
Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

HRCLG Progress Report 2025



Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group
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Background

In 2007, the Washington State Legislature created the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group¹ to improve the visibility and coordination of habitat and recreation land purchases and disposals by state agencies. The Legislature wanted to ensure that state agencies acquiring lands were coordinating their efforts with one another and making their efforts more visible to the public.

What State Lawmakers Asked State Agencies to Provide

In creating the lands group, state legislators are expecting that state agencies acquire habitat and recreation lands strategically and not just as opportunities arise. They also are expecting state agencies to talk to each other about land transactions regularly, not duplicate roles, and maintain programs that have distinct purposes complementary to one another.

What the Public and Local Governments Asked State Agencies to Provide

A combination of state, federal, and nonprofit land buyers using different planning processes has made it difficult for people to know what recreation and conservation land purchases are being planned and occurring in their communities and by whom.

Since 2007, the lands group has been the key vehicle for improving the visibility, coordination, and transparency of land purchases by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission. The lands group makes state land acquisitions more visible and coordinated at key points before, during, and after the acquisitions are completed.

The lands group process occurs on the biennial funding cycle and includes the following components:

- **Annual Coordinating Forum:** The Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum brings together legislators, state agencies, local governments, non-government organizations, landowners, Tribes, and residents to learn about and share ideas on proposals for state habitat and recreation land purchases and disposals.
- **Biennial Forecast Report:** The *State Land Acquisition Forecast Report* gives information about state land purchases and disposals planned for the next biennium.

¹Substitute Senate Bill 5236

- **Biennial Performance Monitoring Report:** The *Biennial State Land Acquisition Performance Monitoring Report* shows whether state agencies achieved their initial acquisition project objectives.

The lands group membership includes representatives from the following state agencies:

- Department of Ecology
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Transportation
- Puget Sound Partnership
- Recreation and Conservation Office
- State Conservation Commission
- State Parks and Recreation Commission

The lands group also includes representatives of local governments, the Legislature, and others including The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, and Washington Association of Land Trusts, (see attachment A for a list of members). The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) provides staff support. The lands group meets quarterly and makes a difference in the following ways:

Improving coordination—The annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum and the quarterly meetings enable interagency coordination of land acquisition projects to improve strategic planning; help agencies identify partnering opportunities and reduce duplicative efforts; and help produce best management practices for land purchases. Another benefit is improving coordination of information between local governments and residents in counties where acquisitions are proposed.

Addressing key policy issues—The annual forum encourages open discussion of key policy issues, such as funding for land maintenance, with the public and state lawmakers. With an increased interest in public land conservation, the forum gives an opportunity for agencies to hear about the issues that are important to lawmakers and the public, and for legislators and people to learn about projects in their areas and about state land purchasing practices.

Improving transparency—The lands group reports give timely information to the public about land purchase plans in their areas. The annual progress report (this document) is submitted on

behalf of the group to satisfy the reporting requirement in the enabling legislation, Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.260 (attachment B).

Progress on Statutory Tasks

The lands group is responsible for accomplishing eleven statutory tasks. In 2012, the Legislature amended the statute to prioritize five. The progress achieved this year for each of the five priority tasks is outlined below.

Task 1 | Review agency land acquisition and disposal plans and policies to help ensure statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals.

The review of agency land acquisition and disposal plans occurs biennially and occurred during the fall 2024 meeting. This meeting will not occur again until fall 2026.

Task 2 | Produce an interagency, statewide biennial forecast of habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal plans.

The lands group completed a comprehensive update of the [State Lands Acquisition Forecast Dashboard](#) in the spring of 2025 to include planned acquisitions and disposals for the 2025-2027 biennium. This electronic forecast report provides information about the state land purchases being planned around the state and allows land acquisition data to be summarized, analyzed, and viewed in different ways (by biennium, by agency, by county, etc.). This online reporting process provides advance notification to stakeholders and the Legislature about planned purchases in their areas, meaningful opportunity to engage in the planning process, and complete and accessible information about proposed projects.

Task 3 | Establish procedures for publishing the biennial forecast of acquisition and disposal plans on websites or other centralized, easily accessible formats.

The [State Land Acquisition Forecast Dashboard](#) provides early notification about plans for land purchases by the state natural resource agencies. This electronic reporting dashboard also gives a comprehensive look at what's being planned around the state, through county-wide, statewide, and project-specific maps and data. In preparing the dashboard, RCO partners with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and State Parks and Recreation Commission to compile and refine state land acquisition data for each biennium. This dashboard was updated in the spring of 2025 to include planned acquisition and disposals for the 2025-2027 biennium and was shared publicly.

Task 4 | Develop and convene an annual forum for agencies to coordinate their near-term acquisition and disposal plans.

The review of agency land acquisition and disposal plans occurs biennially and occurred during the fall 2024 meeting. This meeting will not occur again until fall 2026.

Task 5 | Develop an approach for monitoring the success of acquisitions.

The eighth [*Biennial State Land Acquisition Performance Monitoring Report*](#) was completed in spring 2026. This edition of the monitoring report analyzes proposed acquisitions from the 2021-2023 biennium. This report monitors the success of state habitat and recreation land acquisitions by examining whether state agencies achieved their acquisition objectives. Data from the report can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in state acquisition processes and inform decisions made by the Legislature, state agencies, local governments, and others.

2026 Action Plan

- Finish *Biennial State Land Acquisition Performance Monitoring Report*. Completion planned for spring 2026, along with a release in conjunction with this report.
- Host Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum to discuss monitoring report outcomes. Planned for April 2026.
- Make and deliver formal recommendation to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and appropriate committees of the Legislature as to whether to allow the lands group to sunset in accordance with Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.260.
- Host Annual State Land Acquisition Coordinating Forum to discuss planned acquisitions and disposals for the 2027-2029 biennium. Planned for November 2026.
- Update and share *State Land Acquisition Forecast Dashboard* with planned acquisitions from the 2027-2029 biennium. Planned for completion in November 2026.

Attachment A | Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group

As of December 2025

Affiliation or Organization

Puget Sound Partnership
The Nature Conservancy
Alternate
Trust for Public Land
Alternate
Alternate
Washington Association of Land Trusts
Washington Department of Ecology
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Alternate
Alternate
Alternate
Alternate
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Alternate
Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
Alternate
Washington State Conservation Commission
Alternate
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
Alternate
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

Members and Alternates

Don Gourlie
Justin Allegro
Skippy Shaw
Laurie Benson
Bill Clarke
Mitsu Iwasaki
Vanessa Kritzer
Heather Kapust
Kevin Connally
Matthew Trendera
Lisa Coffman
Darric Lowery
Joel Sisolak
Travis Weller
Jayana Marshall
Robin Hammill
Megan Duffy
Brock Milliern
Hilary Aten
Kate Delavan
Nikki Fields
Tanya Moore
Yvonne Krauss

Attachment B | Enabling Legislation

Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.260

Habitat and recreation lands coordinating group—Members—Progress reports—Duties.

(Expires July 31, 2027)

- (1) The habitat and recreation lands coordinating group is established. The group must include representatives from the office, the state parks and recreation commission, the department of natural resources, and the department of fish and wildlife. The members of the group must have subject matter expertise with the issues presented in this section. Representatives from appropriate stakeholder organizations and local government must also be considered for participation on the group, but may only be appointed or invited by the director.
- (2) To ensure timely completion of the duties assigned to the group, the director shall submit yearly progress reports to the office of financial management.
- (3) The group must:
 - a. Review agency land acquisition and disposal plans and policies to help ensure statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals;
 - b. Produce an interagency, statewide biennial forecast of habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal plans;
 - c. Establish procedures for publishing the biennial forecast of acquisition and disposal plans on web sites or other centralized, easily accessible formats;
 - d. Develop and convene an annual forum for agencies to coordinate their near-term acquisition and disposal plans;
 - e. Develop a recommended method for interagency geographic information system-based documentation of habitat and recreation lands in cooperation with other state agencies using geographic information systems;
 - f. Develop recommendations for standardization of acquisition and disposal recordkeeping, including identifying a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data;
 - g. Develop an approach for monitoring the success of acquisitions;
 - h. Identify and commence a dialogue with key state and federal partners to develop an inventory of potential public lands for transfer into habitat and recreation land management status; and
 - i. Review existing and proposed habitat conservation plans on a regular basis to foster statewide coordination and save costs.

- (4) If prioritization among the various requirements of subsection (3) of this section is necessary due to the availability of resources, the group shall prioritize implementation of subsection (3)(a) through (d) and (g) of this section.
- (5) The group shall revisit the planning requirements of relevant grant programs administered by the office to determine whether coordination of state agency habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal could be improved by modifying those requirements.
- (6) The group must develop options for centralizing coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisition made with funds from federal grants. The advantages and drawbacks of the following options, at a minimum, must be developed:
 - a. Requiring that agencies provide early communication on the status of federal grant applications to the office, the office of financial management, or directly to the legislature;
 - b. Establishing a centralized pass-through agency for federal funds, where individual agencies would be the primary applicants.
- (7) This section expires July 31, 2027. Prior to January 1, 2027, the group shall make a formal recommendation to the board and the appropriate committees of the legislature as to whether the existence of the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group should be continued beyond July 31, 2027, and if so, whether any modifications to its enabling statute should be pursued.

[2012 c 128 § 1; 2007 c 247 § 1.]

Notes

Finding—2012 c 128: "The legislature finds that participation by the state's habitat and recreation land management agencies in the habitat and recreation lands coordinating group is an inherent part of transparent, efficient, and effective state habitat and recreation land management, and must be conducted within existing resources." [2012 c 128 § 2.]