

Evaluation Proposal Acquisition Project

Applicants must respond to the following items. The local citizen and technical advisory groups will use the evaluation proposal to evaluate your project. Applicants should contact their lead entity for additional information that may be required.

Up to eight pages may be submitted for each project evaluation proposal.

(SUBMIT INFORMATION VIA PRISM ATTACHMENT PROCESS)

1. BACKGROUND

Describe the fish resources, the current habitat conditions, and other current and historic factors important to understanding this project. Be specific—avoid general statements. When possible, document your sources of information by citing specific studies and reports.

The *Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan* (2005) identifies this area of Whidbey Island as a high protection priority for habitat protection and restoration. The project is located within one ebb tide (a day's migration) from the Skagit River Delta. Chinook and chum rely heavily on shallow, nearshore habitats with juveniles from these stocks making up a large component of the salmon using the Whidbey nearshore. Nearly 50% of the federally threatened Puget Sound Chinook spawn in the Skagit and Stillaguamish Rivers (SASSI 2004).

The central location of WRIA 6 means that most Puget Sound juvenile and adult salmon and trout populations utilize WRIA 6 marine and nearshore waters. The Skagit, Stillaguamish and Snohomish rivers, which terminate into the protected waters of Whidbey Basin (in which this project is located), are home to 47 salmon and trout stocks, which comprise over 20% of the stocks in Puget Sound. Ten of the 47 Whidbey Basin stocks are Chinook stocks and eight are fall chum stocks. Chinook and chum rely heavily on shallow, nearshore habitats with juveniles from these stocks making up a large component of the salmon using the Whidbey and Camano nearshore. Puget Sound Chinook, Hood Canal summer chum and Coastal Puget Sound bull trout are all listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. (From: WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery Plan 2005). Nearly 50% of the federally threatened Puget Sound Chinook spawn in the Skagit and Stillaguamish Rivers (SASSI 2004).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

State the nature, source, and extent of the problem that this project will address and help solve. Address the primary causes of the problem, not just the symptoms. When possible, document your sources of information by citing specific studies and reports.

This project addresses the protection of diked shoreline to keep it from being degraded thus protecting restoration options in the future that will benefit salmon and other species. The loss of estuarine habitat in the Puget Sound has been identified as a leading cause of declining salmon numbers. The protection and future restoration of estuarine habitats has been identified as a primary tool needed to recover salmon stocks and other native fish species. The nearshore area in WRIA 6 provides the greatest number of functions to the greatest number of salmon and trout stocks and life history stages. The highest priority in WRIA 6 is to protect existing healthy nearshore processes and habitats because this will benefit all juvenile and adult

salmon. The focus of this project is to protect future restoration opportunities by assuring that the subject property is not developed in the future. That will allow the opportunity to adequately work with the community, resource experts and government officials on appropriate restoration options, including breaching portions of the dike, removing the shoreline access road, and restoring channel and habitat conditions conducive to salmon recovery efforts.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

List the project's objectives. Objectives are statements of specific outcomes that typically can be measured or quantified over time. Objectives are more specific than goals (visions of the desired future condition) and less specific than tasks (the specific steps that would be taken to accomplish each of the objectives). For example, the objectives of an acquisition project might be to protect a forested riparian buffer, to protect a steep slope, to protect a floodplain, to protect a channel migration zone, and to extinguish timber, development, and agricultural rights. Explain how achieving the objectives will address and help solve the problem identified in #2 above.

The objectives of this project are to protect healthy functioning salmon supporting habitat by acquiring fee rights to over 2,500 feet of tidelands on Skagit Bay and protect the existing shoreline habitat on 43 acres of diked land on Skagit Bay from being developed in order to keep open future shoreline restoration opportunities that will benefit salmon recovery efforts.

Acquiring this proposed land will both protect existing functioning tideland habitat and retain the opportunity to restore healthy nearshore processes and habitats that benefit juvenile and adult salmon, as well as other native fish. Acquisition and protection for conservation purposes will assure that future actions and uses will benefit and not impact salmon recovery. This is the first of three phases, this being the first phase which is to protect nearshore habitat from further development. The next phase after this would be to apply for SRFB or other funds to being to work on a restoration design the meets the needs of multiple parties, most particularly neighboring property owners. The third phase would be to implement this agreed upon restoration design. But, if you don't start with protecting the land, you will likely never get much further in salmon recovery in this area.

PROJECT APPROACH

- **Briefly describe the geographic setting of the project (marine nearshore, estuary, main stem, tributary, etc.) and the salmon life cycle stage(s) affected.**

This is a marine nearshore and tideland acquisition protection project, located on Skagit Bay, which is in the Island County located on the northeast side of Whidbey Island. The project area is located within Geographic Area 1, identified and designated as the top priority for protection in the WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery Plan. According to the Salmon Recovery Plan, this area is utilized by the largest number of Chinook fry migrants from the Stillaguamish, Skagit and Snohomish rivers during their first days of nearshore migration. The shorelines are primary pathways for bull trout migrating between these rivers. In addition, Geographic Area 1 is used heavily by juveniles and adults from the 47 salmon and trout stocks that originate in these rivers, which comprise over 20% of the stocks in Puget Sound. (WRIA 6 SRP 2005).

- **Briefly describe the habitat types on site (spawning, rearing, forested riparian/floodplain, wetlands, tributary, side-channel, off-channel, uplands, etc.) and their size and quality.**

This project includes large areas of diked property in the nearshore that could provide rearing, shelter from predators, migration, physiological transition areas, refuge from high-energy waves, and key areas for food production. These areas are particularly important for young salmon life stages. The tidelands provide large

areas of mudflats that are extremely productive and provide plankton for young salmon and forage fish and are most important early in the out-migration season. The adjacent eelgrass beds provide shelter for young fish, food, and cover for migration during low tides, and spawning areas for herring. Future restoration will reconnect the large areas of mudflats that are extremely productive and provide plankton for young salmon and forage fish and are most important early in the out-migration season, to the upland shoreline property.

- **Briefly describe adjacent habitat types (upstream, downstream, across stream, upland) that are in protected status and their size and quality.**

The property is adjacent to Dugualla Lake and lies along the Skagit Bay shoreline. The project area is very close to the mouth of the North Fork Skagit River and the Swinomish Channel.

- **Briefly describe the extent to which habitat to be acquired is currently intact and fully functioning and/or needs restoration; the timeframe in which responses or improvements in habitat functioning are expected; and the continuity of the proposed acquisition with other protected or functioning habitat in the reach.**

This diked property is an excellent candidate for future restoration to provide many salmon and other wildlife habitat functions. All of the tideland property is fully functioning for salmon habitat values and no restoration is necessary. Reconnection between the now diked upland and the tidelands of Skagit Bay would provide enormous benefits for salmon recovery.

- **List the individuals and methods used to identify the project and its location.**

The WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery Plan (SRP) was developed and approved after a long and arduous process that involved numerous studies, committees, public input and hearings, etc. The subject project area is located within Geographic Area 1, the top priority area for protection, enhancement and restoration actions according to the SRP. Area 1 is located within 5 miles of the mouths of the main salmon bearing streams (Stillaguamish, Skagit and/or Snohomish rivers). According to the WRIA 6 SRP, this area is utilized by the largest number of Chinook fry migrants from these rivers during their first days of nearshore migration. The shorelines are also primary pathways for bull trout. This area is also identified in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan as an important area to protect and restore.

- **Describe the consequences of not conducting this project at this time and describe the current level and imminence of risk to habitat. Provide the current zoning and Shoreline Master Plan designation. For multi-site acquisition projects, identify all the possible parcels that will provide similar benefits and certainty and provide a clear description of how parcels will be prioritized and how priority parcels will be pursued for acquisition.**

The owner, an Estate, has announced its plan to sell this property on the open market. The property was within days of being listed when the executor was contacted by the Land Trust. This project is a rare opportunity to protect a large area of shoreline land and future salmon supporting habitat from just one owner. If the property is sold, management of salmon supporting habitat becomes much more complicated and opportunities for future restoration are drastically reduced or eliminated. The southern areas of the property could be developed for residential purposes. The property is zoned Rural which allows subdivision into nine homesites.

- **Describe how the site(s) was identified for acquisition**

The Property will be acquired in fee simple ownership. The site was identified through the goals and objectives of the WRIA 6 SRP and identification of this site in the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan as an important priority for salmon recovery. It was also identified in the Whidbey Camano Land Trust “greenprint map” process which over more than a year, resource data was gathered from local, state, federal and other organizations and knowledgeable individuals about the priority landscapes in Island County requiring protection. This area was identified through this process as a high protection priority.

- **Explain how the project’s cost estimates were determined.**

The cost estimates were based on previous grant applications, current market values of comparable properties, and information on what the appraised market value of the property is from the executor of the Estate.

- **Describe other approaches and opportunities that were considered to achieve the project’s objectives.**

This is likely a one-time opportunity to acquire this large amount of shoreline from one owner. Otherwise the property will be sold in tracts and likely developed by the buyers due to its excellent views and amenities.

- **List project partners. When appropriate, include a letter from each participating partner briefly outlining its role and contribution to the project. (see sample form in section 2)**

The major project supporters include the Skagit River Cooperative, Dugualla Bay Heights property association and members, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wild Fish Conservancy and many others.

- **List all landowner names. Include a signed form from each landowner acknowledging their property is proposed for SRFB funding consideration. (see sample form in section)**

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- **Describe your approach to long-term stewardship of the facility or land. Projects should be consistent with habitat forming processes in the watershed, requiring reduced up-keep and long-term maintenance over time. Identify any planned use of the property including upland areas.**

The main objective of this project is to protect future opportunities to enhance and/or restore the habitat value or, at least, eliminate future uses that might degrade the current habitat values. In the short-term, it is likely the land will continue to be farmed to prevent invasive species. The property will be kept in its open space status and condition until restoration plans are agreed to by all affected parties.

- **When known, identify the staff, consultants, and subcontractors that will be implementing the project, including their names, qualifications, roles and responsibilities. If not yet known, describe the selection process.**

Pat Powell, executive director of the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, has over 15 years of experience in successfully acquiring lands and waters for conservation purposes. Chris Hilton, land protection specialist for WCLT, has over six years of acquisition-related experience and ten years of conservation experience. Both

Chris and Pat will be the primary people working on this acquisition. There will be no consultants or subcontractors. WCLT will work with salmon restoration experts after the property is protected.

4. TASKS AND TIME SCHEDULE

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

Acquire preliminary title reports:	September 2007
Enter into option agreements:	September-December 2007
Surveyor review of legals:	November 2007
Acquire appraisal:	January 2008
Acquire properties:	March- August 2008

5. CONSTRAINTS AND UNCERTAINTIES

State any known constraints or uncertainties that may hinder successful completion of the project. Identify any possible problems, delays, or unanticipated expenses associated with project implementation. Explain how you will address these constraints and the likelihood of success.

Success of the project always depends on successful negotiations with the owner.