

THURSTON COUNTY HCP HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

A County plan to help building permit applicants meet land-use requirements in the federal Endangered Species Act.

OVERVIEW

Thurston County is home to four threatened and endangered species, including the Mazama pocket gopher. The U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) protects these animals, which means some property owners need a habitat plan for their project *before* they break ground. The County government isn't requiring an HCP, the federal government is.

THE COUNTY RESPONSE

If the County adopts an HCP to cover its permit applicants, you may not need your own. A County HCP means:

- Most projects will no longer need on-site reviews.
- Review processes will be the same each year.
- Year-round permitting will be available, in most cases.
- A county HCP will cover most permitted projects, so applicants may avoid the time and expense of preparing an HCP specific to their project.

WHAT IS A HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN ?

- A technical study detailing how to offset building impacts to the habitat of ESA-protected animals.
- Required for every building project that will impact ESA-protected species and their habitat.
- Thurston County government can develop an umbrella HCP that covers County permit applicants.
- An umbrella HCP from the County would provide one-stop permitting to cover most County and federal permit approvals in a single process.

WWW.THURSTONPLANNING.ORG



IMPORTANT

If you don't have these species, or if your project is entirely inside an existing structure, this regulation does not apply to you.

LOOK ONLINE

www.thurstonplanning.org
click **Habitat Conservation Plan**

ASK STAFF

A County HCP will cover most permit projects. Ask staff about yours.

READ THE LAW

Endangered Species Act
<https://www.fws.gov/endangered/laws-policies/>



Why the County is preparing a Habitat Conservation Plan for its permit applicants

Thurston County is home to four threatened and endangered species. The federal Endangered Species Act protects these animals and their habitat. That means property owners who build on protected habitat may have federal hoops to jump through before they break ground.

The largest of these hoops is a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), a technical study detailing how to offset project impacts to the habitat of protected animals. It's now required from every person who can't avoid such impacts.

Individual permit applicants may prepare their own HCP directly with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the federal agency that oversees the Endangered Species Act), or they can participate in the County's Gopher Review Process, a temporary process used by the County to screen for Mazama pocket gophers until the County adopts an HCP.

Species Proposed for HCP Coverage in Thurston County



Mazama pocket gopher – Listed in 2014 as Threatened



Oregon spotted frog – Listed in 2014 as Threatened



Taylor's checkerspot butterfly – Listed in 2013 as Endangered



Oregon vesper sparrow – USFWS is considering listing.

Timeline for the HCP



www.thurstonplanning.org See **Habitat Conservation Plan**