



# News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
510 Desmond Drive SE  
Lacey, WA 98503

NOAA Fisheries West Coast  
Region, 7600 Sand Point Way NE  
Seattle, WA 98115

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September 05, 2014

**Public Comments Requested for  
Washington Department of Natural Resources Proposed Aquatic Lands  
Habitat Conservation Plan and its Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

***Public Information Meetings Planned Around the State***

Today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region (the Services) announced the availability of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (proposed HCP), draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and draft Implementing Agreement (draft IA).

WDNR developed the draft Habitat Conservation Plan for their management of 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands. These lands are the marine bedlands under Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the coast including 30 percent of their related tidelands; about 70 percent of the shorelands of the navigable lakes and rivers; and the freshwater bedlands — or basically, all the lands under the navigable water bodies in the State of Washington. It is WDNR's goal to

manage these public lands in ways that protect species identified as at risk from environmental threats in order to ensure long-term conservation.

The proposed HCP details a number of activities that WDNR (or individuals, businesses, and other governmental agencies authorized by WDNR) plans to undertake during the next 50 years to avoid and minimize harmful effects to vulnerable species and their habitats. The HCP proposes to protect 29 species, including the federally listed Chinook salmon, coho salmon, chum salmon, sockeye salmon, steelhead trout, bull trout, Eulachon, Boccaccio, canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, green sturgeon, Oregon spotted frog, western snowy plover, marbled murrelets and several unlisted fish and wildlife species.

WDNR has applied to the Services for incidental take permits (permits) under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA).

A habitat conservation plan provides for conservation partnerships between the federal government and non-federal entities to advance habitat protection and stewardship. By working together to identify long-term, science-based strategies for conservation of species and their habitats, HCPs can provide applicants with more certainty associated with permitting and regulation under the ESA related to a variety of activities, including city water supplies, commercial forestry, and land development.

The Services and the WDNR also announce that they will conduct four public meetings to inform the public about the DEIS, the proposed HCP, and the draft IA. The four meetings will be at the following dates, times, and locations:

1. **MT VERNON** **Tuesday, October 7**, from 6:30-8:30, in Room A-125, Angst Hall, Skagit Valley College, 2405 East College Way, Mt Vernon, 98273-5821.
2. **LONGVIEW** **Thursday, October 9**, from 6:30-8:30, in Cowlitz County PUD, 961 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Longview, 98632
3. **TACOMA** **Monday, October 13**, from 6:30-8:30, in Tacoma at the Pierce County Library, 3005 112<sup>th</sup> Street E, 98446-2215

4. **TRI-CITIES** **Wednesday October 15**, from 6:30-8:30, City of Pasco Senior Center, 1315 N 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Pasco, WA 99301

The Services request comments from the public on the DEIS, the proposed HCP, and the draft implementation agreement by December 4, 2014. The draft documents are available electronically at <http://1.usa.gov/1pFyBBh> and <http://www.fws.gov/wafwo/wdnrhcp>.

All written comments should be addressed to: Tim Romanski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 102, Lacey, WA, 98503; or Scott Anderson, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103, Lacey, WA, 98503. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail, to [WFWOComments@fws.gov](mailto:WFWOComments@fws.gov). In the subject line of the email, please include the identifier: WDNR Aquatic Lands HCP EIS. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above addresses. More information is available by contacting the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office directly: Tom McDowell, Acting Manager, Washington Fish and Wildlife Office, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Lacey, WA 98503; by telephone at 360-753-9440; by facsimile at 360-534-9331, or at the Washington Fish and Wildlife website: <http://www.fws.gov/wafwo/>. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

### **Special Accommodation**

The public meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Scott Anderson, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region, at (360) 753-5828 and [scott.anderson@noaa.gov](mailto:scott.anderson@noaa.gov) at least 5 working days prior to meeting date.

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels:*

