

Thurston County HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

Proposed Habitat Calculation Tool

The Thurston County HCP proposed Habitat Calculation Tool was developed by scientists and technical experts to bring greater confidence to conservation decisions. This approach has been used in wetland mitigation and species conservation throughout the country. The tool provides a consistent, streamlined process to evaluate quantity and quality of habitat to measure "functional acres" for the covered species.

The HCT has the flexibility to bring value and increased transparency to any development, conservation, or restoration project and serves as the basis for the Conservation Program that rewards enrolled willing landowners for achieving conservation outcomes.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

Science-based: factors in the best available science

Consistent: provides an objective measure of impacts and benefits and tracks and reports outcomes for transparent decision-making

Scalable: can inform small- to large-scale conservation projects

Efficient: using the HCT requires only the time to conduct a GIS am

Net benefit: improved accounting means improved tracking of progress toward the goal of creating benefit for the species.

Having a clear understanding of current and potential habitat value is good for everyone: landowners, investors, regulators, and at-risk species. Soon landowners who want to develop their land can use the Habitat Calculation Tool to compare different development scenarios. Those who want to sell their habitat can compare different restoration scenarios, allowing them to create the most benefit possible on their property. Meanwhile, investors can choose projects with the highest return on investment and demonstrate those returns with the calculation tool.



CUSTOMIZED CREDIT AND DEBIT DETERMINATIONS

To measure habitat quality for a plot of land, the HCT weights features for breeding and foraging that the covered species require throughout their lifecycle, including diversity of tree and shrub cover, density of native plants, and soil type. It considers threats such as nuisance vegetative species and distance between known populations. The tool looks at the overall habitat and measures it as a percent of optimal condition (100% functionality) using a scoring curve based on best available science. The form to input information is located on the HCP webpage.

ACRES
Project Impact Area

X

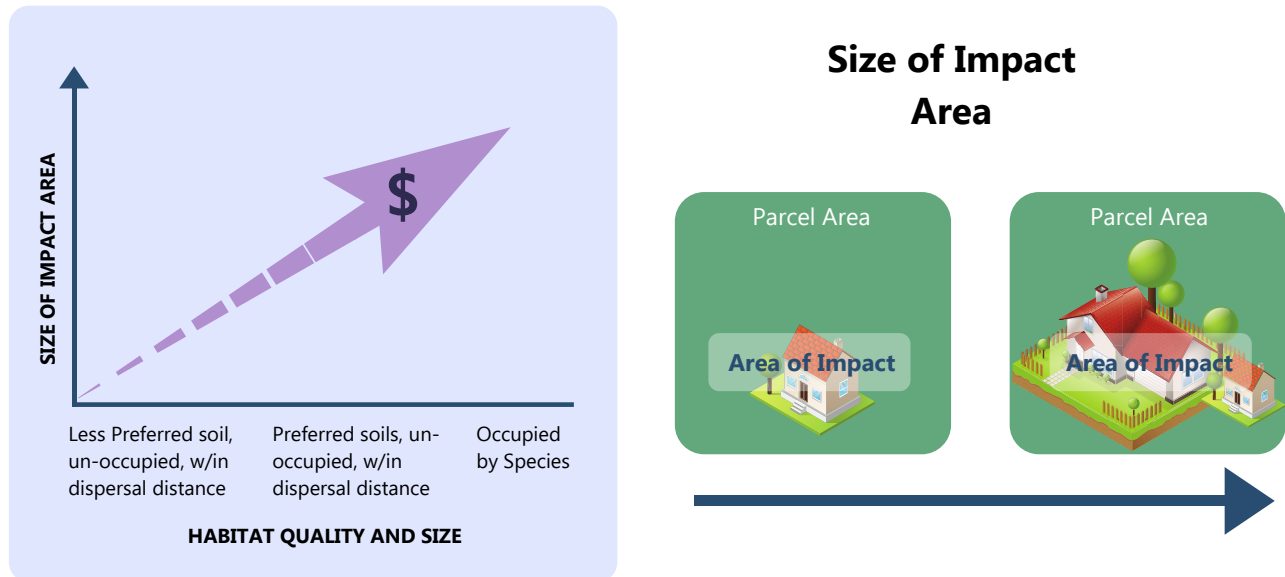
HABITAT QUALITY
Species specific food, shelter,
nesting areas, and land condition

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**FUNCTIONAL
ACRES**

HCT IN ACTION – PRAIRIE SITES

The proposed HCT has been customized for the covered species to bring more certainty to conservation efforts and impact assessment for development permits. The amount of credits needed for development on conservation sites depends on the quality and size of the habitat and the size of the impact area.



HCT IN ACTION – OREGON SPOTTED FROG HABITAT



The habitat quality score is proposed to be computed using the Calculating Credits and Debits for Compensatory Mitigation in Wetlands of Western Washington. Through its life cycle, the OSF relies on wetland habitat. The Department of Ecology has created a rapid assessment tool to determine functions and values for the types of freshwater wetlands.

Like the prairie calculation tool, this tool takes into consideration habitat attributes for the entire life cycle of the OSF. It accounts for water quality, hydrologic and habitat functions (accounting for providing of habitat for federally listed species) as well as effects of landscape-scale impacts (urbanization). The tool is based on the best available information, is a peer reviewed "rapid" method, and is calibrated to wetlands in Washington State.

By using this tool on the impact site and the conservation site, project landowners, investors, and regulatory agencies have a predictable and clear method to precisely assess environmental impacts. With the HCT's data, it's easy to know that compliance standards are being met and allows for flexibility by not requiring a set number of acres or particular land use and restoration practices. It ensures that the restoration process uses best available science to create value for the species that we are all working to protect.