



# HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

## Overview

### BACKGROUND

The Thurston County HCP is a countywide plan to provide Endangered Species Act permits and mitigation for capital improvement projects (roads, schools, fire stations) and development activities (commercial buildings, residential developments, accessory structures) over the next 30 years.

The HCP will coordinate mitigation to maximize benefits to the Covered Species and to multiple other species that use prairie and riparian habitat. The plan strikes a balance between natural resource conservation and economic growth.



**Oregon  
spotted frog**



**Oregon  
vesper sparrow**



**Taylor's  
checkerspot  
butterfly**



**Pocket Gopher  
(Olympia, Yelm,  
Tenino)**

An HCP is an economic development tool that forecasts, manages, and permits defined impacts to endangered species. The proposed Thurston County HCP will replace the need for most project proponents to obtain separate federal and local permits, or secure land to meet mitigation requirements. The proposed HCP replaces the piecemeal process with a new process that would require proponents to pay a fee in exchange for coverage for all HCP species. The County will adjust fees periodically to ensure the mitigation costs are covered.

### BENEFITS

The proposed Thurston County HCP will require the County to protect up to 3,500 acres over 30 years through the acquisition of land, conservation easement on agricultural lands and restoration of exiting preserved land. The Thurston County HCP coordinates these conservation efforts to ensure that lands are selected consistent with a strategy based on biological criteria, including the selection of lands that provide habitat to multiple species. This approach provides the following benefits:



#### Local control

Moves compliance with endangered species laws from federal agencies to the local level. The County administers permits with wildlife agency oversight to streamline the existing process while still providing comprehensive regulatory coverage for current and future listed species.



#### Improved and increased species conservation

Coordinated conservation planning through the HCP provides significant benefits to endangered and threatened species, replacing piecemeal mitigation and adding conservation beyond mitigation.



#### Streamlined permitting process

Replaces the project-by-project mitigation process characterized by uncertainties associated with timing, costs, and litigation, providing an economic benefit to project applicants.



#### Net benefit for Thurston economy

Third-party report showed a county-led HCP would likely lead to higher feasibility and greater likelihood of development. This would bring additional employment opportunities and affect economic activity that improves quality of life in the county.

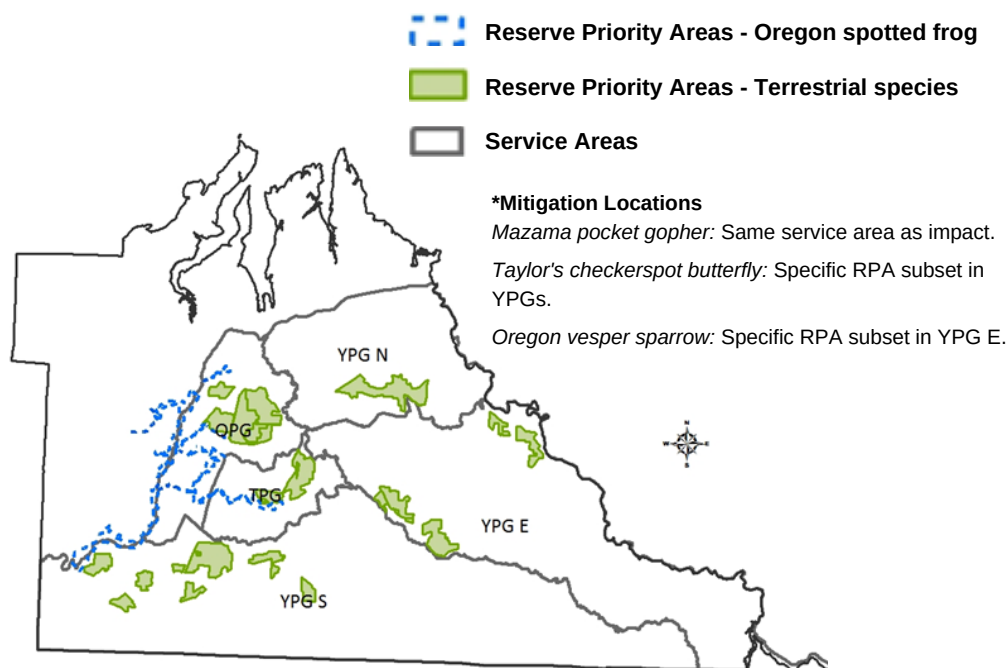
## COVERED ACTIVITIES

The Thurston HCP proposes to cover 9,221 acres of activities in four categories. This includes 6,416 acres for residential development, 146 acres for public service projects, 1,767 acres for capital improvement projects, and 891 acres for commercial and industrial projects.



## CONSERVATION COMMITMENTS

In addition to strengthening local control and improving species protection, the Thurston HCP will create a new reserve system that is larger in scale, more ecologically valuable, and easier to manager than individual mitigation sites.



## HCP MITIGATION FEES

In return for permit coverage for the covered species, the County charges applicants a mitigation fee that is proportional to the proposed impact. This means that the smaller the impact, the smaller the fee. The fee, in addition to a \$500,000 annual contribution from Conservation Futures funding, provides the County with funds to build and manage the Conservation Land System, as well as comply with federal permit conditions. The County will review and, when necessary, update the fees annually.

Cost per Credit

X

Credits Needed

=

Mitigation Fee

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
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