THURSTON COUNTY
WASHINGTON
SINCE 1852

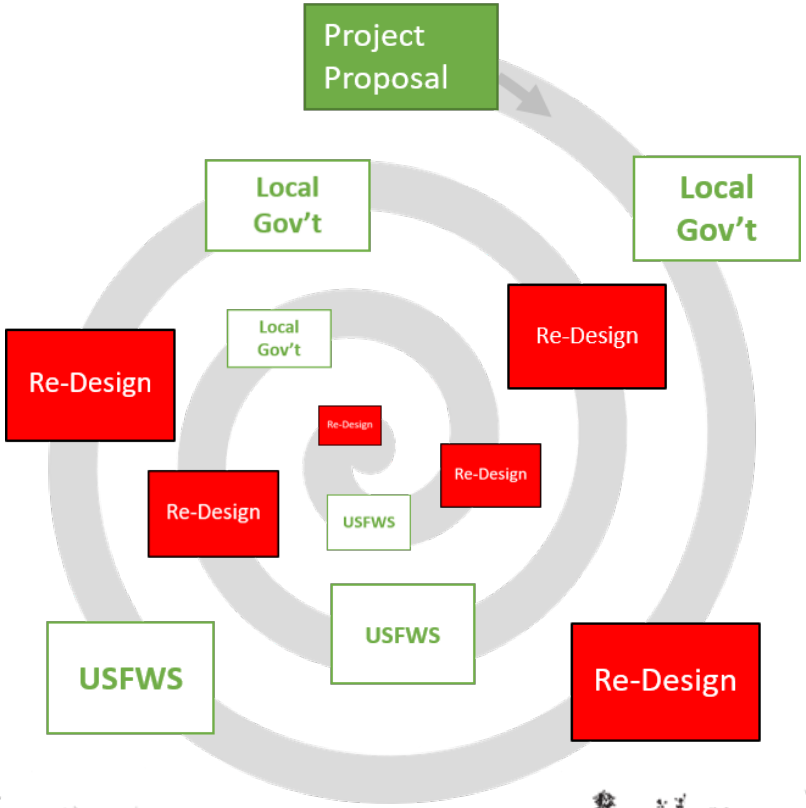
Thurston County

HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

Why County Wide HCP

Endangered Species Permitting – Business as Usual Scenario

Long Uncertain Process

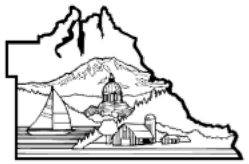


Uncoordinated Small-Scale Mitigation

HCP Benefits

Local Control

The Thurston HCP will replace portions of the Critical Area Ordinance as it relates to the Covered Species. Moves compliance with federal endangered species laws for public and private activities from federal agencies to the local level. The County administers the permits that meets the requirements of both federal (ESA) and state (GMA -Critical Area protections) regulations.



Streamlined permitting process

The Thurston HCP replaces the project by project review. The current site review process for the Mazama pocket gopher, creates and standardized protocols for the other covered species.

HCP Benefits

Improved and increased species conservation
Coordinated conservation planning through the Thurston HCP provides significant benefits to endangered and threatened species as it replaces piecemeal mitigation and adds conservation beyond mitigation.

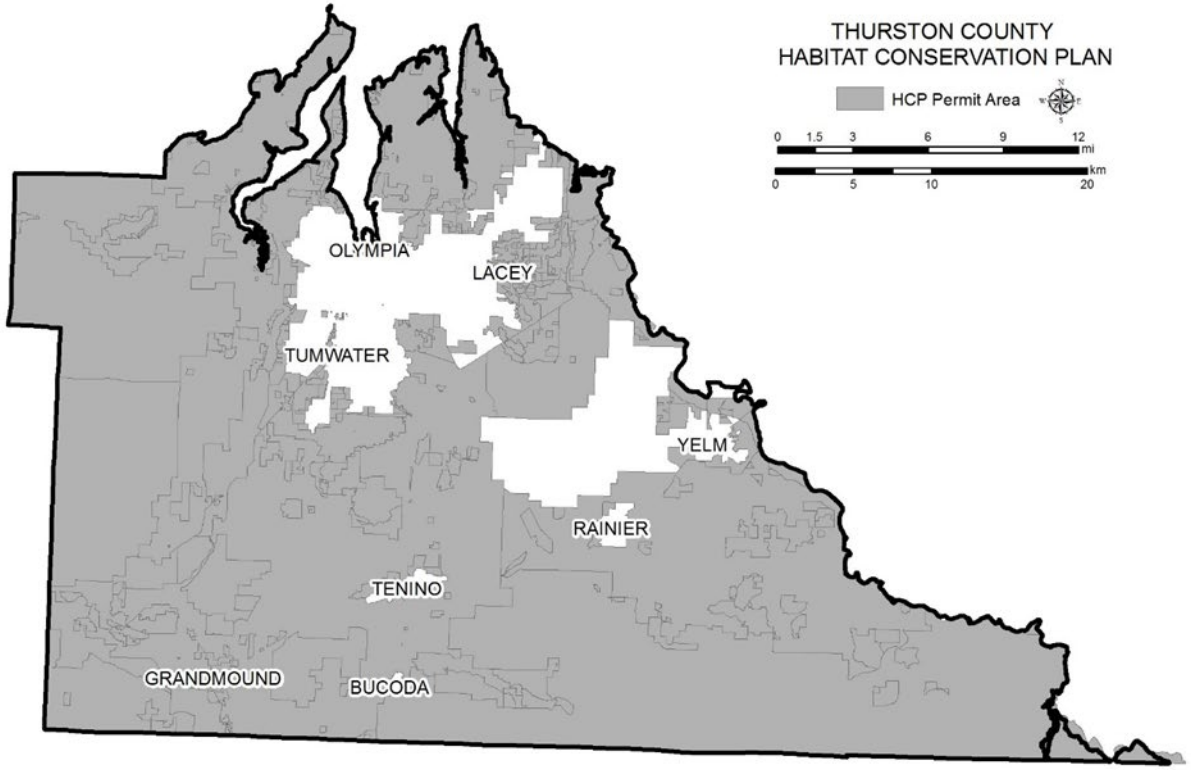
The Thurston HCP is not a Recovery Plan
The Thurston County Habitat Conservation Plan has been developed to complement species recovery efforts by the federal and state wildlife agencies.

Permit Term and Covered Area

Thurston County HCP is proposing a 30-year permit term

Permit Covered Area includes the unincorporated area of Thurston County. This is both the UGA of each city and rural Thurston County.

The areas not covered are properties located with the city limits of Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Tenino, Yelm and Town of Bucoda.

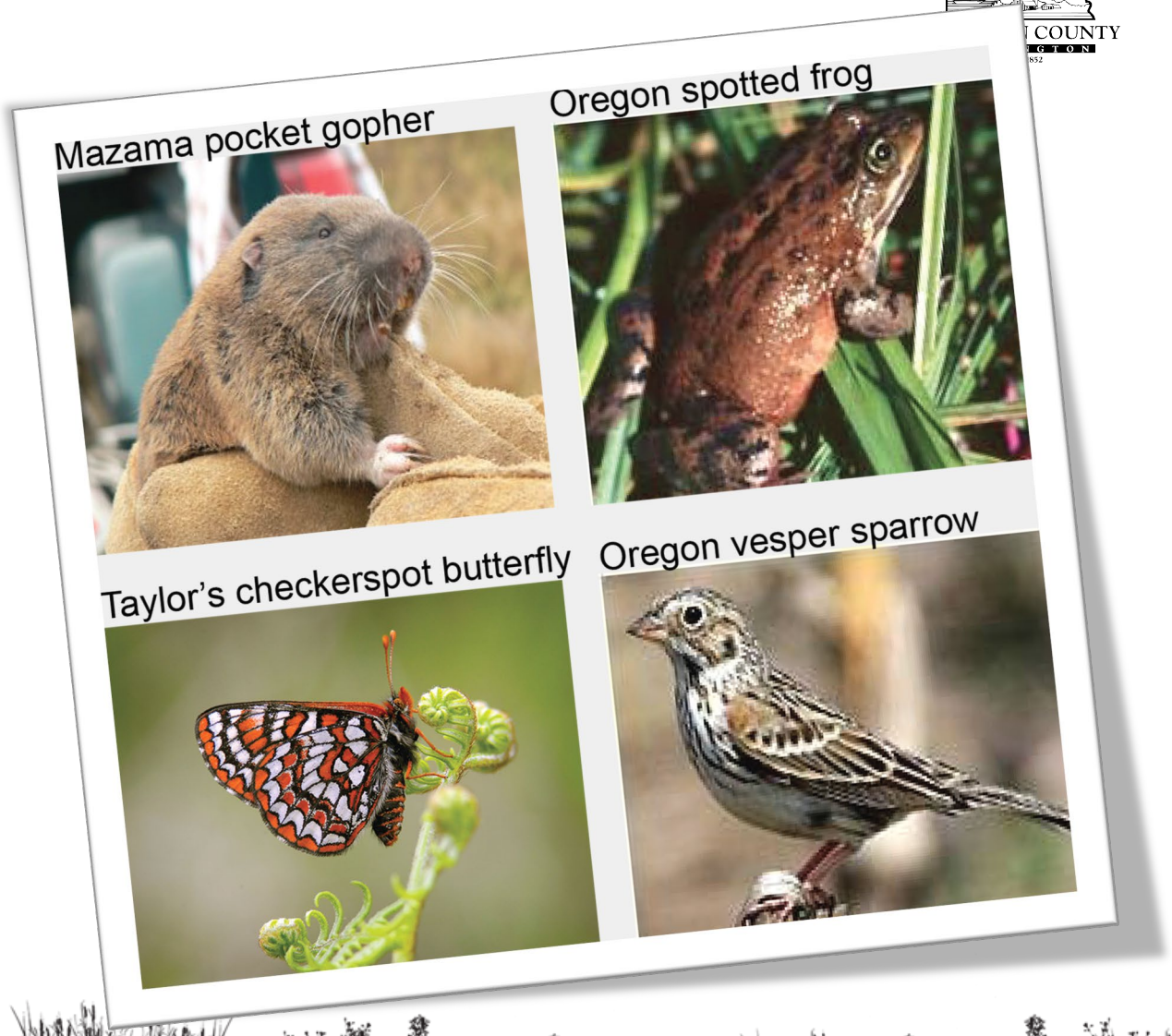


Covered Species

County has proposed to cover five species/sub-species which are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

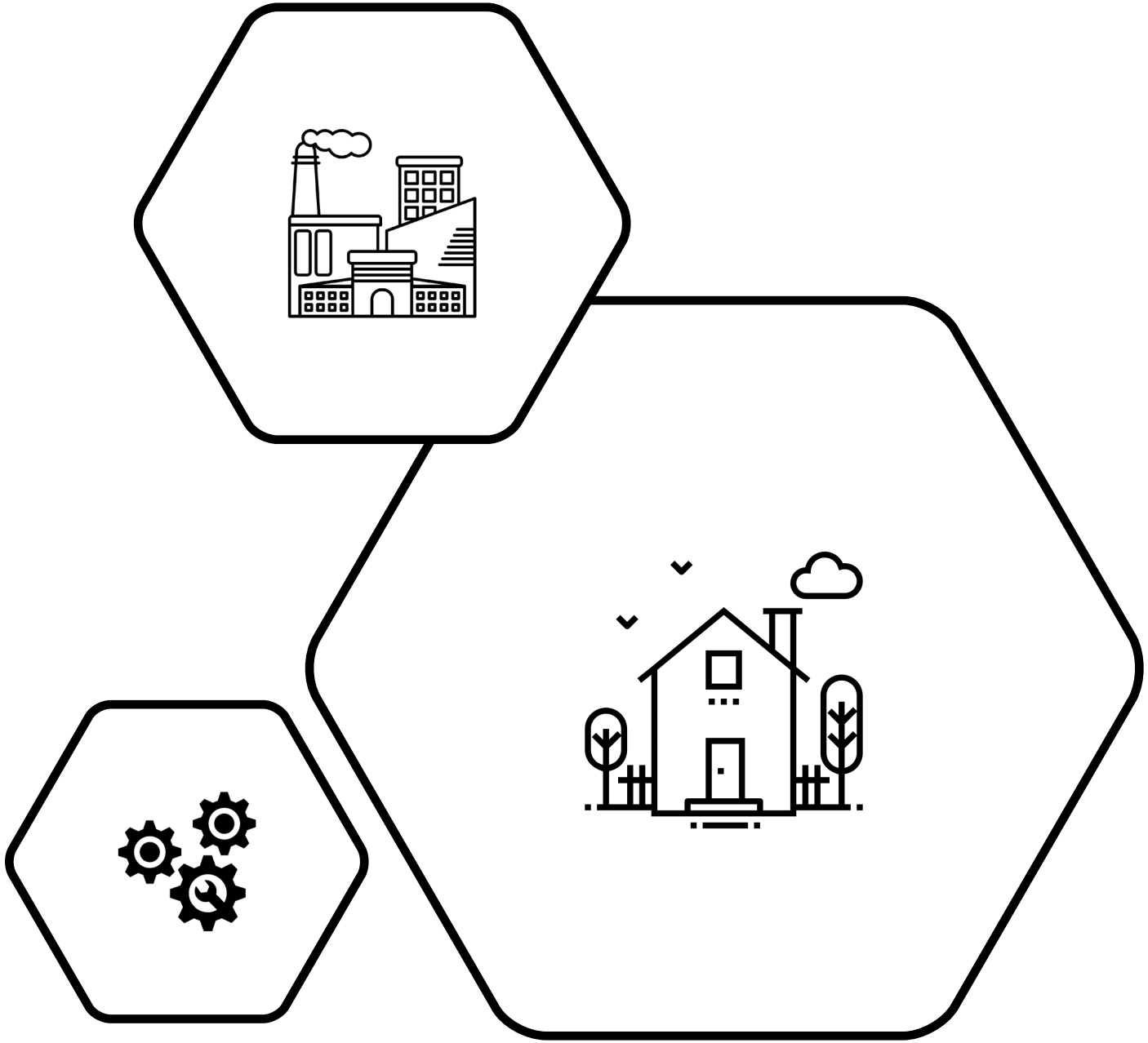
- Oregon Spotted frog,
- Taylors Checkerspot butterfly, and
- 3-sub species of the Mazama Pocket gopher (Olympia, Tenino, Yelm pocket gopher)

In addition, the county choose to include the Oregon vesper sparrow. This species is currently under review for listing under the ESA and resides on similar habitat as the Mazama pocket gopher sub-species.



Covered Activities

- Residential/Subdivisions
- Non-Residential/Industrial
- Capital Improvement Projects

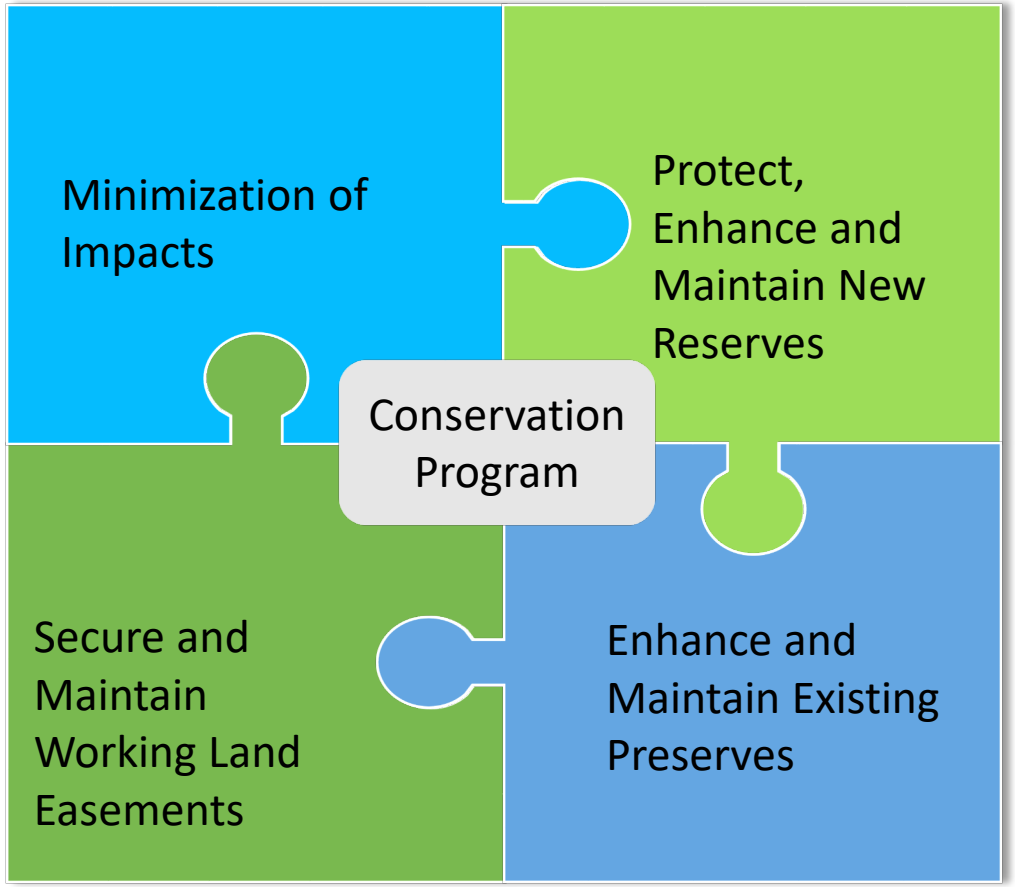


Conservation Program

Central to the Conservation Program are mitigation measures to minimize impacts and to build the Thurston County Conservation Land System.

The Conservation Land System will expand on the existing network of protected lands that are managed for covered species and their habitats.

The Conservation Land System will create mitigation credits to off-set the impacts form the Covered Activities.



Conservation Land System

All conservation land types will have:

- Baseline report
- Site management plans
- Legal permanent protection
- Long term stewardship fund (endowment)

Prior to credit release - will meet the required performance standards (tables 7.1 and 7.2) for credit release (table 7.6 - general release standards).

HCP Conservation Land Type	Target Desired Future Prairie Condition
New Reserves	Native Prairie and High-Quality Native Prairie
Working Lands Easements	Degraded Grassland minimum, with areas of Native or High-Quality Native Prairie
Enhanced Existing Preserves	Enhancement of baseline conditions, which are expected to be Degraded Grassland at a minimum, with lift to Native Prairie or High-Quality Native Prairie. Note that no credits can be taken for baseline condition on these lands – only for increases in habitat value.

Implementation

County permit applicants can obtain ESA coverage under the HCP through Certificate of Inclusion.

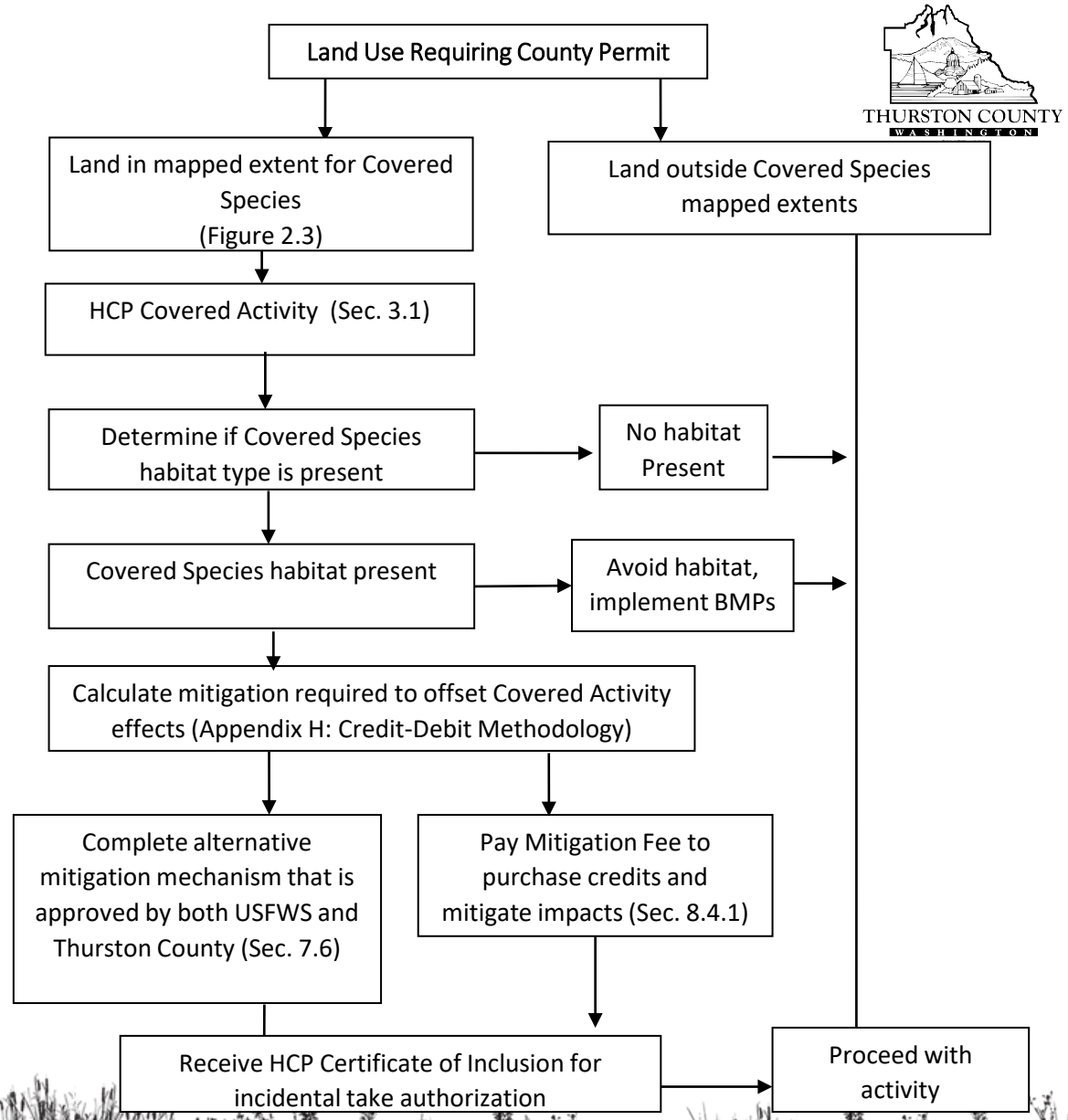
Staff will work with applicant to minimize impacts to maximum extent practicable to reduce impacts.

Changes in Project Review Process

Standard review process:

- Using aerial photos and mapped species extent in GIS county will review application
- Work with applicant to minimize impacts by implementing BMPs (Appendix C)
- Assign functional acre quantity using Credit-debit Method (Appendix H)
- Determine mitigation fee

Applicant may complete the expanded process which is a site-specific survey rather than relying on mapped USDA soil series. Survey to be completed by County-approved qualified specialist, using methods approved by the county (Appendix K)

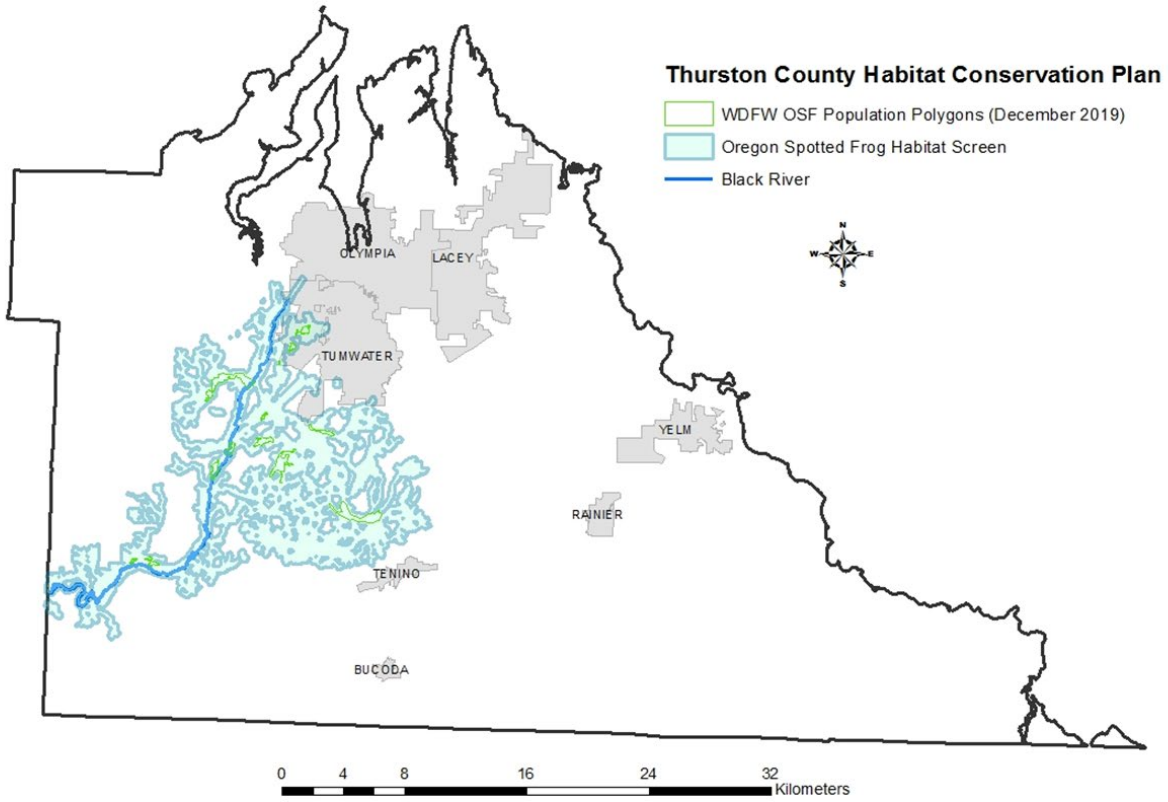


Oregon Spotted Frog Review Process

Projects which fall in the OSF Habitat Screen will need to complete the Habitat Survey Protocol

- On site survey between Jan 1-April 15 to determine if OSF habitat on site
- Follow field evaluation criteria questions (HCP Appendix F)
- Delineate the on-site habitat/wetland

Score impact and conservation area using Ecology's Credit-Debit Tool to determine debits/credits.



Habitat Quantification Tools

- Debits and credits will be computed based on occupancy, or incremental/increased occupancy, and habitat quality and function.

- Relative credit value for prairies habitat categories is specific for each species.

- For Oregon Spotted Frog, debits and credits will be computed using the *Calculating Credits and Debits for Compensatory Mitigation in Wetlands of Western Washington*.

See Section 7.5.1-7.5.4 and Appendix H: Credit – Debit Methodology

Mitigation Options

Applicants can secure a Certificate of Inclusion by:

- paying a Mitigation Fee* (sec. 7.6.1),
- dedicating land** (sec. 7.6.2), or
- purchasing credits from an independent mitigation bank (sec. 7.6.3)

* Designated critical habitat must be mitigated for on-site through land dedication process.

**Land dedicated as mitigation land must meet the same requirements as county's conservation land.

Alternatively a project proponent may obtain a project specific Incidental Take Permit (ITP) from USFWS by developing their own project HCP

Cost and Funding

- The County's estimated an average annual cost to fully implement the HCP. Costs of the include:
  - Conservation Program administration,
  - Conservation land acquisition (includes easements),
  - Restoration, enhancement, management and maintenance

- Conservation Program will be funded through a mix of Mitigation Fees and County Conservation Futures funds.

Timeline

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Outreach and Education

- Start Summer 2020

Environmental Impact Statement

- Fall 2020 – Fall 2021

Implementation Ordinance

- Planning Commission Spring 2021
- Board Review/Adoption Fall/Winter 2021

Questions?

Christina Chaput,
Senior Planner

Christina.Chaput@co.Thurston.wa.us

Jennifer Davis,
Community Planning Manager

Jennifer.davis@co.Thurston.wa.us