

THURSTON COUNTY OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

PLANNING COMMISSION – APRIL 5, 2023



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OPEN SPACE TAXATION ACT (RCW 84.34)

- **Open Space Taxation Act:** Enacted by the WA State Legislature in 1971 (RCW 84.34)

“For the purpose of maintaining, preserving, conserving and otherwise continuing in existence open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic well-being of the state and its citizens.”

CRITERIA

- ✓ Applicants must meet the criteria in **RCW 84.34** and the **Thurston County Open Space tax program guidelines**.
-  A **property tax reduction** results from open space classification because the land is valued (for tax assessment purposes) on the basis of its current use and not its 'highest and best use'.
-  The % reduction of market value is based on the **Public Benefit Rating System score**. The BoCC reviews eligibility & recommends approval; the Assessor's Office completes the tax reduction process.
-  **Supporting documents** must be submitted with application materials

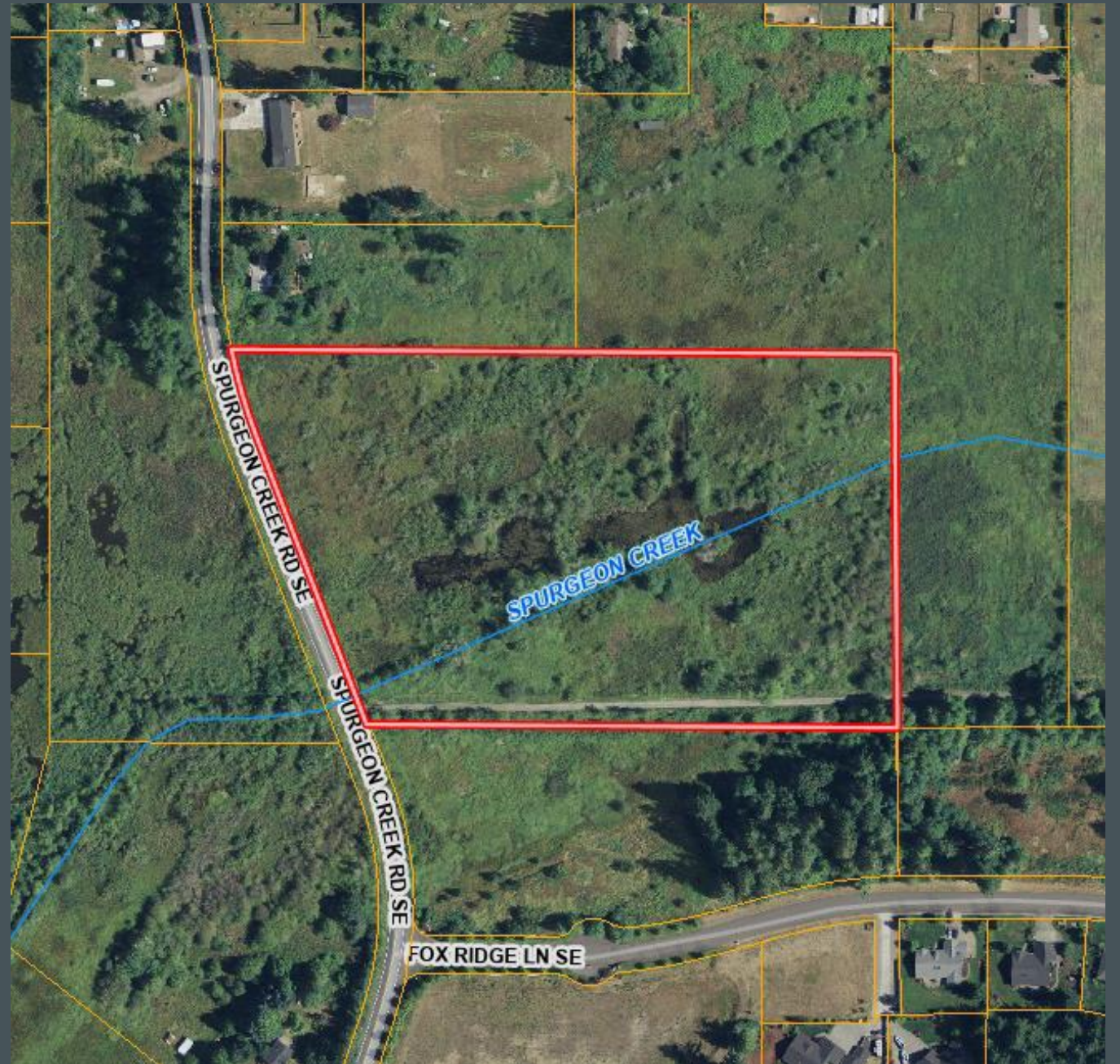
APPLICATION

- Current application:
 - Terry: Significant Wildlife Habitat Area, no public access

“to maintain desirable fish-rearing habitat, wetland habitat, critical aquifer recharge area, floodplain function, and habitat connectivity by providing open space for fish and wildlife”

TERRY

- The parcel under consideration totals 12.84 ac.
 - 12.84 acres proposed for the Open Space program
 - No structures onsite



TERRY APPLICATION

- Applying for **Significant Wildlife Habitat Area** Open Space, no public access
- **Deschutes Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA 13)** and the Spurgeon Creek basin
- **Spurgeon Creek** is a Type F, fish-bearing stream which supports Coho, a candidate for federal listing, and other salmonid species
- Zoning is within **McAllister Geologically Sensitive Area (MGSA) District (Chapter 20.23 TCC)**
- Mapped within a **Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (24.10.005 TCC)**
- The majority of the property is **mapped with wetland**
- Applicant proposes to conserve site for fish and wildlife habitat and control invasive weeds



SPURGEON CREEK, PONDS, AND WILDLIFE ONSITE

- Spurgeon Creek = High priority for restoration in the Deschutes River Coho Salmon Biological Recovery Plan
- Important habitat for Coho, cutthroat trout, and steelhead
- The primary tributary to the Deschutes River in Thurston County



MAPPED ONSITE WETLAND

- Majority of the property is mapped with wetland
- Wetlands provide crucial habitat for Coho salmon and cutthroat during their rearing life stages
- Additionally, the ponds within the wetland provide large, deep pools known to be key habitats for rearing juvenile salmon
- Wetlands play a vital role in water storage and filtration



WILDLIFE SPECIES SUPPORTED BY THE TERRY PARCEL: CAO IMPORTANT SPECIES & WDFW PRIORITY SPECIES

- **Coho salmon**
- **Big brown bat**
- **Great blue heron**
- **Wood duck**

Other Fish Spp. Documented in Spurgeon Cr.

- **Fall Chinook salmon**
- **Chum salmon**
- **Winter steelhead**



CONSERVATION PROPOSAL

- Conserve and improve desirable fish-rearing & wetland habitat, critical aquifer recharge area, floodplain function, and habitat connectivity by maintaining the property in a rural, undeveloped state
- Control invasive weeds within 200 feet of Spurgeon Creek and ponds
 - Primarily through mechanical removal (mowing, shading)
 - Use of herbicides only if needed, and according to label
- Motorized access will be limited to the dry season, only for conservation management purposes
- Monitoring to take place every 5 years

TERRY CRITERIA ANALYSIS

- The proposed 12.84 acres are eligible for **3 points** under the Thurston County Public Benefit Rating System, for a **50% reduction in market value**
- Meets the eligibility requirements for **Significant Wildlife Habitat Area**
 - The property contains Type F stream which supports species meeting CAO Important Species criteria
 - The majority of the property contains wetland which provides crucial habitat for CAO Important Species onsite
 - The applicants submitted a complete application including a Habitat Management Plan prepared by a qualified biologist



TERRY ANALYSIS RESULTS

- Upon review of the application materials, the Terry application meets the eligibility for the classification of 12.84 acres qualifying at a 50% tax reduction as open-space land for current use assessment.

OPTIONAL MOTION TO SET A PUBLIC HEARING

- Move to set a public hearing for May 3, 2023, at 7:00 PM or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard to accept public comments for the Terry Open Space application.

QUESTIONS

- Open Space Staff Contact:
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