# 2013 Project Proposal – Reid Harbor Shoreline Conservation Easement Acquisition

1. **Problem Statement**

**Provide an overview of fish resources, current habitat conditions, site or reach conditions, and other key salmon recovery problem(s) in the watershed that this project is intended to address.**

Nearshore rearing in the San Juans supports all 4 parameters for VSPs - abundance, productivity, spatial structure and both life history diversity and genetic diversity for Chinook salmon as outlined in Table 4 in the RITT’s Monitoring and Adaptive Management Framework.[[1]](#footnote-2)

This project will protect in perpetuity an identified high priority Fish Use area.

“Of the four parameters for viable salmonid populations (abundance, productivity, spatial structure and diversity), abundance and productivity are very difficult to assess in the nearshore environment given the lack of data and the extent of dispersal through a large area. Whether or not there is benefit to genetic diversity is also difficult to ascertain, but use of the area by juvenile salmon suggests that the San Juan Islands support diversity in a viable salmonid population. It may also indicate that there is benefit to spatial structure for all populations in the ESU because the area provides resilience as another place for fish to use.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

As is acknowledged in the local San Juan recovery chapter, it is difficult to assess the VSPs in the nearshore environment, but projects like this one to protect priority nearshore rearing areas are expected to enhance:

* abundance in the density of fry, parr and yearlings;
* productivity in nearshore survival rate;
* productivity in fish growth, i.e. average size, nearshore growth rate, and nearshore residence time;
* spatial structure, i.e. distribution in rearing within and among nearshore habitats;
* life history diversity, i.e. nearshore residence time;
* genetic diversity, i.e. number of populations using the nearshore habitats based on genetic stock identification.

Presently the San Juan Islands do not have the funding or the capacity to monitor all of these indicators. The indicator which the San Juans have been able to assess most recently is the genetic stock identification results. With appropriate resources it could be possible to detect changes over time for the VSP parameters. However, even without the current ability to assess all of these indicators there is certainly still value in this project to protect high priority nearshore rearing habitat in a location correlated with presence and abundance of juvenile Chinook usage in the San Juans. The high priority Speiden Island-Stuart Island Landscape Region is surrounded by highest priority landscape regions of Waldron Island/President Channel and Haro Strait NE, so additional fish sampling may, in fact, document higher fish use than previously assumed. Furthermore, multiple small pocket beaches, a high priority shoreform, are found on the Property and sampling for forage fish spawning is planned.

Without the acquisition of a shoreline Conservation Easement, the property would be vulnerable to the additional development of up to ten desirable home sites and the potential for accompanying shoreline structures such as docks and armoring, alteration of natural drainage patterns, degradation of water quality, and removal of marine riparian vegetation which would impact the shoreline and embayment of Reid Harbor. The shoreline is vulnerable to development because it is common for shoreline owners, especially in the San Juan Islands, to heavily modify the landscape, for example replacing forest with lawn and creating extensive impermeable surface areas such as large homes, extensive outbuildings, arenas, barns and recreation courts.

1. **Project Purpose**

When answering the questions below, please refer to Chapter 4 of the *Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines* ([wdfw.wa.gov/publications/pub.php?id=00043](http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/pub.php?id=00043)) for a definition of restoration goals and objectives.

* 1. **State the project goal(s**).

The goal of this project is to protect the natural shoreline processes, natural habitat, water quality, and native shoreline vegetation of the target property on Reid Harbor, Stuart Island for endangered outmigrating juvenile Chinook salmon; juvenile chum and pink salmon; surf smelt; Pacific sand lance; and Pacific herring.

* 1. **List the project’s objectives.**

The objective of this project are to ensure permanent protection and extinguishment of up to 10 development rights on approximately 61 acres and over 3800 feet of natural shoreline in this high priority Fish Use region of the San Juan Islands.

1. **Project Context**
	1. **Describe the location of the project in the watershed**

The project target property is on approximately 61 acres and over 3800 feet of natural shoreline located on Reid Harbor, Stuart Island in a high priority Fish Use region in the San Juan Islands. This high priority property anchors the forested medium bank southern shore of Reid Harbor with mixed old growth and second growth. This location has eelgrass beds and habitat suitable for forage fish spawning.

* 1. **List the fish resources present at the site and targeted by this project.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Species** | **Life History Present (egg, juvenile, adult)** | **Current Population Trend (decline, stable, rising)** | **ESA Coverage (Y/N)** | **Life History Target (egg, juvenile, adult)** |
| Chinook | Juvenile |  | Y | Juvenile |
| Chum | Juvenile |  | N | Juvenile |
| Pink | Juvenile |  | N | Juvenile |
| Surf smelt | Juvenile |  | N | Juvenile |
| Pacific Sand Lance | Juvenile |  | N | Juvenile |
| Pacific herring | Juvenile |  | N | Juvenile |

* 1. **Discuss how this project fits within your regional recovery plan and local lead entity’s strategy to restore or protect salmonid habitat in the watershed**

Fit to Strategy: Protection is the highest priority action in the San Juan Salmon Recovery Chapter. “Much of the nearshore habitat in the islands are intact and functioning, so the first key is to protect high quality habitat for salmon.”[[3]](#footnote-4) Projects in the 3 year work plan are prioritized based on tiers. Tier 1 projects are projects which address the highest priority work such as protection actions in priority regions.

This project is listed as a Tier 1 project in the local 3 year work plan and is a high priority action for salmon recovery as it would protect in perpetuity over 3800 feet of shoreline. Based on the results of the fish utilization study, the Reid Harbor project area is known to be a very high abundance area for juvenile Chinook, juvenile chum, juvenile pink, juvenile sand lance, juvenile herring and high abundance for juvenile surf smelt.

Fish Use: The project is in a high priority Fish Use region (PIAT Figure 8).

Shoreforms: The project contains multiple high priority pocket beaches (PIAT Figure 11).

Process Degradation: The project is in low/zero percent shoreline degradation (PIAT Figure 10).

Projection Priority: The project is a medium Protection Priority (PIAT Figure 17).

Sea Level Rise Resiliency: The project is medium resiliency for Long Term Salmon Recover Protection priority (PIAT Figure 19).

* 1. **Explain why it is important to do this project now instead of at a later date.**

The property owner is eager to complete this transaction at this time. Discussions with the landowner have resulted in general agreement regarding terms for shoreline protection in the Conservation Easement.

* 1. **If any part or phase of this project previously has been reviewed or funded by the SRFB, please fill in the table below.**

Not applicable.

\* If previous project was not funded, describe how the current proposal differs from the original.

1. **Project Description**

Please answer the questions below and all pertinent supplemental questions. NOTE that projects that include acquisition, fish passage, diversions and screening, or knotweed removal, and projects that are Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP)-related have supplemental questions at the end of this proposal.

* 1. **Provide a detailed description of the proposed project, including project size, scope, design, and how it will address the problem(s) described above.**

Acquisition only – not applicable.

* 1. **If this project includes measures to stabilize an eroding stream bank, explain why bank stabilization at this location is necessary to accomplish habitat recovery.**

Acquisition only – not applicable.

* 1. **If restoration or acquisition will occur in phases or is part of a larger recovery strategy, describe the goal of the overall strategy, explain individual sequencing steps, and which of these steps is included in this application.**

Our Local Integrating Organization, the San Juan Action Agenda Oversight Group, performed a threat analysis and prioritization of strategies and near term actions to update the San Juan Action Area in 2011- 2012. One of the top strategies identified locally to Protect and Restore Habitat is:

Identify and implement shoreline protection tools including land preservation via acquisition and conservation easements, restoration, and protection of marine areas consistent with treaty rights.

One of the near term actions under this strategy is:

San Juan County Lead Entity for Salmon Recovery will identify priority habitats for acquisition by 2013 in updates to the Salmon Recovery strategy, and will lead acquisition of, or establishment of conservation easements for 25% of priority habitat shoreline miles with willing sellers/owners by 2014.[[4]](#footnote-5)

This project addresses this near term action by acquiring over 3800 feet of shoreline via a Conservation Easement providing nearly 0.75 additional shoreline miles of high priority Fish Use habitat that will have been protected in perpetuity. This is in addition to the already protected shoreline in the Reid Harbor area which would bring the total to over 13,800 feet or over 2.6 miles of protected nearshore rearing habitat for salmon in this priority salmon recovery area.

* 1. **Describe the long-term stewardship and maintenance obligations for the project or acquired land.**

This Conservation Easement will preserve and protect the property’s ecological, natural shoreline, forest, scenic, and open space values; will limit residential use of the property to two single-family residences and their appertinent structures within two Structures Areas, one existing and one future residential site, on approximately 10 acres of the property; and will preserve the property in perpetuity. The Preservation Trust will monitor the property annually to ensure compliance with the terms of the Conservation Easement.

The second residential site will be located in a defined Structures Area, the exact fixed location of which will be determined by the landowner and approved by the Trust in writing to ensure that the impact on Conservation Values shall be minimized to the greatest extent practicable and shall be recorded as an amendment to the Conservation Easement prior to site preparation and construction of any structures. The Conservation Easement will identify the notification process and information required for Trust approval of the second residential site. The landowner is aware of this approval process and will approve the terms and conditions by signing the Conservation Easement.

* 1. **Describe other approaches and design alternatives that were considered to achieve the project’s objectives and why the preferred alternative was selected.**

The property owner is willing to provide a Conservation Easement but is not willing to sell the property. The use of a Conservation Easement is a cost-effective alternative to fee-simple purchase of the property.

* 1. **List all landowner names**.

Cooley-Gilliom family

* 1. **Has the Washington Department of Natural Resources confirmed that your project is or is not on state-owned aquatic lands?**

The property is not on state-owned aquatic lands.

* 1. **List project partners and their role and contribution to the project.**

Not applicable – no additional project partners.

* 1. **Stakeholder Outreach:**

There are no known opposition or barriers to this project in the Stuart Island or greater San Juan Islands communities. There is widespread support for the conservation work of the Preservation Trust on Stuart Island; however, there has been no formal outreach regarding this specific project to other residents on the island, to date.

* 1. **Contingency Planning:**

There are no known constraints or problems that many delay or increase the costs of this acquisition.

* 1. **List and describe the major tasks and time schedule you will use to complete the project.**

Finalize, sign and record Conservation Easement. Project completion is anticipated by the end of 2013.

1. **Design and Implementation Questions for Restoration Projects** (Acquisition-only projects need not respond to these questions.)

Acquisition only – not applicable.

## Supplemental Questions

### Acquisition Project Supplemental Questions

(Applies to both acquisition-only and combination projects).Answer the following supplemental questions (these are not included in the ten-page limit):

1. Provide a detailed description of the property.

This high priority property anchors the forested medium bank southern shore of Reid Harbor with mixed old growth and second growth big-leaf maple, Douglas fir, madrone, Western juniper, red alder, Western redcedar, grand fir, hemlock, Pacific yew, Scouler’s willow and Douglas maple. Old growth trees are present along the shoreline. This location has eelgrass beds and habitat suitable for forage fish spawning. A documented pocket beach is located in the northwest corner of the property and several smaller undocumented pocket beaches and a tombolo are found along the shore.

1. State what type of acquisition is proposed (e.g., fee title, conservation easement).

Conservation Easement

1. State the size of the property to be acquired.

The property is approximately 61 acres and has over 3800 feet of natural shoreline

1. Describe the property’s proximity to publically owned or protected properties in the vicinity.

In addition to being identified as a priority location for salmon recovery, the San Juan Preservation Trust has designated the area around Reid Harbor as a priority for conservation and with Washington State Parks has already protected over 355 acres in close proximity to this project, including much of the watershed surrounding the harbor. With adjacent and nearby parks and conservation land already set aside, this project would extend total protection along the shores of Reid Harbor to over 13,800 feet of shoreline (representing approximately 60% of the entire harbor).

1. If uplands are included on the property to be acquired, state their size and explain why they are essential for protecting salmonid habitat.

The property’s 61 uplands acres provide essential protection for the natural vegetation and watershed values adjacent to high priority Fish Use habitat.

1. State the percentage of the total project area that is intact and fully functioning habitat.

Approximately 83% of the property will remain intact and fully functioning habitat in perpetuity.

1. Explain property restoration needs*.*

No restoration is proposed or required.

1. List structures (home, barn, outbuildings, fence) on the property and any proposed modifications.

An historic residence, barn, outbuildings, and dock are located in a discrete area at the northern end of the property. An historic reef net site, which remains active to this day, is located just south of the property.

1. Describe adjacent land uses (upstream, downstream, across stream, upland).

Adjacent properties are either undeveloped or non-residential common area.

1. Describe the proximity of the property to other protected or functioning habitats, and the size and quality of those protected properties.

The Preservation Trust’s Reid Harbor Preserve (17-acres with .5 miles of waterfront) is less than 200 feet from this property. An additional 1.3 mile of shoreline in Reid Harbor are protected by the Stuart Island State Park and a Preservation Trust Conservation Easement. This is all high quality habitat.

1. Describe the:
2. Zoning/land use –

R-5 / Rural Farm Forest

1. Shoreline Master Plan designation

Rural Farm Forest on the four northernmost tax parcels and Conservancy on the two southernmost tax parcels.

1. Portion of site within 100-year floodplain --

Not applicable.

1. Portion of site within designated floodway --

Not applicable.

1. Explain why federal, state, and local regulations are insufficient to protect the property from degradation.

The Conservation Easement will provide a significantly reduced density protection not provided by federal, state and local regulations.

1. For projects that have a goal of saving water:

Not applicable.

1. If buying the land, explain why acquiring a conservation easement to extinguish certain development, timber, agricultural, mineral, or water rights will not achieve the goals and objectives of the project.

Not applicable.

1. For acquisition projects intending to purchase multiple properties within an area, identify all the possible parcels that will provide similar benefits and certainty of success and provide a clear description of how parcels will be prioritized and how priority parcels will be pursued for acquisition.

Not applicable.

1. Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Recovery: A Framework for the Development of Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plans, The Puget Sound Recovery Implementation Team, March 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. San Juan County Salmon Recovery Chapter, Puget Sound Shared Strategy, June 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. San Juan County Salmon Recovery Chapter, Puget Sound Shared Strategy, June 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. San Juan Action Agenda Profile, Action Agenda for Puget Sound, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)