

Appendix C-2:

Planning Project Proposal

Project Number	17-1063
Project Name	WRIA 6 Site-Scale Nearshore Acquisition Strategy
Sponsor	Whidbey Camano Land Trust
Planning Type	Assessment

List all related projects previously funded or reviewed by RCO:

Project # or Name	Status	Status of Prior Phase Deliverables and Relationship to Current Proposal?
	Choose a status	
	Choose a status	
	Choose a status	

RESPONSES TO SRFB REVIEWER COMMENTS ARE PROVIDED IN THE SECTION AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PROPOSAL.

If previous project did not receive funding, describe how the current proposal differs from the original.

*Please respond to each question individually. Do not summarize the answers collectively in essay format. Local citizen and technical advisory groups will use this information to evaluate the project. **Limit the response to ten pages (single-sided).** The sponsor may delete the italicized portion of the questions and inapplicable supplemental questions to shorten the proposal.*

Submit this proposal as a PRISM attachment titled "Project Proposal."

NOTE: Sponsors of barrier inventory projects should NOT fill out this proposal. They instead should use the Barrier Inventory Project Proposal.

- 1. Project brief.** *In one or two sentences, what do you propose to do?*

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust (the Land Trust) proposes to develop a science-based prioritization of shoreline parcels in WRIA 6 (Island County), to acquire for conservation (and associated restoration, if applicable) of nearshore and estuarine processes, to assist the recovery of salmonid populations which use the nearshore areas of WRIA 6. It is envisioned that the prioritization will be used to:

- 1) Inform where to emphasize efforts to identify willing landowners, and
- 2) Inform decisions about whether to purchase parcel(s) that opportunistically come on the market by characterizing the relative priority of the parcel(s).

2. Project location.

Nearshore areas of WRIA 6 which includes Whidbey and Camano Islands

3. Problem statement. *What are the problems the project seeks to address? Include the source and scale of each problem. Describe the site, reach, and watershed conditions. Describe how those conditions impact salmon populations. Include current and historic factors important to understand the problems.*

Salmon recovery practitioners in WRIA 6 have identified a need for a finer scale, comprehensive tool to help identify where to prioritize restoration and conservation efforts, as well as to inform funding decisions when making decisions between one project versus another. Currently, the salmon recovery plan identifies geographic tiers to help guide recovery practitioners, but more specificity is needed to help inform the relative benefits to ESA-listed salmon.

WRIA 6 lacks an objective evaluation of the ecological value of individual parcels along the nearshore for salmonids. Without such an understanding, project proposals are evaluated individually without appropriate context to understand their relative ecological importance. This creates inefficiencies in both the primary ways that property protection opportunities are identified – strategic outreach to targeted property owners and review of opportunistic properties that come to the attention of conservation buyers. By creating a systematic evaluation of nearshore parcels we anticipate improving the effectiveness of nearshore expenditures and to increase the efficiency of future nearshore project evaluations.

4. List the fish resources present at the site and targeted by the project.

Species	Life History Present (egg, juvenile, adult)	Current Population Trend (decline, stable, rising)	Endangered Species Act Coverage (Y/N)
Chinook	Juvenile	Varies by run	Y
Chum	Juvenile	Varies	Y
Pink	Juvenile	Varies	N

Coho	Juvenile	Unknown	N
Steelhead	Juvenile	Varies	Y

5. Describe the limiting factors, and limiting life stages (by fish species) that the project expects to address.

Prioritization will focus on the early marine life stage for outmigrating chinook and summer chum. These species are more dependent on estuaries and marine nearshore habitats than other salmon species (Healey 1982, Simenstad 1982, Fresh 2006). Emerging data suggest the importance of rapid growth during this life stage in increasing the population's rate of survival to return (smolt-to-adult survival). This project will incorporate scientific information on what provides favorable habitats for survival and growth of juvenile salmon to inform the relative benefits of projects.

6. Project goals and objectives. *When answering the questions below please refer to Chapter 4 of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's [Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines](#) for more information on goals and objectives.*

A. What are the project's goals?

The goal of the project is to create a watershed assessment that can be applied to the site scale. A further goal is that the assessment methods be robust and transparent in creating a rating for each parcel-based shoreline segment due to ecological value for salmonids. This rating tool will result in a GIS dataset where each parcel is assigned values based on the ecological functions the site currently supports. These ecological values will be available for review and updates as new scientific understanding or data become available. Therefore, this rating effort will create dynamic, rating system that can incorporate additional data or site-based surveys as they become available.

- i. Assess the relative importance of shoreline segments for salmonid ecological function.
- ii. Assess the feasibility of acquiring high priority shoreline parcels to support juvenile Chinook ecological function.
- iii. Provide a flexible site rating tool that adapts to new information.

B. What are the project's objectives? *Objectives support and refine biological goals, breaking them down into smaller steps. Objectives are specific, quantifiable actions the project will complete to achieve the stated goal. Each objective should be "SMART:" Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.*

Create GIS geodatabase containing the most up-to-date and comprehensive spatial datasets relevant to characterizing nearshore conditions that support juvenile salmon. Parcel data will be attributed with the data. This objective will be achieved within the first 6 months of the project.

Within 12 months of project kick-off, develop and run a science-based evaluation framework that is approved by an Advisory Group and characterizes the relative contribution of each parcel for providing – currently or through restoration – habitat conditions favorable for juvenile salmon, specifically chinook.

Within 18 months of project kick-off, provide report with maps providing in concise writing style the methods, results, and recommendations of the acquisition strategy evaluation framework. The GIS geodatabase will also be provided for use and the ability to have updated in the future.

- 7. What are the assumptions and constraints that could impact whether the sponsor achieves the objectives?** *Assumptions and constraints are external conditions that are not under the direct control of the project, but directly influence the outcome of the project. These may include subsequent availability of funding, public acceptance of the project, land use constraints, geomorphic factors, additional expenses, delays, etc. How will the sponsor address these issues if they arise?*

We assume that this project will use existing spatial data to create a parcel based prioritization framework. This assumption makes the outputs dependent on the quality and interpretation of existing data that may or may not have been collected for the purpose for which it is being used. We will manage this constraint through careful interpretation and review of the datasets used in the framework to ensure appropriate use. This may include consultation with data managers and, potentially, exclusion or reinterpretation of some datasets.

Further, this project assumes that the existing science is sufficient to generate a meaningful integration of environmental data to generate a robust and meaningful ranking or score for individual parcels. This assumption will be managed through the inclusion of an advisory group that will help guide development of the framework and review initial outputs.

- 8. Project details.** *Please answer the questions below and all pertinent supplemental questions at the end of the application form.*
- A. Provide a narrative description of the proposed project.** *Describe the specific project elements and explain how they will lead to the project's objectives. For assessment projects, describe the design and methodology.*

This project builds upon prior data compilation and integration efforts for nearshore prioritization with a focus on the Island County nearshore habitats. Prior prioritization efforts in other geographic areas including West Sound Nearshore, WRIA 1, and San Juans have included evaluation of the relative ecological importance of individual parcel opportunities to guide watershed decision-making. This project will initially review these frameworks, identify GIS datasets available for WRIA 6 to support them, and decide upon a recommended evaluation framework. This information and recommendation will then be reviewed by an expert Advisory Group convened for the project to identify modifications to the framework that are appropriate for Island County. This will then lead to an initial framework for prioritizing parcels and an initial ranking of parcels throughout WRIA 6. This initial ranking will be reviewed by the Advisory Group and iteratively refined to ensure known high value sites are being rated appropriately. Parcels will be assigned a relative priority ranking value and a subset of the highest ranking parcels will be further evaluated to initiate the use of the prioritization framework and to provide an example of the utility of the overall framework to future users.

B. Provide a scope of work and detailed list of project deliverables. *Provide a detailed description of the proposed project tasks, who will be responsible for each, what the project deliverables will be, and a schedule for accomplishing them. If the project will produce a design, please specify the level of design that will be developed (conceptual, preliminary, or final); design deliverables must comply with those described in RCO "Manual 18, Salmon Recovery Grants," Appendix D-1 (conceptual design), D-2 (preliminary design), and D-3 (final design). Complete planning projects within 2 years of funding.*

Task 1. Assemble GIS Geodatabase

A GIS Geodatabase of parcels and relevant datasets will be assembled to inform the prioritization. The Land Trust has a robust GIS library that can serve as a starting point. The geodatabase will be organized with forethought on the anticipated analysis and queries to be run. GIS layers from the Land Trust library and additional data sources will be added.

Task 2. Develop Recommended Prioritization Framework

This task includes two main elements. First, existing parcel-scale prioritizations and juvenile salmon nearshore habitat utilization patterns will be reviewed. The prioritizations from other watersheds will be compared to available datasets for WRIA 6 to inform whether there are data to support including a specific parameter in the analysis. The juvenile salmon studies will include the Skagit Bay work by the Skagit River Systems Cooperative and NOAA, as well as the west Whidbey Island study by the Wild Fish Conservancy. From these reviews, a

recommended acquisition prioritization framework will be developed. The intent of the framework will be to characterize the relative benefits of different parcels for acquisition for the purpose of conservation and/or restoration.

Second, the recommended evaluation framework will be vetted by an expert Advisory Panel convened for the project. The Advisory Group will be comprised of invited representatives of Cities, Counties, Tribes, conservation/restoration practitioners, scientists, and others. During Advisory Group Meeting #1, the project team will review the information assembled, the scientific foundation, and the recommended evaluation framework. The outcome of this task will be an agreed to evaluation framework to be tested.

Task 3. Run Prioritization Framework

The GIS geodatabase will be updated for running the selected prioritization framework. This may include preparing datasets (e.g., linear referencing of parcels) to provide the information needed. The evaluation framework will be run and results considered. One iteration of adjustment will be run, if necessary, if the outputs do not adequately characterize conditions.

Advisory Group Meeting #2 will focus on the results of the evaluation framework and the project team's recommendations for how to interpret, use, and communicate the prioritization outputs.

Task 4. Finalize Prioritization Framework and Prepare Report

A draft and final report will be prepared documenting the methods, results, and recommendations of the prioritization. The GIS geodatabase will be provided to WRIA 6.

C. Explain how the sponsor determined cost estimates.

Costs were estimated based on budgets from other similar assessment, input from Confluence Environmental, and an understanding of budget availability in the WRIA 6 allocation.

D. How have lessons learned from completed projects or monitoring studies informed the project? *Sources of results may be from Project Scale Effectiveness Monitoring from TetraTech, individual sponsors, lessons learned from previously implemented projects, Intensively Monitored Watershed results, or other sources.*

The project team has experience in the WRIA 6 watershed, in the recovery planning meetings, and in parcel-based prioritizations in other watersheds. Through this experience, lessons learned from those efforts will be applied. For

the evaluation framework, the lessons learned stem from knowledge of how formulas translate to outputs and the amount of time to assign to each of the proposed tasks in the project.

9. If the project includes an assessment or inventory *(NOTE: project may extend across a wide area and cover multiple properties).*

A. Describe any previous or ongoing assessment or inventory work in your project's geographic area and how this project will build upon, rather than duplicate, the completed work.

Juvenile salmon fish use data from the Skagit River System Cooperative and Wild Fish Conservancy will be applied in the analysis. A number of survey efforts have been conducted in WRIA 6 that inventory shoreline modifications and shoreline resources. For example, most recently the County collected detailed shoreline armoring data for the entire shoreline. The Washington Department of Ecology has funded drift cell and feeder bluff map throughout Puget Sound, including WRIA 6, to inform net shore drift and sediment supplies along the shoreline.

B. If a design is NOT a deliverable of this grant, please describe how this project meets all of the required criteria for filling a data gap that are list in Section 2 of Manual 18.

Funding is requested by a Nonprofit Organization (The Land Trust) to complete the prioritization project. The total project duration will be less than 2 years and the assessment will be coordinated with federal, tribal, state, regional and local organizations. The assessment will provide a roadmap that prioritizes parcel-based shoreline segments for subsequent acquisition projects.

10. If the project includes developing a design or a feasibility study:

A. Will a licensed professional engineer design the project?
Choose an answer

Not Applicable

B. If the project includes a fish passage or screening design, has the project received a Priority Index (PI) or Screening Priority Index (SPI) number? If so, provide the PI or SPI number and describe how it was generated. (i.e. physical survey, reduced sample full survey, expanded threshold determination, or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife generated. Refer to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's [Fish Passage Barrier and Surface Water Screening Assessment and Prioritization Manual](#) for guidance).

Not Applicable

**C. Will you apply for permits as part of this project's scope?
Choose an answer**

- i. No permits are required as part of this project.

D. For fish passage design projects:

- i. If you are proposing a culvert or arch, will you use stream simulation, no slope, hydrologic, or other design method? Please describe.

Not Applicable

- ii. Describe the amount and quality of habitat made accessible if the barrier is corrected.

Not Applicable

- iii. List additional upstream or downstream fish passage barriers, if any.

Not Applicable

11. Explain why it is important to do this project now instead of later. *(Consider its sequence relative to other needs in the watershed and the current level and imminence of risk to habitat).*

Substantial recovery efforts have been completed in WRIA 6 since the ESA-listing of Puget Sound Chinook salmon. Many restoration and protection projects have been completed or are being planned. As the recovery effort has advanced – and many “low hanging fruit” opportunities have been completed – there is a need for a more specific acquisition strategy to understand the relative benefits of one opportunity versus another. There are new datasets and juvenile salmon monitoring studies to apply in the prioritization, thus making it particularly timely.

12. If the project is a part of a larger overall project or strategy, describe the goal of the overall strategy, explain individual sequencing steps, and which of these steps is included in this application for funding. *Attach a map in PRISM that illustrates how this project fits into the overall strategy, if relevant.*

The project is not part of a larger overall project. This project will provide a comprehensive acquisition prioritization strategy that is anticipated to be applied in updating the local strategy and informing future funding round project rankings.

13. Describe the sponsors experience managing this type of project. *Please describe other projects where the sponsor successfully used a similar approach.*

The Land Trust has more than 30 years of experience conserving, stewarding and restoring important lands. It currently holds and manages 42 conservation easements and 16 fee simple conservation properties, and maintains restricted funds for the stewardship and legal defense of these lands to ensure their permanent protection. As a demonstration of its commitment to excellence and permanency, the Land Trust was awarded National Accreditation in 2012.

The Land Trust is very experienced managing grant-funded contracts and contracting with consultants to complete specific aspects of projects.

14. List all landowner names. *If the project will occur on land not owned by the organization, attach a Landowner Acknowledgement Form (Manual 18, [Appendix F](#)) in PRISM from each landowner acknowledging that his/her property is proposed for SRFB funding consideration. Refer to Manual 18, Section 3 for possible exceptions to this requirement.*

The assessment will not be working with specific landowners, rather all shoreline parcels in WRIA 6 will be evaluated using GIS techniques.

15. List project partners and their roles and contributions to the project. *Attach a Partner Contribution Form (Manual 18, [Appendix G](#)) from each partner in PRISM. Refer to Manual 18, Section 3 for when this is required.*

Not applicable

16. Stakeholder outreach. *Discuss whether this project has any opposition or barriers to completion besides funding. Describe the sponsors public outreach and feedback received. Are there any public safety concerns with the project? How will the sponsor address those concerns?*

This project does not have any known opposition or barriers to completion. This proposal responds to the WRIA 6 request for projects that specifically asked for this type of prioritization to be proposed.

Supplemental Questions

For acquisition and planning combination projects, applicants will need to answer the acquisition supplemental questions found in the "Restoration, Acquisition, and Combination Proposal."

Comments

Use this section to respond to the comments received after the initial site visits and after submitting the final application.

Response to Site Visit Comments

Site visit comments and responses are provided below.

- 1) Recommended Improvements: The proposal would be improved by including a specific landowner outreach task and budget item for the top priority projects identified through the assessment. Landowner willingness will likely be the most important limiting factor for implementing protection of the top priority areas and it strengthens the outcome of leading to restoration or protection projects.**

This project focuses on providing a science-based prioritization of project opportunities. Landowner outreach informs project feasibility and likelihood of near-term implementation, but would not be used in identifying priorities based on relative benefits to salmon. While identifying willing landowners is crucial for completing the top priority projects, it is seen as a subsequent project and not part of the proposed project.

The Land Trust is very well thought of throughout the WRIA 6 community and plans to lead landowner outreach following the completion of the prioritization.

Besides the incompatibility of the outreach with the project focus, there are budgetary and logistical hurdles also. First, landowner outreach would require additional funding and the proposal fits within the watershed's planned funding allocation for this grant round. Second, targeted landowner outreach would need to occur after the technical portion of the prioritization is complete and informs the top priority opportunities. As a result, any targeted landowner outreach would simply extend the project timeframe when the work could instead be completed as part of an independent effort.

- 2) General Comments: The primary benefit of this proposed acquisition strategy project is to develop a tool to help summarize disparate information about the ecological value of nearshore areas, improve communication about the value of specific parcels, and to update and focus the lead entity strategy on nearshore acquisitions. It is always preferred to have a strategy in place to review those opportunistic protection or restoration projects and provide context and rationale for the go/no-go decisions. It helps stakeholders and decision makers, including the review panel, understand where the lead entities priorities are, and how the proposal fits into those priorities.**

Thank you for the comment.

- 3) **Staff Comments:** If available, then include information on how the West Sound Nearshore Integration and Synthesis Project (14-1375) is being implemented by Kitsap County to date. This could help in avoiding identified challenges again, and to mimic the known strengths of the project.

The West Sound Nearshore Prioritization is being used by restoration and conservation practitioners in the lead entity. The ranked project list was relied upon by at least one prospective project sponsor to identify high priority project opportunities to complete. This led to a proposal to begin restoration planning at the highest ranking project site.

In addition, Kitsap County has added projects to the lists and scored them using the formula to compare the relative benefits of new project opportunities. These new opportunities are shoreline armor removal project at parcels where willing landowners have been identified since the completion of the prioritization project.

The application authorization resolution needs to match RCO's and be signed by the 8/10/17 application due date.

We will work with the RCO grant manager to ensure all forms are properly completed and submitted by the deadlines.

Response to Post-Application Comments

Please describe how the sponsor responded to the review panel's post-application comments. *RCO recommends that the sponsor list each of the review panel's comments and questions and identify the response. The sponsor may use this space to respond directly to the comments.*

Review Panel Comments to Final Application

#3 If the project is Conditioned, the following language will be added to the project agreement: The project sponsor will assess landowner willingness for the top 10 areas of protection or restoration as identified by the GIS-based prioritization framework.

#4 General comments: We understand the desire to keep the assessment as a separate stand-alone project; however, the benefits of the project are only realized once protection or restoration measures are implemented. Rather than waiting another funding cycle to evaluate landowner interest, this project should take the next logical step of contacting landowners via letters and phone calls. The land trust should be well equipped to communicate with landowners who are potential candidates for easements or acquisitions and will require minimal time and effort. The outreach work would also likely qualify as matching funds for the project. This approach of including landowner outreach is consistent with other similar acquisition prioritization and strategy proposals funded by SRFB in the Puget Sound Region and around the state.

Sponsor Response:

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust respectfully requests the review panel's reconsideration of the condition language for the reasons described below. Instead, we would like the condition language to be modified to read "The project sponsor will assess landowner willingness through targeted outreach to at least 10 landowners in high priority areas identified in the GIS-based prioritization framework."

Priority areas may include large numbers of landowners, some of whom may be known to be opposed to conservation and restoration efforts. Requiring a systematic outreach in such areas may contribute to unintended outcomes. The Land Trust is proposing this prioritization effort to fulfill a need identified by the Lead Entity for a framework to inform ranking and scoring in SRFB and other processes. The Land Trust is one of several anticipated users of the prioritization results who will be working with landowners to identify protection and restoration opportunities.

Landowner outreach and community dialogue is a cornerstone of the Land Trust's success in Island County. As such, the Land Trust has a strategic approach for when and how to conduct outreach with landowners. The review panel's proposed condition language does not align with the approach that has helped make the Land Trust successful in achieving our mission. The reason for this is two-fold.

First is the limit of the Land Trust's capacity to successfully follow through with those landowners who express interest. There is the potential for greater landowner willingness within the top 10 areas than the Land Trust's protection staff can offer a respectful level of service. As a result, some important landowners who may initially be willing to pursue conservation or restoration actions on their land may not be followed up with sufficiently for their satisfaction. We see this as a risk that inadvertently undermines the intent of the condition which is why we requested changing the language of the condition.

Second, there is uncertainty about the types of landowners potentially included in the top 10 priority areas. The Land Trust and the Lead Entity may already have an understanding of the willingness of landowners among the top 10, making further outreach counterproductive for the landowner. In addition, certain types of landowners within WRIA 6, may be more receptive to initial outreach from entities other than the Land Trust. The Land Trust is well suited to work with many landowners, but our familiarity with the community also enables us to recognize some outreach is best led by others.

In addition to the work entailed in the modified condition proposed above, the project team and Lead Entity coordinator will prepare an outreach strategy specifically tailored to each of the top 10 areas. This will include the recommended approach as well as the recommended entity to lead said approach with the landowners in each area. We anticipate the strategy will vary among sites depending on type of landowner (e.g., residential, commercial, city, or federal), the number of landowners, and knowledge of earlier outreach efforts.