

RCW 79A.15.060 Habitat conservation account—Acquisition policies and priorities. (1) The board may adopt rules establishing acquisition policies and priorities for distributions from the habitat conservation account.

(2) Except as provided in RCW 79A.15.030(8), moneys appropriated for this chapter may not be used by the board to fund staff positions or other overhead expenses, or by a state, regional, or local agency to fund operation or maintenance of areas acquired under this chapter.

(3) Moneys appropriated for this chapter may be used by grant recipients for costs incidental to acquisition, including, but not limited to, surveying expenses, fencing, noxious weed control, and signing.

(4) The board may not approve a local project where the local agency share is less than the amount to be awarded from the habitat conservation account.

(5) In determining acquisition priorities with respect to the habitat conservation account, the board shall consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:

(a) For critical habitat and natural areas proposals:

(i) Multiple benefits for the project;

(ii) Whether, and the extent to which, a conservation easement can be used to meet the purposes for the project;

(iii) Community support for the project based on input from, but not limited to, local citizens, local organizations, and local elected officials;

(iv) The project proposal's ongoing stewardship program that includes estimated costs of maintaining and operating the project including, but not limited to, control of noxious weeds and detrimental invasive species, and that identifies the source of the funds from which the stewardship program will be funded;

(v) Recommendations as part of a watershed plan or habitat conservation plan, or a coordinated regionwide prioritization effort, and for projects primarily intended to benefit salmon, limiting factors, or critical pathways analysis;

(vi) Immediacy of threat to the site;

(vii) Uniqueness of the site;

(viii) Diversity of species using the site;

(ix) Quality of the habitat;

(x) Long-term viability of the site;

(xi) Presence of endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;

(xii) Enhancement of existing public property;

(xiii) Consistency with a local land use plan, or a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan, including projects that assist in the implementation of local shoreline master plans updated according to RCW 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to RCW 36.70A.130;

(xiv) Educational and scientific value of the site;

(xv) Integration with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;

(xvi) The statewide significance of the site;

(xvii) Habitat benefits for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees.

(b) For urban wildlife habitat proposals, in addition to the criteria of (a) of this subsection:

(i) Population of, and distance from, the nearest urban area;

(ii) Proximity to other wildlife habitat;

- (iii) Potential for public use; and
- (iv) Potential for use by special needs populations.

(c) For riparian protection proposals, the board must consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:

(i) Whether the project continues the conservation reserve enhancement program. Applications that extend the duration of leases of riparian areas that are currently enrolled in the conservation reserve enhancement program are eligible. These applications are eligible for a conservation lease extension of at least twenty-five years of duration;

(ii) Whether the projects are identified or recommended in a watershed plan, salmon recovery plan, or other local plans, such as habitat conservation plans, and these must be highly considered in the process;

(iii) Whether there is community support for the project;

(iv) Whether the proposal includes an ongoing stewardship program that includes control of noxious weeds, detrimental invasive species, and that identifies the source of the funds from which the stewardship program will be funded;

(v) Whether there is an immediate threat to the site;

(vi) Whether the quality of the habitat is improved or, for projects including restoration or enhancement, the potential for restoring quality habitat including linkage of the site to other high quality habitat;

(vii) Whether the project is consistent with a local land use plan or a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan. The projects that assist in the implementation of local shoreline master plans updated according to RCW 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to RCW 36.70A.130 must be highly considered in the process;

(viii) Whether the site has educational or scientific value;

(ix) Whether the site has passive recreational values for walking trails, wildlife viewing, the observation of natural settings, or other multiple benefits; and

(x) Whether the project provides habitat benefits for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees.

(d) Moneys appropriated for this chapter to riparian protection projects must be distributed for the acquisition or enhancement or restoration of riparian habitat. All enhancement or restoration projects, except those qualifying under (c)(i) of this subsection, must include the acquisition of a real property interest in order to be eligible.

(6) Before November 1st of each even-numbered year, the board shall recommend to the governor a prioritized list of all projects to be funded under RCW 79A.15.040. The governor may remove projects from the list recommended by the board and shall submit this amended list in the capital budget request to the legislature. The list shall include, but not be limited to, a description of each project and any particular match requirement, and describe for each project any anticipated restrictions upon recreational activities allowed prior to the project. [2019 c 353 § 12; 2016 c 149 § 6. Prior: 2009 c 341 § 3; 2009 c 16 § 1; 2007 c 241 § 31; 2005 c 303 § 8; 2000 c 11 § 67; 1999 c 379 § 918; 1997 c 235 § 719; 1990 1st ex.s. c 14 § 7. Formerly RCW 43.98A.060.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 353: See note following RCW 43.23.300.

Effective date—Intent—2016 c 249: See notes following RCW 79A.15.010.

Intent—Effective date—2007 c 241: See notes following RCW 79A.25.005.

Effective date—2005 c 303 §§ 1-14: See note following RCW 79A.15.010.

Effective date—1999 c 379: See note following RCW 79A.15.040.

Severability—Effective date—1997 c 235: See notes following RCW 79A.15.040.