Washington Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACEP) Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

Wetland Restoration Criteria and Guidelines (WRCG)

WRP Restoration 2016, Skagit County, Washington

Version 1 - March 2022

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1. Introduction

ACEP-WRE serves the same purposes and functions as Wetland Restoration Program (WRP). WRP was consolidated under ACEP-WRE in the 2014 Farm Bill. Under ACEP-WRE, NRCS purchases easements directly from private and Tribal landowners through a reserved interest deed on eligible land to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and associated lands. In these cases, the United States (US) holds the easement and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for monitoring, management, and enforcement. The wetland easement programs can be and are used as a catalyst for protection and restoration of important statewide resources.

The WRCG document is a requirement in the ACEP Program Manual (440-528-M, 1st Ed., Amend. 131, Feb 2020). Each State must develop State-specific criteria and guidelines for wetland restoration under ACEP-WRE and its predecessor, WRP, throughout the lifespan of an easement or 30-year contract in coordination with the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) and with input from other partners such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and State wildlife agencies. This document may also be used for decision-making on Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE) where authorized.

2. Objective

This version of Washington's WRCG addresses the minimum requirements as outlined by the ACEP manual (528.131.B.2): (1) A summary of the wetland habitat types historically enrolled into the wetland easement program; (2) enrollment of alternative communities (also known as a community that existed prior to agricultural disturbance); and (3) adjacent land (also known as match acres to eligible acres) eligibility criteria. This version of the WRCG will also address the suggested requirement of guidance related to the reserved grazing enrollment option. In future versions, the WRCG will continue to expand and address other technical information used to guide decision making for activities related to land eligibility, ranking, selection, restoration, enhancement, and management of wetlands and associated habitats under ACEP-WRE to ensure program purposes are achieved.

The WRCG is considered a living document for technical criteria and provides the greatest utility in supporting and aiding objective, sound, and consistent decision-making in the technical aspects of program delivery for existing WRP and future ACEP-WRE enrollments. The WRCG may be reviewed annually with the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) and updated as necessary. Washington NRCS will review and update as necessary per Farm Bill. All decisions documented in the WRCG must be consistent with ACEP statute, regulation, and policy and ensure that program purposes are achieved. The contents of the WRCG do not supersede the policy and requirements in the ACEP manual. If any conflicts arise, the language of the statute, regulation, or policy shall prevail. The State Conservationist may use this WRCG to supplement the National policy if this State-level supplement is developed, reviewed, approved, and published in accordance with Title 120, National Directives Management Manual (NDMM), Part 503.

3. Application Eligibility, Evaluation, & Ranking

This section aids Washington NRCS in technical decision-making for new enrollments in ACEP-WRE. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section is not applicable to existing enrollments and closed conservation easements.

Following eligibility determinations for both the landowner(s) and the land offered for enrollment, NRCS evaluates and ranks the application. Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, evaluation and ranking will occur within new business tools, Conservation Desktop (CD) and Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool (CART). Each year, copies of the ranking tools will be published on the public Washington NRCS website.

3.1. Priorities

3.1.1. Size

Washington NRCS will not place limits on the size of an enrollment that will be accepted under ACEP-WRE. Implementation of such limitations could result in exclusion of valuable wetlands that would otherwise qualify for the program.

3.1.2. Environmental Resource Concern Categories

Washington NRCS may choose in any given year to give priority to ACEP-WRE enrollments that directly address the following resource and related concerns, whether in the ranking criteria or other method as permitted by policy:

1. Water quality, including the capacity of the previously degraded wetland that has been restored to improve water quality;
2. Wildlife habitat addressing threatened and endangered species;
3. Wildlife habitat initiatives;
4. Protection of migratory birds and wetland-dependent wildlife; and
5. Floodwater storage and attenuation.

3.1.3. Priority Areas

Priority geographic regions may be used to target certain areas of the State where restoration of wetlands may better achieve Federal, State and regional goals and objectives. Additionally, the State may also set priorities for specific priority wetland habitat types.

Washington NRCS may also utilize any of the National and regional NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) initiatives, other NRCS initiatives, Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) Potential Conservation Areas, or other sources to prioritize ACEP-WRE applications.

After consultation with the STAC, Washington NRCS may choose in any given year to implement any number of the priority areas listed above, including NRCS initiatives, or may choose to implement none. If priority areas are utilized, Washington NRCS will still accept ACEP-WRE applications outside of the priority areas and process them as required. Washington NRCS may use such priority areas to create separate funding pools and/or to award additional

points to applications located within a priority area. If separate funding pools are utilized, a General funding pool will always be maintained.

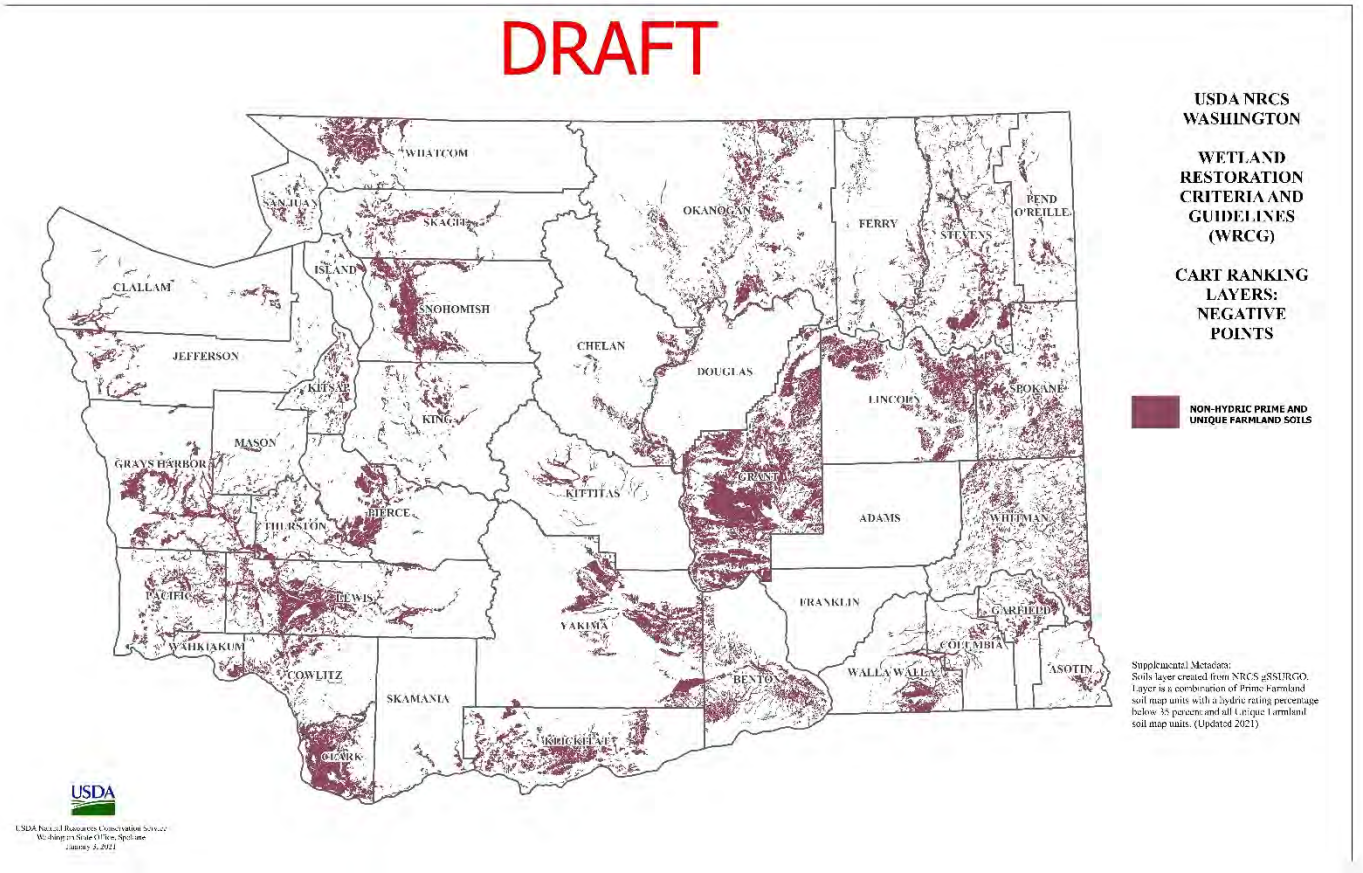
Washington NRCS ACEP-WRE priority areas map illustrated below can be found in Appendix 2 within this document. Washington NRCS may utilize the following supplemental metadata to set geospatial positive ranking priority areas to promote habitat connectivity and focused acquisition investments:

1. Military Installations: DoD-released boundaries of military installations, ranges, and training areas. (Last updated 2021)
2. Wildlife Refuges: USFWS approved acquisition boundaries and USFWS managed lands. (Last updated 2021)
3. Waterfowl Concentration Areas: Subset of WDFW Priority Habitat and Species dataset. (Last updated 2021)
4. Threatened and Endangered Species Critical Habitat: USFWS designated habitat for species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. (Last updated 2021)

Washington NRCS may utilize the following supplemental metadata to set geospatial ranking areas to avoid wetland acquisition and restoration on prime and unique farmland, and to secure working lands and promote the ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program. A map of

Washington prime and unique soils is located as Appendix 3 within this document. The presence of prime and unique soils will not automatically make an application ineligible; however, negative rankings points will be given to such scenarios for avoidance measures. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case situation in the best interest of NRCS. Consultation with NRCS's West National Technology Support Center was obtained to make a sound statewide technical decision in data attributes and thresholds:

1. Prime Soils – Soil layer created from NRCS gSSURGO. Layer consists of prime soil map units with a hydric rating percentage below 35 percent. (Last updated 2021)
2. Unique Soils – Soil layer created from NRCS gSSURGO. Layer consists of all statewide unique soils; statewide threshold was not needed due to all soil attributes having a zero (0) hydric rating. (Last updated 2021)



3.2. Eligible Land Types

There are six (6) categories of eligible land types for ACEP-WRE:

1. Farmed or Converted Wetlands, including:
    a. Farmed or Converted Wetlands
    b. Former or Degraded Wetlands

    c. Lands Substantially Altered by Flooding
2. Croplands or Grasslands Flooded by Overflow of a Closed Basin Lake or Pothole
3. Riparian Areas
4. Lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
5. Wetlands Restored or Protected Under a Private, State, or Federal Program
6. Hydric Soil Minor Components (Inclusions) and Problematic Hydric Soils (Atypical Situations)

Any land not meeting the eligible land criteria described in this section, that does not meet the criteria for "adjacent lands" (see Section 3.2.5), and that cannot be determined otherwise eligible upon review of current National policy is considered ineligible for ACEP-WRE. Not all land eligibility categories will apply to Washington or to all areas in Washington. Only the most common land eligibility categories applicable to Washington will be addressed below. For further information on other land eligibility categories, refer to Conservation Program Manual (CPM), Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.105.

3.2.1. Farmed or Converted Wetlands

Farmed wetland or converted wetland together with the adjacent land that is functionally dependent on the wetlands are eligible for enrollment, except that converted wetland are not eligible if the conversion was not commenced prior to December 23, 1985, except as provided for in section 528.105I(6), and is identified as one or more of the following (CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.105(C)):

1. Wetlands farmed under natural conditions, farmed wetlands, prior converted cropland, commenced conversion wetlands, and farmed wetland pastures;
2. Former or degraded wetlands that occur on lands that have been used or are currently being used to produce food and fiber, including rangeland and forest production lands, where the hydrology has been significantly degraded or modified and will be substantially restored;
3. Agricultural lands substantially altered by flooding so as to develop and retain wetland functions and values. To qualify, the alteration must be determined to be of such magnitude and permanency that it is unlikely that the alteration and the resultant wetland functions and values will cease to exist during the easement or contract period. Furthermore, the extent of the surface or subsurface flooding or saturation must be great enough to create hydrologic conditions that have or will develop hydric soil and hydrophytic vegetation characteristics over time.

The State further defines specific language from this land eligibility category. Definitions are provided below. All enrollments utilizing this land eligibility category must adhere to these definitions. No waivers for these requirements will be granted.

3a. Significantly degraded or modified: More than 25% of the land offered for enrollment has been altered from its historic hydrologic conditions.

3b. Substantially restored: More than 50% of the land considered to be significantly degraded or modified will be restored to historic hydrologic conditions.

3.2.2. Riparian Areas

Riparian areas along streams or other waterways are eligible, provided that the offered riparian area directly links wetlands less than one (1) mile apart and that those wetlands are currently protected or will be protected under the same ACEP-WRE easement transaction. Protected wetlands include areas currently enrolled under an existing easement or other resource protection device or circumstance that achieves the same objectives as an easement, such as a State or Federal wildlife management area. If the riparian area will link already-protected wetland areas, then no additional wetland acres are required to enroll the riparian acres. Eligible riparian areas should average no more than 300 feet in width, measured from the top of bank on one side, or 600 feet in width, if both sides of the river, stream, channel, or water body are offered for enrollment.

Additional criteria apply to this land eligibility category. See CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.105(E) *for details before making decisions regarding eligibility for this category.*

3.2.3. Lands in the CRP

Eligible CRP lands include farmed wetlands and adjoining lands that meet all the following criteria:

- The land is subject to an existing CRP contract;
- The land has already been restored to or under ACEP-WRE will be restored to a condition that maximizes the highest wetland functions and values;
- The land is likely to return to cropland production if the land leaves CRP; and
- Enrollment is this land eligibility category is requested by the landowner and agreed to by Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P) and State Resource Conservationist (SRC).

It should be noted that land established to trees under CRP are ineligible for enrollment, whether the contract is active or closed. However, these lands may still be considered if the lands meet certain criteria outlined in Section 5.2.3 Waiver Considerations – Trees Established under CRP.

3.2.4. Wetlands Restored or Protected Under a Private, State, or Federal Program

As listed in CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.105(G), Eligible land types previously restored privately or under a local, State, or Federal restoration program, on which the restored wetland areas meet or are capable of meeting NRCS restoration standards and specifications are eligible. Such wetlands that have already been restored but are not fully protected may be considered eligible and a positive attribute in ranking.

3.2.5. Adjacent Lands ("Match Acres")

If land offered for enrollment is considered eligible land, NRCS may also consider enrollment of "adjacent lands." Adjacent lands are lands that –

1. Do not meet one of the primary land eligibility criteria, but are an acceptable associated habitat as defined by this WRCG (see Section 3.3);
2. Are directly adjacent or otherwise contiguous to the eligible land;
3. Maximize wildlife benefits; (e.g., uplands that provide cover or another necessity to identified wildlife, nesting, forage, open areas to see predators, land that squares up a field to make maintenance possible).
4. Do not exceed the acres of otherwise eligible land (two-to-one ratio) to be enrolled without a waiver from the State Conservationist.
5. Contribute significantly to wetland functions and values (see Table 2. For a list of wetlands functions and values) or are incidental but necessary for the practical administration and management of the easement. For example: Uplands that provide cover or another necessity to identified priority wetland dependent wildlife; open area to see predators; or the land squares up field or make maintenance possible.

Adjacent lands are primarily upland buffer and associated areas but may also include riparian areas that do not meet the requirements of the "riparian" land eligibility category, restored nonagricultural wetlands, created wetlands, artificial wetlands, and noncropped natural wetlands. See Table 1 for more details on acceptable associated habitats in Washington.

NRCS determines on a case-by-case basis if an enrollment's adjacent lands meet the criteria listed above. If they do not meet the criteria, adjacent lands may also be included if determined by the NRCS necessary for practical administration and management of the easement (e.g., land needed for access). The upper limits on the ratio of adjacent lands to eligible lands may differ based on the wetland type but may not for any wetland type exceed a ratio of 5 to 1 (five adjacent lands acres to one eligible land acre) per policy. **Washington NRCS will allow only a ratio of 2 to 1 (two adjacent lands acres to one eligible land acre) for new ACEP-WRE enrollments.** Ranking points may be utilized to prioritize wetland to upland ratios. The higher the proportion of adjacent lands the more rigorous the technical determination to ensure the inclusion of such lands is appropriate and necessary to achieve program purposes.

Adjacent lands will not be accepted under any circumstances if they are:

- Determined not to meet the required criteria;
- Noncontiguous to otherwise eligible lands offered for enrollment;
- Developed or highly disturbed non-agricultural lands;
- Exceeding the two-to-one ratio of otherwise eligible lands except in special cases requiring a waiver from the State Conservationist (see section 5.2.2);
- Ineligible lands under ACEP-WRE;
- Insignificant or have no contribution to the wetland functions and values, or meet the lifecycle needs of wetland dependent wildlife;
- Not necessary for practical administration and management of the easement; or

- Inconsistent with other State criteria specified in WRCG and National policy

The lands described above will be removed from consideration at the discretion of Washington NRCS and in consultation with the applicant.

3.3. Acceptable Associated Habitats

Table 1 lists acceptable associated habitats that may be used as adjacent lands (i.e., uplands habitat types, open water) in conjunction with WDFW Priority Habitats and Species List (August 2008). Washington NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides (WHEGs) or a documented recommendation from the State Resource Conservationist (SRC) must be used to demonstrate how the associated habitat(s) is benefitting a Wetlands Priority Species. Associated habitats not listed here may be considered with written approval from the State Conservationist. This list of associated habitats applies to new enrollments in ACEP-WRE, existing enrollments (unclosed), and closed conservation easements under ACEP-WRE and predecessor programs. Any maintenance, management, or additional restoration after initial restoration completed on a ACEP-WRE easement must be consistent with these associated habitats.

Table 1. Associated Habitats.

Acceptable Associated Habitat	WDFW Priority Habitats	Expected Contribution to Wetland Functions & Values
Grasslands	Eastside Steppe, Herbaceous Balds, Inland Dunes, Juniper Savannah, Westside Prairie.	Buffer areas to wetlands, perennial and intermittent streams, and riverine habitat. Provides for wildlife cover, forage, nesting, and movement activities.
Riparian Areas	Riparian	Lands that occur along watercourses and water bodies (e.g., flood plains, streambanks) that typically express unique soil and vegetation characteristics strongly influenced by the presence of water. Typical vegetation consists of woody species that benefits multiple wildlife species. Acts as a buffer zone for riverine areas and adjacent wetlands.
Shrublands	Shrubsteppe	Cover and forage areas for migratory and nesting birds.
Forestland	Aspen Stands, Old Growth – Mature Forest, Oregon White Oak Woodlands.	Cover, nesting, and forage areas for migrating birds.
Other Aquatic Priority Habitats	Freshwater Wetlands – Fresh Deepwater, Instream, Coastal Nearshore.	Connectivity to eligible wetlands.

3.4. Ranking – Funding Pools

Generally, Washington NRCS may fund all ACEP-WRE applications under a single ranking pool unless otherwise dictated by yearly allocations. If appropriate, Washington NRCS may also utilize any number of priority areas as defined in Section 3.1.3. Any special considerations for mandated or discretionary fund pools may be reviewed with the STAC prior to implementation. Details of the special considerations may be reflected in an update to this document.

3.4.1. RCPP Easements

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes the coordination of conservation activities with partners to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Under RCPP, partners may utilize conservation easements to restore, protect, manage, maintain, enhance, and monitor resource concerns tied to project goals. Both stewardship (i.e., U.S. held) and non-stewardship (i.e., entity-held) easements are acceptable under RCPP. The administration and function of RCPP easements is based on 1.) who holds the easement, 2.) the purpose of the deed, which is driven by the project's conservation values, 3.) how restrictive the deed terms are, and 4.) whether there is a U.S. government right of enforcement. RCPP easements are not subject to the same land eligibility requirements as defined in other NRCS covered programs, including ACEP-WRE, ACEP-ALE, and HFRP; therefore, RCPP easements may occur on any land type that is identified for the purposes of achieving the RCPP project goals. These easements are subject to their own ranking pools, cost-share requirements, timelines, and minimum deed term addendums. All RCPP easements must comply with NRCS administrative responsibilities and technical standards as detailed in the RCPP manual and Notice of Funding Opportunity. Technical parameters will be followed within Washington's WRCG where applicable and other standards are not set for RCPP stewardship easements.

3.5. Ranking – Screening, Criteria, & Scoring

3.5.1. Screening

A screening and land eligibility tool may be utilized by Washington NRCS for workload prioritization to screen high, medium, low, and ineligible applications prior to ranking. This workload prioritization tool will assist with efficient, effective, and equitable application processing. Per CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.41(B)(6), the State Conservationist can select applications out of order for funding with special considerations documented. This documentation will be adhered to on the screening and land eligibility worksheet.

3.5.2. Criteria

Ranking criteria since the 2014 Farm Bill has changed minimally. The 2018 Farm Bill made additional changes to the ranking criteria, but much remained the same. The changes are summarized below. Although much of the ranking criteria is set Nationally, the States have some flexibility to embellish upon or create criteria if the resultant criteria do not violate policy. This document will be updated if ranking criteria substantially changes in subsequent years. The most

current version of the ranking criteria is reviewed with STAC annually and posted on the public Washington NRCS Easements website.

In general, the 2018 Farm Bill instituted the following changes and clarifications to ranking criteria nationwide. If not already considered, these changes were incorporated into the current version of the ranking criteria:

- Water Quality: Added the capacity of the wetland to improve water quality
- Hydrology Restoration Potential:
    - Adequately consider source, attributes, and reliability of hydrology, including consideration of water rights
    - Must comprise 50% of available points for conservation benefits
- Economic Considerations:
    - Consider contributions that reduce NRCS costs as a positive attribute
    - Removed requirement that NRCS control such contributions to receive ranking points.
    - Long-term cost considerations, including monitoring and operation and maintenance

Washington may implement the following considerations in the ranking criteria to prioritize selections for enrollment in ACEP-WRE per CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.111:

- Environmental benefits:
    - Habitat that will be restored for the benefit of migratory birds and wetland-dependent wildlife, including the diversity of wildlife species that will be benefitted or the life-cycle needs that will be addressed.
    - Habitat for threatened, endangered, or other at-risk species, including the planned extents and anticipated use of the restored habitats on the easement area, and diversity of at-risk species benefitted.
    - Protection or restoration of native vegetative communities.
    - Habitat diversity and complexity to be restored and protected on the enrollment area.
    - Proximity and connectivity to other protected habitats.
    - Extent of adjacent beneficial land uses.
    - Water quality protection or improvement.
    - Attenuation of floodwater flows.
    - Water quantity benefits through increased water storage in the soil profile or through groundwater recharge and consideration of proximity to impaired water bodies.
    - Carbon sequestration.
    - Improving climate change resiliency.
    - Hydrology restoration potential:
        - Soil properties, such as soil texture, soil structure, and soil drainage classes.

        - Landscape features, such as geomorphic position, slope, and water table depths.
        - Flooding characteristics, including frequency, timing, duration, depth, and sources.
        - The source of the hydrology, the degree and type of hydrologic manipulation, existing connectivity and barriers to connectivity with hydrology sources, and the extent to which the hydrology can be restored.
        - To the extent surface water rights are required for the restoration of hydrology and will be provided by and secured by the landowner as a matter of land eligibility, the reliability and availability of the water delivered through such water rights, and the degree of reliance on such water rights to successfully restore hydrology, should be taken into account as a ranking consideration.
    - Duration of the enrollment
- Economic considerations:
    - Estimated easement or 30-year contract cost per acre, if appropriate. As applicable, any voluntary landowner offer to accept a reduced per-acre easement value.
    - Estimated restoration costs.
    - Partnership contributions from a landowner or other person or entity that reduce NRCS costs should be reflected positively in the ranking process. States must ensure NRCS payments are appropriately reduced based on the amount of the partnership contribution.
    - A cost-benefit comparison. Applications that have a lower cost per environmental benefit ratio will receive higher rankings.
    - Potential near- and long-term management, repair, replacement, operation and maintenance costs, and monitoring.
- Special considerations (if determined by Washington NRCS applicable in a particular funding year):
    - Priority areas as defined by Section 3.1.3
    - Source Water Protection Areas as defined by Washington NRCS

3.5.3. Ranking Scores

Each ranking criterion is assigned points based on the degree to which an application would address the criterion. The States, in consultation with the STAC, can assign point values to each criterion at their discretion. The only limitation on scoring is that 50% of the potential points awarded for environmental benefits must come from hydrology restoration potential. The Washington ranking criteria reflect the scoring that Washington will use to rank new ACEP-WRE applications. This scoring system was developed by the State in consultation with the STAC.

Note: Any points earned in the ranking must be represented in the preliminary Wetlands Restoration Plan of Operations (WRPO).

3.5.4. Ranking Thresholds

NRCS is authorized to establish high-threshold scores to facilitate year-round selection. State Conservationists, with advice from STAC, may establish high threshold ranking score at a level high enough that an eligible application ranking above such threshold score would automatically warrant selection for funding. Conversely, a low threshold ranking score can be established, below which applications will not be funded. Establishing thresholds helps protect the Federal investment, ensuring expeditious funding of the highest-quality applications and removing low-quality applications from consideration.

Washington will implement a high threshold of greater than 90%. Any application that receives more than 90% of the available ranking points may be automatically selected for funding provided the application meets all eligibility requirements.

Washington will implement a low threshold of less than 25%. Any application that receives less than 25% of the available ranking points may be automatically removed from consideration for funding. These applications may not be funded even if there is funding available. Remaining funds will be returned to National Headquarters for redistribution.

3.6. Role of Partners in Application, Management, & Monitoring

NRCS relies on partners and the STAC for technical recommendations and other input for application eligibility, evaluation, and ranking. Roles and responsibilities of each entity is described below.

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 3837f, the Secretary of Agriculture may delegate any of the easement management, monitoring, and enforcement responsibilities of the Secretary to Federal or State agencies that have the appropriate authority, expertise, and resources necessary to carry out such delegated responsibilities. Therefore, Washington NRCS reserves the right to adopt management plans from any state agency, federal agency, or tribes that aligns with and meets the intent of the easement and WRPO requirements as set forth in ACEP policy. Any state agency, federal agency, or tribes must manage the easement in alignment with the terms and conditions of the easement deed and cannot do anything in conflict with the deed terms.

Washington NRCS will allow for ten (10) year CUAs on such managed easements with an end date of 12/31/YYYY. NRCS legal authority only allows a CUA to be issued to a fee landowner. NRCS does not have authority to issue a CUA to a third party, therefore any such state agency, federal agency, or tribe cannot issue CUAs to third parties.

The state agency, federal agency, or tribes will send the annual monitoring report to NRCS to be entered into NEST prior to September 1 of each calendar year. Washington NRCS is responsible to monitor all easements in compliance with the WA NRCS State Quality Assurance (QA) plan, therefor on-site monitoring will occur on such easements once (1) every five (5) years by an NRCS employee. Failure to submit required annual monitoring worksheet can result in termination of executed CUA by NRCS.

Similar to CUAs, a fee landowner cannot issue a violation to themselves. The NRCS deed relationship is with the landowner and no one else. If there are third party issues causing impacts

to the easement, the fee landowner should be working with NRCS to resolve and remediate. Any fee landowner can also utilize their own enforcement authorities to resolve third party issues.

3.6.1. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of the Interior)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) serves in the STAC, but also plays a role in the application phase of an ACEP-WRE enrollment.

Although the ACEP interim rule removed the requirement for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) input at the local level in the determination of eligible land, their input remains invaluable at the state level as a member of the STAC. In this capacity, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) provides input on ranking priorities and considerations and on the development of the WRCG. NRCS Area or State Office staff may still request input from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the local level. For the purposes on planning on ACEP-WRE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) consultation requirements related to the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act still apply.

3.6.2. Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (State Agency)

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) also serves on the STAC. There are no requirements from ACEP rule or policy for NRCS coordination with WDFW, but WDFW is an important partner in technical decision-making for ACEP-WRE.

WDFW may provide input as a member of the STAC on ranking priorities and considerations and on the development of the WRCG. NRCS Area or State Office staff may request input from WDFW at the local level.

3.6.3. State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) – Subcommittees

STAC easement and wildlife subcommittees were established to provide a vehicle for discussion and to solicit recommendations for State Conservationist consideration in implementation of the program. If changes occur to documents, the Washington STAC will be given the opportunity to review the materials that will be used to implement ACEP-WRE for the future fiscal year. The Subcommittees, led by a chair or co-chair, will present any recommendations to the STAC at large prior to implementation of the program in a given fiscal year. The overall recommendations will be considered by the State Conservationist. Any changes accepted by the State Conservationist will be implemented in the year in which they were made.

3.7. Reservation of Grazing Rights Option

Grazing can be an effective vegetation management tool to simulate natural disturbance on easements when used appropriately. Grazing reserved rights is a special enrollment option under ACEP-WRE and its predecessor program, WRP. Under this option, the landowner may reserve grazing rights under the following conditions:

- Grazing is compatible with the easement area;
- Grazing is consistent with the historical natural uses of the land;

- Grazing is consistent with the long-term wetland protection and enhancement goals;
- Grazing is consistent with the Wetland Restoration Plan of Operations (WRPO) that includes a site-specific grazing management plan and is reviewed every five years and updated as needed.

Grazing reserved rights are initiated during the offer for enrollment process and solidified through an "Exhibit E," which must be approved by the NRCS's Easement Program Division (EPD). The landowner is compensated less than a typical enrollment to account for the retention of grazing rights. States offering this option must document geographic areas, wetland types, role of grazing, and other criteria. Washington NRCS may allow the Reserved Grazing Right option on any new ACEP-WRE enrollments only if T&E species are present, the T&E species identified is heavily dependent on early successional habitat wetland community and is concurred in writing for the official case file by the Washington NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P), State Resource Conservationist (SRC), and State Conservationist (STC).

4. Wetland Restoration Planning & Implementation

4.1. Wetland Restoration Definition

The ACEP Manual (CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.131) defines wetland restoration as the rehabilitation of degraded or lost wetland and associated habitats pursuant to published State-specific criteria and guidelines developed in coordination with the State Technical Advisory Committee in a manner such that:

i. The original, native vegetative plant community and hydrology are, to the extent practicable, reestablished; or

ii. A hydrologic regime and native vegetative community different from what likely existed prior to degradation of the site is established that will:

   a. Substantially replace the original habitat functions and values while providing significant support or benefit for migratory waterfowl or other wetland-dependent wildlife; or

   b. Address local resource concerns or needs for the restoration of wetland functions and values for wetland-dependent wildlife as identified in an approved WDFW State wildlife action plan, NRCS national initiative(s), or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) T&E Recovery Plan.

The primary objective of wetland restoration is to reestablish the wetlands and associated habitats that would have been found on site prior to European settlement manipulation or degradation. The definition was revised upon release of the interim rule to incorporate the WRCG requirement, also removing the regulatory 30% limitation of alternative communities and applying conditions to establishment of alternative wetland communities. The definition applies to all wetlands and associated habitats (e.g., eligible uplands) on the easement area.

Washington NRCS is utilizing the WRCG to provide clarification on specific aspects of the wetland restoration definition:

A. Definition language: "The original, native vegetative community and hydrology are, to the extent practical, reestablished…"
   Washington NRCS clarification: Use the Historic Wetland Conditions and High-Priority Habitats sections of this document, Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) or acceptable alternatives, and site-specific observations for determination of the original, native community and hydrology. If it is not practical to restore or maintain the site to the degree required, refer to the Alternative Vegetative Community section of this document. If land does not meet any alternative vegetative community criteria, the land must meet (2)(i) or (2)(ii) of the definition or the land is ineligible. Being that the definition called for the "native vegetative community," introduced species are not acceptable for an NRCS easement. In the same manner, native species means plant communities that are within range of the ecological system's potential species composition.
B. Definition language: "Substantially…" and "…significant…"
   Washington NRCS clarification: "Substantially" means greater than 60%. "Significant" means greater than 50%.
C. Definition language: "Address local resource concerns or needs for the restoration of wetland functions and values for wetland-dependent wildlife as identified in an approved State wildlife action plan or NRCS national initiative"
   Washington NRCS clarification: The following resource concerns are applicable to ACEP-WRE. These "local" resource concerns are a subset of the Resource Concern List approved by the National Technical Guide Committee, October 2019, Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) – Section III). Reference Appendix 1 for complete list of resource concerns.
D. Definition language: "…approved State wildlife action plan or NRCS national initiative."
   Washington NRCS clarification: (1) The most up-to-date version of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife State Wildlife Action Plan; (2) Working Lands for Wildlife – Sage Grouse Initiative or successor initiative; (3) Source Water Protection Program; (4) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) T&E Species Recovery Plan.

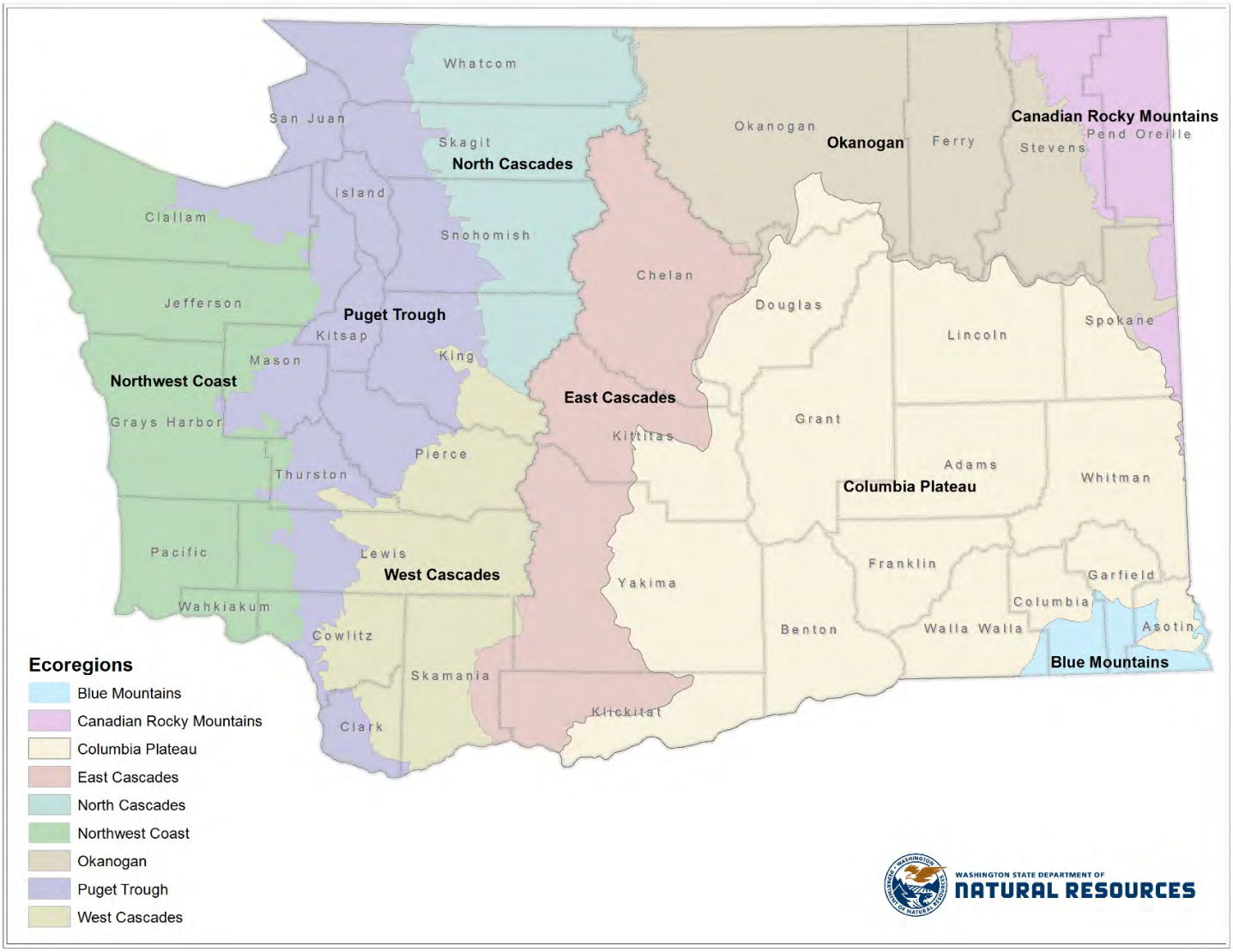
The revised definition and State-specific clarification as shown above applies to every phase of all existing easements and enrollments under ACEP-WRE, WRP, and EWPP-FPE, and all future enrollments in ACEP-WRE and successor programs.

4.2. Historic Conditions

Pioneers arrived in the late 1800s and rapidly began altering the landscape. Many of the marshes and riparian areas were drained to expand crop areas for hay. By the late 1920s few wetlands remained; instead a network of drainage ditches became the more common feature of the landscape. In addition, as in most developing communities, timber was harvested, native plant communities were grazed by livestock, exotic plants were introduced, and fire, a natural part of the ecosystem, was suppressed.

The historic wetland conditions refer to the original, native vegetative community and hydrology that would have existed on the land prior to European settlement degradation or manipulation. This same concept applies to uplands which may be included in an easement. Historic conditions

do not include introduced species. The States are tasked with identification of the historic communities and associated habitat types (e.g., uplands) that are commonly restored under ACEP-WRE and the predecessor programs. These historic communities are listed in Table 2; however, more specific information can be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan and focus areas are integrated below. Any historic wetland-type community should generally be consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's information.



Ecoregions reflect broad patterns of species composition and distribution, climate, landforms, geology, soils, and hydrology occurring on the landscape. Washington Department of Natural Resources Ecoregions Map illustrated above can be found in Appendix 4 within this document. Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) uses ecoregions to help set conservation priorities by tracking the degree of protection and representation of rare species and ecosystems within each of the nine ecoregions found in Washington (WADNR 2007; 2011). The ecoregions used by WNHP are modified from Level 3 ecoregions identified by U.S. EPA

(https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/ecoregions-north-america). The modifications were made in consultation with a variety of conservation partners, primarily The Nature Conservancy and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, in order to better reflect local, on-the-ground expertise and finer boundary resolution (WADNR 2007). In conjunction with the United States National Vegetation Classification (USNVC) classification, ecoregions offer a suitable scale for defining reference domains. Although finer-scale divisions such as watersheds might be of value, the combination of ecoregions and the biogeographic-ecological information embedded in USNVC units adequately constrains both regional and local variation in biotic and abiotic drivers of wetland diversity in Washington. The nine ecoregions are summarized below. Additional information is found in WADNR (2007).

Northwest Coast Ecoregion The Northwest Coast ecoregion includes most of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington, the coast mountain ranges extending down to central Oregon, and most of Vancouver Island, in British Columbia. Precipitation ranges from 60 to 240 inches annually, mostly falling as rain from November through April. Due to a rain shadow effect, the northeastern Olympic Mountains receive the least precipitation of equivalent elevations anywhere in western Washington. Summer fog and cool temperatures are important climatic factors along the outer coast and adjacent valleys.

The Olympic Mountains occupy the northern portion of the ecoregion and extend to nearly 8,000 feet. They were formed from the uplift of sedimentary (e.g. sandstones, mudstones, and shales) and volcanic rocks which were deposited over millions of years on a seafloor off the continental shelf (McNulty 2003). Pleistocene glaciations, associated with both alpine and continental ice, dramatically eroded the Olympic Mountains into the jagged, steep topography characteristic of the contemporary landscape (McNulty 2003). The Willapa Hills occur in the southern portion of this ecoregion (within Washington) and form a continuous ridge from the Chehalis River Valley to the Columbia River. They range in elevation from 1,000 to 3,000 feet and have a rounded topography composed of old, well-weathered soils. During the Pleistocene, the Chehalis River Valley, which separates this portion of the ecoregion from the Olympic Mountains to the north, supported a major river draining meltwaters from the Puget ice lobe and from the western Cascade foothills.

Barrier beaches characterize the low-lying coastline of the Willapa Hills region, behind which there are major estuaries such as Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay, two of the largest estuaries on the west coast of North America (WADNR 2007). Peatlands, forested swamps, and marshes are abundant in the western portion of the ecoregion. Forested, shrubland, and herbaceous tidal surge plain wetlands are found along the lower Chehalis River and Columbia River reaches. Montane wetlands include seeps & springs, marshes, wet meadows, and fens. Tidal salt and brackish marshes are especially abundant in Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. The wetland flora is derived from the Vancouverian floristic province and many species in wetlands of the outer coast are at the southern extent of their range and/or disjunct from a more typical high elevation distribution. The only known raised bog in the western conterminous United States is found in the ecoregion. Lowland peatlands and forested swamps have a unique floristic expression relative to those found elsewhere in Washington.

Puget Trough Ecoregion The Puget Trough consists of a broad, rolling landscape primarily occupying a continental glacial trough (from Thurston County to the north) and includes many islands, peninsulas, and bays in the Puget Sound area. The northern portion of the ecoregion includes lowlands surrounding the Puget Sound. The southern half includes the upper basins of the Chehalis River and the Cowlitz River valleys and the northern Willamette Valley (Portland Basin) in Clark County. Relief is moderate and elevations are mostly below 1,000 feet. Annual precipitation ranges from 32 to 35 inches in the northern portion of the Puget Trough (from Seattle to the Canadian border) while precipitation increases in the southern portion to ~ 50 inches in Olympia and ~ 48 inches in Centralia (WRCC 2012). Precipitation mostly falls as rain, but an average of 10-20 inches of snow occasionally falls throughout the area.

Contemporary landscapes of the Puget Trough are primarily the result of the last continental glacier (the Cordilleran Ice Sheet) that moved through the region about 18,000 years ago. The ice advanced to just south of Olympia. Surface runoff from the Cascades was dammed by the ice sheet and/or diverted south along the flanks and around the terminus of the glacier south of Olympia, then out to the Pacific through the Chehalis River Valley. These events left a landscape almost entirely created by glacial deposition or erosion. South of these outwash areas, the topography is mostly a result of stream erosion. However, alpine glaciers and their associated outwash deposits are found in the Cowlitz River Valley and into the Columbia River (Pringle 2008). Some post-glacial alluvial erosion and deposition has modified the landscape in riverine settings. Kettle holes, glacial till, moraines, glacial scours, meltwater outwash, proglacial lake deposits, and contemporary alluvial and shoreline landforms affect the distribution of wetland types and distribution across the Puget Trough. Ice Age floods originating in eastern Washington and Idaho made their way through the Gorge and ponded in the Portland Basin, leaving well-sorted sand, clay, and gravel (WADNR 2012).

Estuaries are found along some inlets of Puget Sound. Marshes, swamps, riparian areas, and peatlands are very abundant across the landscape. Peatlands—especially flat bogs and acidic or poor fens—are concentrated in areas of past glaciation and are abundant relative to other ecoregions. Large, low-gradient rivers begin in adjacent mountains and flow through the ecoregion while small streams may originate at lower elevations. Lakes are numerous in the areas affected by past glaciation. Wet prairies are found in areas where glacial outwash or Missoula flood deposits left fine-textured silt and clay (i.e., Clark County). The wetland flora is derived from the Vancouverian floristic province.

The Puget Sound Lowland Ecoregion of Washington State contained large expanses of low-lying wetlands, oxbows, marshes, and wet-meadows, connected by riverine flood plains, slow low gradient streams, and large beaver pond complexes. These large aquatic habitats were maintained by flooding, fire, and/or beaver activity (Watson et al. 2003, Shovlain 2005). Many species used these habitats, such as juvenile salmon, waterfowl, and amphibians. The Puget Sound area has been drained, diked, ditched, and developed so much of the historic wetland habitat has been removed. Based on a 1988 estimate by the FWS, about 20 to 39 percent of Washington's wetlands have been lost during the past two centuries. Other estimates place the total loss as great as 50 percent, and some urbanized areas of the Puget Sound area have experienced losses of from 70 to 100 percent. Estimates of continuing wetland loss range from 700 to 2,000 acres per year. In addition, most of the State's remaining wetlands have been significantly degraded

(Lane et al 1997). This large loss of habitat has had significant impacts on many aquatic organisms.

With the expansion of urban and rural development and alterations to historic wetlands for agriculture, the native range of the Oregon spotted frog has declined sharply over the years, leading to its addition to the Washington State Endangered Species list in the 1997 and listing as a threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act in 2014. Two years later, Critical Habitat for the species was designated across the species' remaining range.

Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*), spends most of its lifecycle in freshwater and is almost entirely dependent on this habitat type. Oregon spotted frog (abbreviated "OSF") are generally associated with wetland complexes greater than 4 ha (10 acres) in size with extensive emergent marsh coverage (Pearl and Hayes 2004). Across its range, this species is thought to have lost up to 76 – 90 percent of wetland habitat that once supported them (Hayes 1997, p.1). Washington State in particular has a history of large open wetland loss; this is especially true along the Eastern Puget Sound where the State's population and expansion is greatest. At one point in the not too distant past, Seattle's freshwaters were home to the OSF; however, now it only occurs at the extreme northern and southern extents of the Puget Lowlands, and two large wetlands in the shadow of Mount Adams (Dickerson 1969, p.221, 222, Hallock 2013, p. 8, USFWS 2104 p. 51662 – 51665).

North Cascades Ecoregion The North Cascades ecoregion ranges from Snoqualmie Pass north into British Columbia and is the north section of the Cascade Range. The ecoregion is constrained to the east by the Cascade crest and to the west by lowlands of the Puget Trough ecoregion. Annual precipitation ranges from 60 to 160 inches (WADNR 2007; WRCC 2012). Precipitation at low elevations mostly consists of rain, high elevations have significant snowpack for many months, and middle elevations have significant snowpack which fluctuates over the course of the winter due to rain-on-snow events (Iachetti et al. 2006). Average snowfall ranges from 50 to 75 inches in the lower elevations and gradually increases with elevation to between 400 and 600 inches at 4,000 to 5,500 feet (WRCC 2012). Snowfall often continues until late spring, reaching maximum depths in early March (10-25 feet above 3,000 feet (WRCC 2012)). Above 5,000 feet, snow may remain until early July (WRCC 2012).

The North Cascades landscape is composed of highly dissected terrain primarily ranging from 1,000 and 7,000 feet in elevation (WADNR 2007). The highest peaks are volcanoes that reach to over 10,000 feet, while some valley bottoms may be as low as 500 feet. Glacially carved, U-shaped valleys are prominent as are steep-gradient small stream drainages (WADNR 2007). The North Cascades ecoregion is underlain by sedimentary and metamorphic rock in contrast to the predominance of volcanic strata in the West Cascades ecoregion to the south. The vertical distance from valley floor to the mountain peaks ranges from 4,000 to 6,000 feet, making the North Cascades one of the steepest mountain ranges in the conterminous United States (Tabor and Haugerud 1999). Mountain glaciation has occurred repeatedly over the last 120,000 years. During the Holocene, the cordilleran ice sheet flowed over most of the North Cascade range and greatly modified the North Cascade landscape. Today, the ecoregion has over 300 alpine glaciers, more than half of the total glaciers in the lower 48 states (WADNR 2012).

The steep topography limits wetland formation to areas affected by past glaciation, as well as along rivers, around lakes and ponds, or groundwater discharge sites. Small snowmelt basins are common at high elevations. Peatlands and forested swamps are found in areas of groundwater discharge, on alluvial terraces, and high-elevation basins. Natural lakes created by glacial processes are abundant. Marshes and wet meadows are found along riparian zones, beaver dams, and associated with depressions. The wetland flora is primarily derived from the Vancouverian floristic province, although elements of the Rocky Mountain floristic province may be present near the Cascade crest and within the rain shadow areas.

West Cascades Ecoregion Within Washington, this mountainous ecoregion extends from Snoqualmie Pass south to the Columbia River and from the Cascade crest west to the Puget lowlands. Elevations mostly range from 1,000 to 7,000 feet, with extremes of 14,410 feet at Mount Rainier and 50 feet at the Columbia River Gorge (WADNR 2007). Average annual precipitation ranges from 55 to 140 inches, mostly falling from October through April as snow in the higher elevations and rain in the lower elevations (WADNR 2007). Snowfall ranges from 50 to 75 inches in the lower elevations and gradually increases with elevation to between 400 and 600 inches at 4,000 to 5,500 feet (WRCC 2012). Snowfall often continues until late spring, reaching maximum depths of 10-25 feet above 3,000 feet elevation in early March (WRCC 2012). Above 5,000 feet, snow may remain on the ground until early July (WRCC 2012). Middle elevations can have significant snow pack that fluctuates over the winter due to rain-on-snow events. Lower elevations accumulate little snow.

The ecoregion is characterized by steep ridges and river valleys in the west, a high plateau in the east, and both active and dormant volcanoes. The isolated volcanic peaks and associated high plateaus extend above the surrounding steep mountain ridges which were formed primarily from extrusive volcanic rocks (WADNR 2007). The ecoregion is underlain by Cenozoic volcanics and much of the region has been affected by alpine glaciation. Alpine glaciation was widespread in the Pleistocene and the Cordilleran ice sheet pushed against the lower flanks of the northwestern portion of the ecoregion (Franklin and Dyrness 1988). Long lakes were formed in many of the lower mountain valleys due to the impoundment of rivers by the cordilleran ice sheet, with glaciolacustrine deposits marking their locations (Franklin and Dyrness 1988).

The steep topography limits wetland formation to areas affected by past glaciation, along rivers, around lakes and ponds, or groundwater discharge sites. Small snowmelt basins are common at high elevations. Peatlands and swamps are found in areas of groundwater discharge, on alluvial terraces, and high-elevation basins, but are not as abundant as in the Puget Trough. Natural lakes created by glacial processes are abundant throughout the ecoregion. Marshes and wet meadows are found along riparian zones, beaver dams, and associated with depressions. The wetland flora is derived from the Vancouverian floristic province.

East Cascades Ecoregion The East Cascades ecoregion lies east of the Cascade crest, from Sawtooth Ridge near Lake Chelan south to the Oregon-California border. Its eastern border follows the transition zone between montane forest and shrub-steppe. Climate varies dramatically from west to east, with cold temperature and high precipitation (120 inches/yr.) along the Cascade crest shifting to relatively warm temperatures and low precipitation (< 20

inches/yr.) along the foothills (WADNR 2007). Precipitation mostly occurs from November through April. Snowpack accumulates at higher elevations.

The ecoregion's topography has resulted from tectonic uplift and subsequent erosion by alpine glaciers and landslides. Coupled with volcanic activity, these processes have left rugged ridges, with broad valleys between, extending southeast to east from the Cascade crest (WADNR 2007). Isolated volcanic cones appear on the steep mountain ridges, but—with the exception of Mt. Adams—are not as high as those in the West Cascades ecoregion. Bedrock geology is varied, including large serpentine areas in the Wenatchee Mountains. Elevation ranges from 2,000 to 7,000 feet, with Mt. Adams rising to 12,276 feet. In general, mountain slopes are less steep and cut by fewer streams than those in the West Cascades ecoregion (WADNR 2007).

The steep topography limits wetland formation to areas affected by past glaciation, along rivers, around lakes and ponds, or groundwater discharge sites. Peatlands and swamps are found in areas of groundwater discharge, on alluvial terraces, and high-elevation basins, but are not as abundant as in the Puget Trough. However, the abundance of montane fens around the base of Mount Adams may be the largest concentration of such wetlands in the Cascades. In this area, glacial scouring of volcanic fields left behind till and outwash materials suitable for wetland formation (Hildreth and Fierstein 1995). Natural lakes created by glacial processes are abundant throughout the ecoregion. Marshes and wet meadows are found along riparian zones, beaver dams, and associated with depressions. The wetland flora is derived from both the Vancouverian and Rocky Mountain floristic provinces (Takhtajan 1986).

Okanogan Ecoregion The Okanogan ecoregion extends from the Cascade crest in the North Cascades east to the Selkirk Mountains and then continues north along the east slope of the Cascades into Canada and along the west slope of the Canadian Rockies to Kamloops, British Columbia. Sawtooth Ridge, northeast of Lake Chelan, defines the southwestern border of the ecoregion. The ecoregion includes the Methow and Okanogan valleys and the Okanogan Highlands east to the Colville and Spokane valleys (WADNR 2007). This ecoregion is less distinct than other ecoregions in Washington, being transitional between and sharing characteristics of adjacent areas. The ecoregion has the coldest climate in Washington due to exposure to arctic winter fronts. Summers are relatively hot and dry (Pryce et al. 2006). Annual precipitation varies from less than 12 inches in the Okanogan Valley to 50-90 inches at higher elevations, with most of the ecoregion receiving 14 to 24 inches/year (WADNR 2007). The western part of the ecoregion experiences a rain shadow effect from the North Cascades and is drier than the eastern portion, which is in a zone of increasing precipitation created by the Rocky Mountains (Pryce et al. 2006).

The western portion is the highest and most rugged part of the ecoregion, with peaks in the northeast Cascades rising to more than 9,400 feet. The central portion of the ecoregion is comprised of a series of low elevation valleys at about 750 feet. The eastern portion of the ecoregion is occupied by the Kettle Range and Huckleberry Mountains, both of which are rounded mountains with elevations up to 8,000 feet (WADNR 2012). Continental and alpine glaciers played a major role in shaping landforms across the ecoregion.

Montane fens are relatively common in the western portion of the ecoregion. The central portion supports a diversity of arid riparian vegetation and a high concentration of alkaline and saline wetlands, especially on the Omak Plateau. Many of these wetlands are known locally as “spotted lakes’. East of the Okanogan River Valley, wetlands are limited to riparian zones, groundwater discharge site and around lakes and pond shores. The Myer Creek watershed supports an abundance of wetlands affected by groundwater discharge from calcareous bedrock, including calcareous fens—one of the rarest wetland types in the state. The wetland flora is derived from the Rocky Mountain floristic province and many species more common in boreal wetlands reach the southern extent of their range in this ecoregion.

Canadian Rockies Ecoregion The Canadian Rockies ecoregion extends from northern Idaho and northwestern Montana, across the northeastern corner of Washington, and into southwestern Alberta and southeastern British Columbia. Only a small portion occurs within Washington. Precipitation ranges from 18 inches along the Columbia River to about 80 inches in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness Area, with most of the ecoregion receiving between 24 and 34 inches. At mid to upper elevations, significant snowpack develops. The Washington portion of the ecoregion has a moist, inland maritime climate, supporting Vancouverian species such as *Thuja plicata* and *Tsuga heterophylla* (Kovalchik and Clausnitzer 2004).

The geology of the ecoregion is complex, containing sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic bedrock (Canadian Rocky Mountains Ecoregional Team 2004). The mountains within the ecoregion are transitional between the western rolling Okanogan Highlands and the eastern higher ridges of the Selkirk Mountains (WADNR 2007). Wide valleys are also found in the ecoregion, especially along the Pend Oreille River. Most of the ecoregion was completely glaciated leaving ice-carved, U-shaped valleys filled with glaciofluvial deposits and moraines and isolated ice-sculpted mountain peaks (WADNR 2007). Elevation ranges from 1,300 feet at the Columbia River to more than 7,000 feet in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness Area (WADNR 2007).

Riparian wetlands are abundant along the Pend Oreille River and in other riparian valleys. Montane fens are found throughout higher elevations. The region supports two very unique fen types: calcareous fens and patterned fens. Calcareous fens are associated with groundwater discharging through calcareous bedrock. Patterned fens have a distinctive ridge/hollow pattern that forms perpendicular to water flow. These fens are more common in boreal regions and are at the southern edge of their distribution in Washington. Marshes and wet meadows are also found throughout the ecoregion. The wetland flora is derived from the Rocky Mountain floristic province and many species more common in boreal wetlands reach the southern extent of their range in this ecoregion.

Blue Mountains Ecoregion The Blue Mountains ecoregion extends from Idaho and Oregon into the southeast corner of Washington. In Washington, the ecoregion includes the portion of the Blue Mountains occurring in Washington and the Grande Ronde and Snake River canyons north to just south of Clarkston (WADNR 2007). Precipitation ranges from less than 10 inches in the Grande Ronde River canyon to more than 50 inches in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area. Most of the ecoregion receives between 14 and 24 inches. Much of the precipitation occurs as snow, although fall and spring rains are common, often creating floods.

The Blue Mountains were formed by uplift of Columbia River basalt flows which were simultaneously incised by the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers (WADNR 2007). The Blue Mountains in Washington are flat plateaus above deep canyons. Elevation ranges from 750 feet along the Snake River to 6,387 feet, with most of the ecoregion between 2,000 and 4,000 feet.

Most wetlands in the ecoregions are found along riparian corridors and in areas of groundwater discharge. The northwest portion of the ecoregion supports unique riparian plant communities dominated by red alder (*Alnus rubra*). Riparian vegetation along the Grand Ronde and Snake rivers is confined to narrow areas along the river banks. More extensive riparian vegetation forms along Asotin Creek and similar drainages. The wetland flora is derived from the Rocky Mountain floristic province.

Columbia Plateau Ecoregion The Columbia Plateau ecoregion occupies much of eastern Washington. The area is bounded by the Cascades, Okanogan, Blue, and Rocky Mountains. This is the hottest and driest ecoregion in Washington. Annual precipitation increases west to east from about 6 inches along the Columbia River's Hanford Reach to 25 inches in the Palouse Hills (WADNR 2007). Most of the ecoregion receives between 8 and 14 inches/yr.
Columbia River basalt is the primary—almost exclusive—bedrock within the ecoregion. Windblown silts and volcanic ash cover extensive areas, forming rolling, deep, productive soils (WADNR 2007). Ice Age floods carved deep canyons and coulees through the basalt, scouring some areas of soils and vegetation and leaving exposed basalt. Dominant landforms include the Palouse Hills, Channeled Scablands, Yakima Fold Hills, Pasco Basin, Crab Creek, and the Frenchman Hills (WADNR 2007). The northern portion of Douglas County was exposed to continental glaciation, leaving a variety of glacial landforms. Elevations range from 160 feet along the Columbia River to nearly 4,000 feet on isolated hills such as Badger and Tekoa mountains (WADNR 2007).

Wetland diversity is surprisingly high for such an arid region. Most wetlands are associated with riparian zones or groundwater discharge. Within areas scoured by Ice Age floods, vernal pools are common. In areas affected by glaciation, alkaline depressions and playas are common. Saline wetlands are also common in the central portion of the ecoregion, many of which are a result of irrigation wastewater discharging along slope and bedrock breaks. Aspen stands are common in seeps in exposed basalt and in areas near lower treeline, especially near Spokane. Brackish and freshwater marshes are found in depressions and along stream corridors. Remnants of tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) meadows are scattered, but most have been replaced by nonnative species such as reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). A few floristically unique alkaline seeps/fens can be found at the periphery of the ecoregion. The wetland flora is derived from the Rocky Mountain floristic province and has affinities with wetland vegetation found throughout aridlands across the western United States.

Table 2. Historic Wetland Communities from Washington Ecoregions.

Historic Community	Target Hydrology & Vegetation	Cowardin Classification	Common Wetland Functions, Values, & Acceptable Species	Associated Habitat Type (see Table 1)	State Distribution by Ecoregion*	State Limit (%)
Aquatic Bed	Permanent water too deep for emergent vegetation; Aquatic herbaceous rooted to floating leaf	Lacustrine or Riverine		All	Statewide	None
Bogs	Ground water driven hydrology often permanent saturation; Herbaceous and low or dwarf shrub/trees tolerant of low pH soils; *Sphagnum* peatmoss typical	Freshwater Wetland	Water quality improvement, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat	Riparian Areas, Forestland	PC, PT, NC, WC	None
Coastal Salt Marshes	Exposed twice daily tide flats of mud or gravel, more typical at oceanic inlets; Salt-water or brackish water tolerant herbaceous	Marine or Estuarine	Fish and wildlife habitat. Sediment filtering. Flood water retention. Fall, winter, and spring habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Shorebird, dabbling duck. Water filtering, groundwater recharge.	Grasslands, Riparian Areas, Forestland, Other Aquatic Priority Habitat	PC, PT	None
Exposed Freshwater Mud Flats	Seasonal flooded lakebeds or floodplains; Low statue annual plants	Freshwater Wetland	Fall, winter, and spring habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.	Grasslands, Riparian Areas, Forestland, Other Aquatic Priority Habitat	Statewide	None
Fens	See Bog. Typically high elevation in WA	Freshwater Wetland	Water quality improvement, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat	Riparian Areas, Forestland	OK, CR	None
Freshwater Tidal Wetlands	Exposed twice daily tide flats of mud or gravel, more typical at mouth of large rivers;	Freshwater Wetland	Fish and wildlife habitat. Sediment filtering. Flood water retention. Fall, winter, and spring habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Shorebird, dabbling duck. Water filtering, and flood water storage.	Grasslands, Riparian Areas, Forestland, Other Aquatic Priority Habitat	PC, PT	None
Interdunal Wetlands	Located above mean high water, often exposed to salt spray and storm surge; Herbaceous to dwarf shrubs	Marine	Water quality improvement, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat	Grassland, Forestland	PC	None
Interior Alkaline Wetlands	Freshwater to brackish semi-permanent to seasonal hydrology; herbaceous vegetation sometimes a monoculture, emergent forbs to tall grasses		Water quality improvement, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat	Grassland. shrubland	OK	None
Marshes and Wet Meadows	Permanently saturated to seasonally flooded; Herbaceous vegetation composed of grasses and annual & perennial forbs (wet meadow) and/or in combination with shrubs (marsh)	Freshwater Wetland	Fish and wildlife habitat. Sediment filtering. Flood water retention. Fall and spring habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Shorebird, dabbling duck, and sandhill crane habitat. Water filtering, groundwater recharge.	All	Statewide	None
Riparian and Forested Wetland (Swamp Forest)	Semi-permanent to permanently saturated or flooded forests and woodlands dominated by hardwoods or a mix of hardwood & conifer, typically have well developed shrub and herbaceous layers	Riverine & Freshwater Wetland	Songbird habitat, erosion control, water filtering. Often critical for salmon and steelhead rearing and refuge during floods. Benefits wildlife species that utilize forestland for life cycle needs. Provides soil stabilization and carbon sequestration	All	Statewide	None
Seeps & Springs	Seasonal to perennial hydrology, freshwater to saline tolerant vegetation, dominated by herbaceous	Freshwater Wetland	Habitat for amphibians, song birds, pollinators and other wildlife wildlife, provides ground water recharge	All	Statewide	None
Vernal Pools	Closed basin systems fill with rain or snowmelt with wide range of hydroperiod (dry for several years – inundated 2 consecutive years; Low herbaceous vegetation often dominated by forbs and annual grass	Freshwater Wetland	Primarily benefits migratory birds and herps. Recharges groundwater.	All	PT, EC, OK, CP	None
Low Elevation Freshwater Shrub Wetland*	Located in depressions, around lakes/ponds, or river terraces with mostly seasonally flooded regime; Dense shrub cover from monoculture to mixed species	Freshwater Wetland	Benefits wildlife species that utilize shrubland and floodplains for life cycle needs. Provides soil stabilization and carbon sequestration	All	Statewide	None

*Ecoregions: PC (Pacific Northwest Coast), PT (Puget Trough), NC (North Cascades), WC (West Cascades), EC (East Cascades), OK (Okanogan), CR (Canadian Rocky Mtns), BM (Blue Mtns), CP (Columbia Plateau)

In order to restore land to its historic community, certain approaches are required. Restoration of these communities' functions and values positively affect offsite hydrologic conditions. The approaches listed below and information on the historic communities listed above were gathered from the National Wetlands Inventory, Ecological Site Descriptions, and feedback from partners and staff. Wetland Restoration, Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, Wetland Enhancement, and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management are the umbrella practices eligible to implement on ACEP-WRE's. Practices and activities planned on ACEP-WRE's must meet the intent of the program, for the purpose of wetland wildlife habitat restoration. Common practices, activities, or measures that could be used to achieve wetland restoration of these communities include but are not limited to Brush Management (314), Herbaceous Weed Control (315), Dike (356), Dam (348), Pond (378), Fence (382), Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (395) Grade Stabilization Structure (410), Precision Land Forming (462), Prescribed Grazing (528), Open Channel (582), Structure for Water Control (587), Tree and Shrub Establishment (612), Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643), Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645), Shallow Water Development and Management (646), Early Successional Habitat Development (647), Structures for Wildlife (649), Wetland Restoration (657), Wetland Creation (658), Wetland Enhancement (659), etc.

4.3. High-Priority Wetland Habitat Focus Areas

Per the WDFW State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) wetlands are characterized as 12-19 distinct terrestrial ecological systems occurring within 5 of 16 terrestrial vegetation formations. 7-8 of the wetland terrestrial ecological systems are classified as ecologically imperiled or ecological system of concern. Counts of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) either closely or generally associated with each ecological system are provided. The SGCN list was developed for/within the 2015 SWAP, emphasizing NatureServe rankings as well as a revision for simplification of criteria used in 2005 SWAP. This yielded a 'draft SGCN' list of 700+ spp, which was then reviewed by team of taxonomy experts for Washington. The result was increase in SGCN from 2005>2015 (186>268 spp), including increases in all taxon groups save birds; 25 game spp were also considered.) WDFW SWAP Priority Wetland & Riparian Types Include:

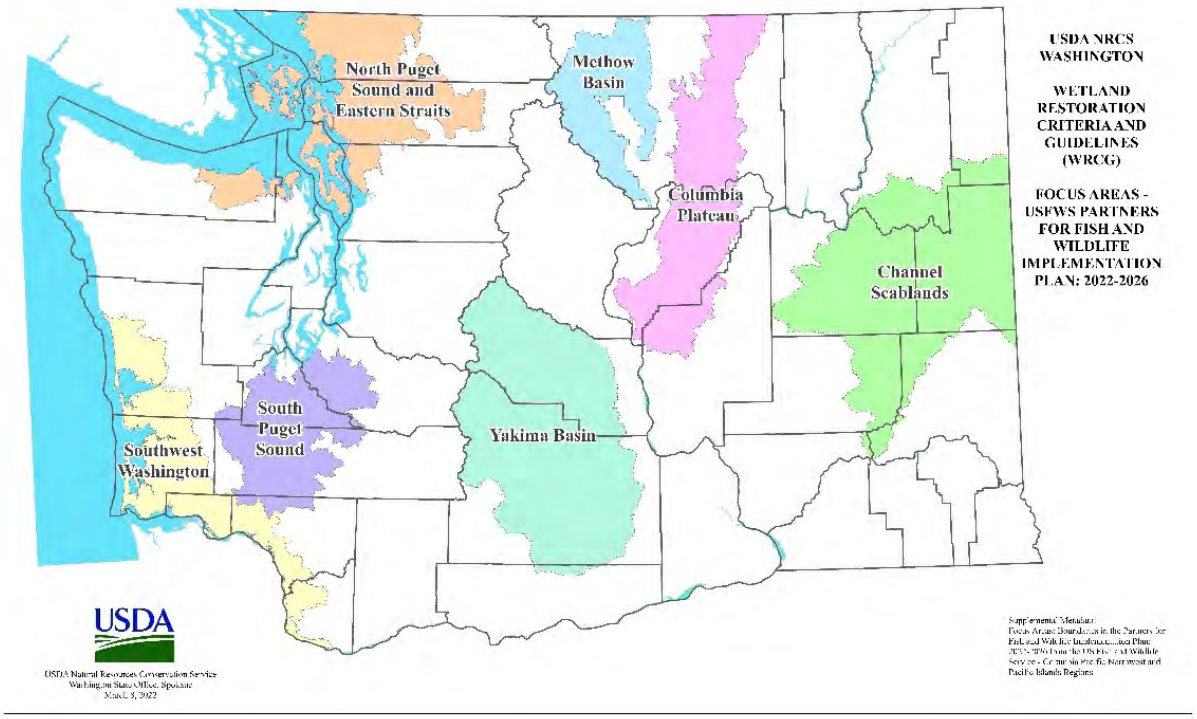
1. North Pacific Bog and Fen
2. North Pacific Hardwood-Conifer Swamp
3. North American Arid Wet Emergent Marsh
4. North Pacific Coastal Interdunal Wetland
5. North Pacific Intertidal Freshwater Wetland
6. North Pacific Lowland Riparian Forest and Shrubland
7. Temperate Pacific Freshwater Emergent Marsh
8. Willamette Valley Wet Prairie
9. Temperate Pacific Tidal Salt and Brackish Marsh
10. Inter-Mountain Basins Playa and Alkaline Closed Depression
11. Columbia Basin Foothill Riparian Woodland & Shrubland
12. Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland & Shrubland

Table 3. Washington State and Federal Wetland Focus Areas.

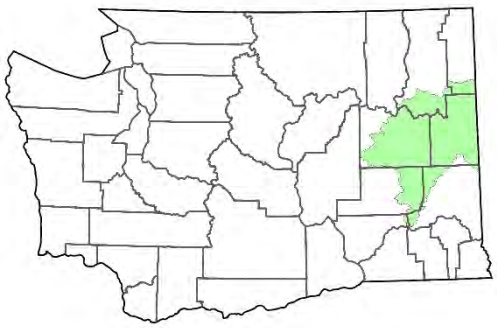
WDNR Ecoregion	Historic Wetland Type(s) (Table 2)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Focus Area	WDFW SWAP Priority Wetlands	SGCN
WESTERN WASHINGTON				
Northwest Coast	All Except Fen and Interior Alkaline	Southwest Washington South Puget Sound North Puget Sound & Eastern Straits	N. Pacific Bog & Fen	**MAMMALS:** Gray Wolf, Western Spotted Skunk, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Keen's Myotis, Hoary Bat, Silver-haired Bat **BIRDS:** Greater Sandhill Crane **AMPHIBIANS:** Western Toad **FISH:** Olympia Mudminnow* **INVERTEBRATES:** Beller's Ground Beetle*, Hatch's Click Beetle*, Makah Copper*
			N. Pacific Hardwood-Conifer Swamp	**MAMMALS:** Columbian White-tailed Deer, Fisher, Gray Wolf, Hoary Bat, Keen's Myotis, Silver-haired Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Western Spotted Skunk **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Marbled Murrelet, Western Screech Owl **AMPHIBIANS:** Oregon Spotted Frog*, Western Toad **FISH:** Salmon & Steelhead
			Pacific Lowland Riparian Forest & Shrubland	**MAMMALS:** Columbian White-tailed Deer*, Fisher, Gray Wolf, Hoary Bat, Keen's Myotis, Pacific Marten (coastal population), Silver-haired Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Western Gray Squirrel, Western Spotted Skunk **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Marbled Murrelet, Peregrine Falcon, Slender-billed White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird **AMPHIBIANS:** Cascade Torrent Salamander*, Cope's Giant Salamander, Dunn's Salamander*, Larch Mountain Salamander, Olympic Torrent Salamander, Oregon Spotted Frog*, Van Dyke's Salamander, Western Toad **FISH:** Salmon & Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** California Floater, Puget Oregonian*, Barren Juga, Brown Juga*, Three-band Juga*, Dalles Sideband, Hoko Vertigo, Dalles Hesperian, Taylor's Checkerspot, Valley Silverspot
Puget Trough			Temperate Pacific Freshwater Emergent Marsh	**MAMMALS:** Columbian White-tailed Deer, Hoary Bat, Keen's Myotis, Shaw Island Vole, Silver-haired Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Cinnamon Teal*, Dusky Canada Goose, Harlequin Duck, Peregrine Falcon*, Purple Martin, Greater Sandhill Crane, Short-eared Owl **REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS:** Columbia Spotted Frog, Oregon Spotted Frog*, Tiger Salamander*, Western Toad, Western Pond Turtle* **FISH:** Salmon & Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** A caddisfly species (*Limnephilus flavastellus*)
			Temperate Pacific Tidal Salt and Brackish Marsh	**MAMMALS:** Shaw Island Vole **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, , Brown Pelican, Common Loon, Dusky Canada Goose, Harlequin Duck, Marbled Godwit, Peregrine Falcon, Purple Martin, Red-necked Grebe, Western High Arctic Brant **FISH:** Salmon &Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** Island Marble*, Oregon Silverspot, Taylor's Checkerspot, Valley Silverspot

			North Pacific Intertidal Freshwater Wetland	**MAMMALS:** Columbian White-tailed Deer*, Hoary Bat, Silver-haired Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat **BIRDS:** Peregrine Falcon*, Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red–necked Grebe, Greater Sandhill Crane **FISH:** Salmon & Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** Oregon Silverspot, Taylor's Checkerspot*
			Willamette Valley Wet Prairie	**MAMMALS:** Brush Prairie Pocket Gopher, Silver haired Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Mazama Pocket Gopher **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Cinnamon Teal, Oregon Vesper Sparrow, Short-eared Owl, Streaked Horned Lark*, Western Bluebird* **FISH**: To be determined- research needed **INVERTEBRATES:** Taylor's Checkerspot*, Oregon Branded Skipper*, Mardon Skipper*, Sonora Skipper*, Puget Sound Fritillary*, Valley Silverspot*
EASTERN WASHINGTON				
Columbia Plateau Okanogan Canadian Rocky Mtns Columbia Plateau	Aquatic Bed. Exposed Freshwater Mud Flats, Interior Alkaline, Marshes & Wet Meadows, Riparian & Forested, Seeps & Springs, Vernal Pools, Low Elevation Freshwater Shrub	Channel Scablands Methow Basin Columbia Plateau Yakima Basin	North American Arid West Emergent Marsh	**MAMMALS:** Hoary Bat, Kincaid Meadow Vole*, Silver-haired Bat, Spotted Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat **BIRDS:** American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Cinnamon Teal*, Common Loon, Marbled Godwit, Peregrine Falcon*, Red-necked Grebe, Shorteared Owl, Upland Sandpiper* **AMPHIBIANS:** Columbia Spotted Frog, Northern Leopard Frog*, Tiger Salamander*, Woodhouse's Toad* **FISH**: Salmon & Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** Silver-bordered Fritillary*
			Inter-Mountain Basins Playa & Alkaline Closed Depressions	**MAMMALS:** Hoary Bat, Kincaid Meadow Vole, Silver haired Bat, Spotted Bat, Townsends Big-eared Bat **BIRDS:** American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Cinnamon Teal*, Golden Eagle, Greater Sage-grouse*, Loggerhead Shrike, Marbled Godwit, Peregrine Falcon*, Short-eared Owl
			Columbia Basin Foothill Riparian Woodland and Shrubland Northern Rocky Mountain Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland	**MAMMALS:** Hoary Bat, Silver-haired Bat, Spotted Bat, Townsend's Big-eared Bat **BIRDS:** Bald Eagle, Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse*, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Lewis' Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike, Pygmy Nuthatch **REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS:** Columbia Spotted Frog, Northern Leopard Frog*, Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog*, Western Toad, Ring-necked Snake*, Sharp-tailed Snake* **FISH:** Salmon & Steelhead **INVERTEBRATES:** Columbia Clubtail*, Columbia Oregonian*, Dry Land Forest snail, White-belted Ringtail*, Columbia Clubtail*, Mad River Mountain snail*, Mann's Mollusk-eating Ground Beetle*, Mission Creek Oregonian, Morrison's Bumblebee

The following focus areas are in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan: 2022-2026":



4.3.1. Channel Scablands Focus Area



Area Description: The Channeled Scablands Focus Area includes two large-scale geologic features created by glacial floods in the Pleistocene: The Channeled Scablands of Eastern Washington and the Spokane River basin. Much of the Spokane River basin is covered by deep gravel deposits laid down over successive flood events roughly 10,000 years ago. The Channeled Scablands to the west of the Spokane River basin were also created by these cataclysmic flood events. In this area, the flood waters deeply eroded the Columbia River Basalt Group plateau, leaving giant gravel bars, alluvial aprons, and ephemeral lake deposits across the landscape. Within this area, the wetland basin densities rival those of the upper Midwest's Prairie Potholes. This landscape has been identified as a high priority for recovery and habitat restoration of waterfowl, migratory songbirds, and Spalding's catchfly populations. The focus area covers nearly 3.3 million acres within Pend Oreille, Stevens, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams, Whitman, and Franklin counties and is made up of approximately 80% private owned property. Land ownership is a mixture of private land, the reservations and trust lands of the Colville; Kalispel; Coeur d' Alene; and Spokane

tribes, the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Bureau of Land Management, State and county owned conservation properties, and private, non-profit conservation lands. Outside of the Spokane metropolitan area, communities in this region are mostly small and rural with strong agricultural ties.

Habitat Types: Key habitat types include wetland, riparian zones, steppe-grasslands, sagebrush steppe, and ponderosa pine woodlands

Conservation Issues: A history of ditching efforts has resulted in many wetland basins that are dry by late spring or early summer. Damage to these areas over the past 100 years have resulted in drained wetland basins and unvegetated riparian corridors. Faster drying of these wetlands have resulted in abandoned and unsuccessful waterfowl nests and loss of brood rearing habitat in many of these areas.

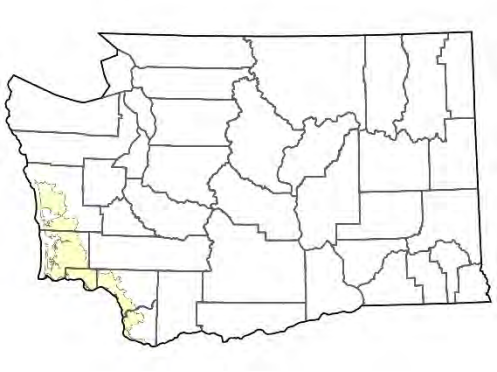
4.3.2. Methow Focus Area

Area Description: The Methow watershed is a spectacular landscape that extends from the Canadian border in the north to the confluence of the Columbia River in Pateros, WA in the south and encompasses over 1.1 million acres in Okanogan County. The watershed has its origins in the high-alpine streams of the Pasayten Wilderness and the North Cascades, with the major tributaries being the Methow River, Lost River, Early Winters Creek, Twisp River, and the Chewuch River. They provide clean, cold water which is the lifeblood of this otherwise arid environment. The climate is characterized by cold, snowy winters and hot, dry summers. The mountains receive over 40 feet of snow each year while the lowlands often exceed 100 degrees in summer. The lower elevation valleys of the Methow Basin are largely in private ownership and contain most of the priority habitats which are the focus of current conservation efforts. Many of the high-value habitats are under conservation easements. Most of the remaining land is owned and managed by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, North Cascades National Park, and State agencies.

Habitat Types: Priority habitats are wetlands, streams, and riparian areas that support ESA-listed bull trout, upper Columbia River steelhead, and spring Chinook

Conservation Issues: Climate change is beginning to reduce average winter snowpack, change the timing of stream runoff, increase the frequency and intensity of storm events, and reduce summer baseflows. Wildfires have burned a considerable portion of the Basin in the last decade and pose an ongoing challenge to ESA-Listed species recovery. Dramatic, non-linear changes in the climate will place considerable stressors on species, ecosystems, and humans alike.

4.3.3. Southwest Washington Focus Area



Area Description: The Southwest Washington (SW) Focus Area (1,428,066 ac.) includes land within Grays Harbor, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, and Clark counties. The majority of landownership is private (83%), interspersed with tribal reservation and trust lands, multiple National Wildlife Refuges, state owned conservation properties (WDFW & WDNR), local governmental, and private, non-profit conservation lands. Land uses include commercial timber production, commercial fishing and mariculture, agriculture, tourism, and recreation.

Habitat Types: Rivers, streams, estuarine bays, barrier beaches, coastal sand dunes, coniferous forests, mixed forest marshes, riparian areas and tidal mudflats.

Conservation Issues: Due to extensive commercial forest harvest in the region, less than 1% of old growth/late successional forest habitat still exists. Existing forest habitat is extensively fragmented by networks of logging roads, and these younger managed forests do not support species dependent on complex older forests, such as the federally listed marbled murrelet. Coastal dunes along the Pacific Coast were stabilized through planting of invasive beachgrasses resulting in the loss of dune processes and native species. Conversion of grassland meadows also resulted in the extirpation of species, such as the Oregon silverspot butterfly.
Construction of flood control levees along the Columbia River facilitated land conversion for agricultural use and areas once open to tidal inundation were lost. A result of these practices was a drastic decline of palustrine wetland and forest habitats that support species such as the Columbian white-tailed deer.

4.3.4. Columbia Plateau Focus Area

Area Description: The Columbia Plateau Focus Area is primarily arid, low elevation desert, that contains unique habitat types in portions of Okanogan, Douglas, Grant, Chelan, Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, and Adams counties. The focus area has been identified as a high priority for the recovery of the shrub-steppe ecosystem and the trust species that depend on it. Precipitation in this focus area ranges from 10 to 15 inches annually. This semi-arid climate of the Columbia Plateau supports native shrub-steppe vegetation, as well as other drought-tolerant plant communities. Events and processes associated with ice-age glacial recession and subsequent flooding have created unique topographical features such as coulees, channeled scablands, boulder fields, glacial erratics, moraines, potholes, and large fertile plains. Made up of 3.7 million acres, the primary land ownership is private (86%). Since this area has little state or

federally owned lands, conservation on private property is of high importance for the continued benefit of focal species.

Habitat Types: Key habitats are big sagebrush, three-tip sagebrush, bitterbrush shrub- steppe, ponderosa pine inclusions, wetlands, springs, and associated riparian zones. The high priority watersheds within this focus area include Foster Creek, Rock Island Creek, and Beaver Creek.

Conservation Issues: The impact of human activity is high here: more than half of the shrub-steppe has been converted to agriculture while other areas have been altered by development and infrastructure. The remaining native habitat is often fragmented and on shallow soils less amenable to agriculture; therefore, improving, or restoring, properties that will provide connectivity between our existing areas of quality shrub-steppe is essential. Drought, fire and invasive annual grasses are also issues for the area that the PFW Program will address.

4.3.5. North Puget South and Eastern Straits Focus Area

Area Description: The North Puget Sound and Eastern Straits Focus Area is an ecologically diverse space in Washington State that falls between the crest of the Cascade Mountains and the Olympic Peninsula and covers the western slope of the North Cascades, the Puget Lowlands, San Juan Islands, and the northeastern Olympic Peninsula. Major river basins associated with the focus area include the Dungeness, Nooksack, Skagit, Snohomish, and Stillaguamish Rivers. Elevation of the focus area ranges from zero to greater than 7,000 feet above sea level. The total acreage for this focus area is just over 1.9 million acres, with 72% being privately owned. Land ownership is a mixture of private land; tribal reservations and trust lands; the Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex; National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; and state-owned conservation properties

Habitat Types: This area is characterized by U-shaped valleys and cirques carved by glaciers, rocky islands and shorelines, large estuaries, riparian areas, and uplands with mixed-old growth forest and remanent prairie

Conservation Issues: The focus area faces a range of threats to its ecological integrity, including a wide range of development and urban encroachment, invasive plant and animal species, impaired water quality, and lack of indigenous fire and harvests. Washington, especially the greater Seattle area, continues to grow exponentially on an annual basis. Population centers are beginning to expand into more rural, undeveloped areas, such as the I-5/ Puget Sound corridor, which provides the means for expansion and growth, and bisects the North Puget Sound and Eastern Straits Focus Area.

4.3.6 South Puget South Focus Area

Area Description: The South Puget Sound Focus Area, an ecologically diverse area in Washington State that radiates from the I-5 corridor between Dupont and Castle Rock, includes glacial outwash, wet, and dry prairies. Large river systems with smaller prairie streams and riparian habitat dispersed throughout. The total acreage for this focus area is just over 1.4 million acres, with 84% being privately owned. Land ownership is a mixture of private land; Department of Defense (DoD; Joint Base Lewis-McChord); tribal reservation and trust lands; National Wildlife Refuge (Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR); state owned conservation properties. Communities in this region range from small and rural to large population centers. Over the past 25 years, the conservation community has made tremendous investments into this area for the expanding the extent of protected lands, the number of partners involved in prairie conservation, and high-quality habitat supporting rare and endangered species.

Habitat Types: Prairie, oak savanna, woodlands, and associated wetlands and streams

Conservation Issues: Due to a wide range of threats, including development, invasive species, and the lack of indigenous fire and harvests, the remaining prairies are fragmented and degraded. The stretch of land between Portland and Seattle is predicted to experience incredible growth over the next several decades, due to the open, relatively low-priced land, and the projected influx of climate refugees moving north from the burned landscapes of California and Oregon. The heavy development pressure on the region's prairies that exist primarily along the I-5 corridor will further fragment that which remains in this largely rural ecosystem. Agricultural communities are already struggling due to some of the same development pressures that threaten rare species and their habitats. This leads to a high cost of doing business and increasing challenges for small farm viability.

4.6.7. Yakima Basin Focus Area

Area Description: The Yakima Basin Focus Area starts at river mile 70 of the Yakima River at the confluence of Satus Creek, the lowest tributary on the Yakima River (elevation 652 ft) and extends north to the crest of the Cascade Mountains (elevation 8,170 ft). The Yakima River, a tributary of the Columbia River, flows for 215 miles in south central Washington provides drinking and irrigation water to local communities and vital habitat for a multitude of species. Annual precipitation within the focus area ranges from over 120 inches in the mountains to approximately seven inches in the lower Yakima Valley. Competition for limited water resources within the Yakima Basin Focus Area creates major challenges for the fish, farms, and families

that call this area home. The focus area encompasses 3.2 million acres within Kittitas, Yakima, and Klickitat Counties, and counties and is comprised of Yakama Nation Reservation lands (27%), private lands (32%), federal lands (35%), and state lands (6%).

Habitat Types: Wetlands, streams, riparian zones, shrub-steppe

Conservation Issues: There are 5 water storage reservoirs within the focus area and innumerable irrigation canals, ditches, and diversion dams that prevent fish passage into headwaters. Flow management has also significantly altered the Yakima Basin's hydrograph, impacting instream, floodplain, and shrub-steppe habitats. Threats that can be addressed on private land include: fish passage barriers, poor water quality due to increased temperature and sedimentation, loss of seasonal wetlands, in-stream habitat complexity, and habitat fragmentation. Threats that cannot be addressed solely on private land are the large number of non-native fish throughout the basin (e.g., bass, brook trout, etc.), and fish passage at reservoir dams. Climate change is altering the basin's hydraulic cycle including a significant reduction in snowpack, an increase in the frequency and intensity of storm events, and the timing and type of precipitation, which are all leading to more powerful flooding, reduced summer base flows and higher stream temperatures. Increased frequency of catastrophic wildfire will impact designated critical habitats through sedimentation, vegetation loss, streambank instability, and higher stream temperatures.

4.4. Alternative Vegetative Communities

Alternative vegetative communities are plant communities where the hydrologic regime and vegetation is different from what likely existed prior to degradation of the site following European settlement. These communities can represent either wetlands or uplands.

Under the 2014 Farm Bill, there was a limitation of 30% of the land enrolled in ACEP-WRE or a predecessor program that could consist of an alternative vegetative community. Washington had not clearly defined alternative vegetative community for use in the State at that time.

The 2018 Farm Bill removed the 30% limitation. The States are tasked with establishing their own limits and defining acceptable alternative vegetative communities. Washington has identified specific alternative vegetative communities that will be accepted if it is not feasible to restore the land to its historic state. Washington may also implement limitations depending upon the type of community represented. This information is found in Table 3. No other alternative communities will be accepted.

To be considered an acceptable alternative vegetative community, otherwise eligible land must meet the "wetland restoration" definition requirements as documented in Section 4.1. The community may only be established and maintained if:

- Replace at least 20% of the original habitat functions and values while providing significant support or benefit for migratory waterfowl or other wetland-dependent wildlife; or

- Address local resource concerns or needs for the restoration of wetland functions and values for wetland-dependent wildlife as identified in an approved State wildlife action plan or NRCS national initiative.

Additionally, Washington may only consider alternative vegetative communities that also achieve at least two of the following considerations:

- Provide wetland and associated habitat types limited in the area;
- Address limiting conditions for wetland-dependent wildlife;
- Establish enhanced habitat conditions for at-risk species;
- Provide unique, rare, or declining wetland habitat types; or
- Restore wetland functions identified in State Wildlife Action Plan; NRCS National Initiative; State Wetland Focus Areas; Joint Ventures; or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Table 4. Permitted Alternative Vegetative Communities.

Alternative Community	Related Historic Community	Target Hydrology & Vegetation of Alt.	Rationale	State Limit (%)
Wet Meadow	Emergent Marsh	See table 2.	Hydrology and availability of water for semi-permanent flooding. Soils.	No Limit.
Emergent Marsh (seasonal wetland)	Emergent Marsh	See table 2.	Hydrology – availability of water for semi-permanent flooding. Soils.	No Limit.
Artificial Wetlands (e.g., augmentation ponds)	Emergent Marsh	See table 2.	Hydrology – availability of water for semi-permanent or permanent flooding. Soils.	Limited to 30% of offered ACEP-WRE enrollment acres.
Upland (non-wetland)	All applicable historic habitat types in addition to food plots.	Forestlands, grasslands	Soils, vegetation, lack of hydrology, and topographic elevation.	Limited to no more than 30% of enrolled area without a waiver. Soils and topography should be assessed to determine if suitable non-wetland conditions exist for upland restoration. No prime or unique soils will be allowed without a STC waiver.

4.5. Restoration of Vegetation

States must determine how vegetative communities will be restored. If restoration is determined unfeasible, an application will be determined ineligible. For existing easements, Washington NRCS may need to be more flexible on how restoration is achieved.

The Wetlands Restoration Plan of Operations (WRPO) is the document that is developed and/or approved by NRCS that identifies how the wetland functions and values and associated habitats

on the easement will be restored, improved, protected, managed, maintained, and monitored to achieve the purposes of the enrollment.

4.5.1. Funding

NRCS will provide funds toward practices in an approved WRPO to facilitate implementation of planned activities authorized for funding as listed in Appendix 2 and the current version of the applicable program payment schedule. These funds can be provided through an easement restoration or maintenance agreement directly with the landowner or with a third party. NRCS may also seek to implement activities through the Federal contracting process. The funding level will be determined through and combination of the most current version of the applicable program payment schedule, internal cost estimates, and cost estimates from contractors. Funds will be allocated according to the annual instructions from National Headquarters. Per CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.141(C), permanent easements will receive 100% cost share for restoration activities; 30-year easements and contracts will receive 75% cost share for restoration activities.

Not all activities are approved for NRCS funding. For example, management activities are not typically funded. Management and restoration activities not funded by NRCS may be approved under a Compatible Use Authorization (CUA) (see Section 6.1). Any activities not funded directly by NRCS, even if funded by another source, must be covered by a CUA before they are implemented.

4.5.2. Methods

Independent of funding, the WRPO will identify how the planned activities will be implemented depending on the type of activity. NRCS Conservation Practice Standards, National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance must be followed for all activities. Vegetative communities can be restored passively (e.g., natural regeneration) or actively (e.g., planting). The expense of active restoration should be considered when planning for the WRPO as it may contribute to the eligibility of the project.

4.6. Eligible Practices

Appendix 7 represents the NRCS conservation practices that may be planned and implemented on wetlands easements in Washington with certain requirements or limitations. The most current version of the program payment schedule is based on Appendix 7 and represents the exhaustive list of payment scenarios available for financial assistance (FA) under a restoration or maintenance contract. Any Washington NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) not listed in Appendix 7 cannot be planned on any easement covered by this document without approval from the Washington State Conservationist. Provided that the changes are consistent with the guidelines in this WRCG, NRCS Washington reserves the right to update the program payment schedules and Appendix 7 at any time without consultation with the STAC to facilitate new

contracts or modify existing contracts in a timely manner. Any new additions will be compiled and reviewed with the STAC at the next opportunity. Eligible restoration contract practices and permissible scenarios will be maintained on a payment schedule by program contained within the appropriate Business Tool. All planned practices and activities must meet all applicable NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and supporting documentation found in the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance. Practices must also be planned within the most current version of the planning Business Tool. Ranking of these activities is not required; however, these activities may be considered in the ranking criteria for preliminary WRPOs for new enrollments. Additionally, the planner or their assignee must have proper job approval authority (JAA) to plan and oversee implementation and certification of the practices. Engineering practices shall also include an Operation and Maintenance Plan with the design package.

5. Waiver Considerations

5.1. Waivers Issued by the State Conservationist

The State Conservationist is authorized to issue waivers based on technical considerations. All other requested policy waivers can only be approved or denied by National Headquarters. Program requirements covered by the statute or the rule may not be waived. Only waiver options contained within this WRCG or, if not inconsistent with this WRCG, in program policy may be requested. Existing waivers issued by the State Conservationist prior to the approval and publication of this WRCG will be allowed until expiration of such existing waiver.

5.2. Application Phase

The State Conservationist is authorized to consider waivers to the requirements in the following subsections.

5.2.1. Riparian Widths and Distances Waiver

Section 3.2.2 describes the “riparian” eligible land category. Lands that do not fully meet the requirements of this section, but can meet the following criteria, may be considered for a waiver from the State Conservationist to include that land in the “riparian” category.

Larger widths or linkages of wetland areas greater than 1 mile apart may be considered if the riparian zone and its associated wildlife or ecological values so warrant; waivers for additional width or for eligible wetland areas more than 1 mile apart may be granted by the State conservationist if the riparian area can be demonstrated to provide habitat for at-risk fish or wildlife, contribute significantly to wetland functions and values of the easement area, or improve the practical administration and management of the easement area. Information must be provided to the State Conservationist with the application package for consideration.

5.2.2. Adjacent Land to Eligible Lands Ratio Waiver

Under limited authority, the State Conservationist can authorize a waiver allowing adjacent land acres to exceed eligible land acres under the following circumstances:

- Enrollment includes unique or critical wetland complexes whose wetland functions and values inherently depend on the adjacent lands (e.g. sloughs).
- Enrollment targets at-risk, wetland-dependent species and migratory birds that require additional upland acres to successfully complete their lifecycle.
- There is a high risk of degradation to wetland acres as a result of agricultural, development, or other incompatible uses outside the enrollment area and adequate buffer is needed to protect wetland functions and values.

Under these limited circumstances, the State Conservationist is limited to approval of inclusion of adjacent lands at a two-to-one (2:1) ratio to otherwise eligible lands for any type of adjacent land as identified in Table 1.

5.2.3. Trees Established under CRP Waiver

In general, lands established to trees under a CRP contract are not eligible, whether the contract is active or not. However, the State Conservationist may determine these lands to be eligible if the application meets all other ACEP-WRE eligibility criteria and one of the following two conditions are met:

- Tree establishment has not been completed, a planted stand failed to become established, or a stand that was determined to be established subsequently failed.
- NRCS will determine and document if plantings failed or were established and failed.

The State Conservationist determines and documents that the enrollment of such lands would further the purposes of the program based on all of the following criteria being met:

- A sound, technical basis is provided by the landowner and local NRCS office supporting inclusion of the land and is accompanied by a map showing how many acres of lands established to trees under CRP are determined eligible.
- The established cover conforms to ACEP-WRE restoration requirements.
- If the CRP contract is active, upon closing of the ACEP-WRE easement, the CRP contract for the property will be terminated or otherwise modified, subject to such terms and conditions as are mutually agreed upon by FSA and the landowner.

5.3. Restoration Phase

5.3.1. Excessive Restoration Costs

Lands where the cost of restoration for the easement area will exceed the fair market value of the land are ineligible. This criterion may be waived by the State Conservationist in situations in which it is documented that the restoration may be successfully accomplished without accumulating a long-term operation and maintenance cost burden to the program. These may

include habitat types that are highly degraded, and labor intensive and expensive to restore, such as wet meadows, streambank stabilization, or restoration of historic stream functions.

5.3.2. Early Implementation of Restoration

In general, payments are not authorized for restoration practices that are started or completed before easement recording and easement restoration agreement approval date. In very special cases and for meritorious reasons only, the State Conservationist may consider a waiver for enrollments that meet all ACEP-WRE land and landowner eligibility requirements. Meritorious reasons may include:

- Alleviation of imminent and significant environmental problems.
- Prevention of damage to life or property.
- Seasonal weather constraints.

The landowner must submit the request for a waiver in writing and must acknowledge certain conditions of the waiver. More information can be found at CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.142(D).

5.4. Stewardship Phase

5.4.1. Waiver for Compliance with WRCG Criteria

Washington NRCS has many wetlands easements that predate this WRCG. Therefore, the qualities of these easements as they were enrolled may not comply with the criteria outlined in this WRCG. Thus, when compatible use authorizations (CUAs), restoration, or maintenance activities are determined necessary by NRCS, the activities may not meet the criteria.

Future activities on easements whose enrollment predate the current version of the WRCG must comply with the Washington WRCG. In the event this is not possible, the State Conservationist may consider granting a waiver to compliance with the WRCG criteria. In order for such waiver to be considered, the following criteria must be met:

1. The WRPO must:
    a. Demonstrate a clear need for the activities to address the wildlife habitat and wetland values for which the easement was originally enrolled;
    b. Include a map showing the wetland/habitat types outlined in this WRCG with acreages;
    c. Be up-to-date and reflect those activities for which the waiver is being requested.
    d. Be in accordance with the most recent state issued guidance.
2. A written waiver request signed by the Area Conservationist outlining the specific criteria for which a waiver is being requested and referencing the applicable sections of this WRCG.

Any planned activities that do not comply with this WRCG may not commence unless there is a waiver signed by the State Conservationist in place. Implementation of such activities without a signed waiver may be considered a violation of the easement.

This waiver only applies to easements that predate the current version of this WRCG. Waivers to the WRCG criteria may not be granted to new enrollments after FY 2022 unless expressly identified in other sections of this WRCG.

6. Easement Management

6.1 Compatible Use Authorizations (CUA)

A compatible use is a use or activity conducted on a wetland reserve easement that NRCS determines, in its sole discretion, is consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland and other natural values of the easement area when performed according to amount, method, location, timing, frequency, intensity, and duration limitations prescribed by NRCS. Compatible uses must not adversely affect habitat for migratory birds, at-risk species, and threatened or endangered species. CUAs are considered on a case-by case basis in Washington. Washington NRCS will not consider any CUA requests on any easement that is in a current violation status unless approved in writing for the official case file by Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P) or State Conservationist (STC). NRCS may issue compatible use authorizations (CUA) to grant a landowner permission to implement specific compatible uses for a temporary period. The maximum duration of a multi-year CUA is 10 years (CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(A)(5)) unless otherwise noted within this WRCG. Reserved grazing rights easements will have a five (5) year maximum duration in Washington.

Existing CUAs issued and properly signed and authorized by policy prior to the approval and publication of this WRCG will be allowed until expiration of such CUA. CUAs that have been improperly authorized will be reviewed and considered by the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P) or State Conservationist (STC). All future CUA issuance will follow current Washington state instruction, bulletin, and guidance.

The practices and activities covered by a CUA must also be reflected in the WRPO and be implemented according to the specifications in the WRPO. The planner or their assignee must have proper job approval authority (JAA) to plan and oversee implementation of the practices and follow all Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) and supporting documentation contained in Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG). Engineering practices shall also include an Operation and Maintenance Plan with the design package. Any necessary practices or activities must meet all applicable NRCS Conservation Practice Standards, National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance. Practices must also be planned within the most current version of the planning Business Tool. Ranking of these activities is not required. All planning activities must be backed by sound data and observations gathered in the field (e.g., forage inventories) and determined appropriate for the site based on the data gathered and planning objectives. An NRCS-CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation is required for all practices and activities in a CUA in accordance with Washington State Instruction 300 Part 393.

Washington NRCS's WRCG is used to document State specific technical information related to CUAs to facilitate analysis, decision-making, prescription, documentation, and authorization of CUAs, such as technical considerations and parameters used to determine the conditions under which a CUA may be authorized, and associated limits, applicability, and exceptions (CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(B)(1)). Technical requirements typically included in CUAs are based on the use being prescribed per CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(C)(2). CUAs may be authorized for any activity listed in the current version of the applicable program payment schedule and Table 5 unless explicitly restricted by this section or policy at CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152. New wildlife habitat and wetland value considerations can be considered if sound justification is provided and is supported by acceptable planning tools and data gathered in the field.

The following sections give National and State specific guidelines for only certain activities. For additional guidance and activities, refer to issued National policy and guidance and State guidance or other sections of this document.

6.1.1. Food Plots

Food plots must be recommended by the WRPO, determined necessary to complete the planned functions and values of the easement area, and must be planned to minimize any habitat fragmentation. Food plots are limited to not more than 5% of the total acreage of the easement area and must comply with State and Federal baiting regulations. The species mix recommended must not have a negative impact on the easement area and should recommend native species over non-native species when feasible. Food plots are the only activity that can use non-native species on the easement, with the exception of Cover Crop (see Appendix 7).

Additionally, the following considerations must be made when planning food plots in Washington:

- Do not disturb sagebrush habitat; no food plots will be allowed in existing sagebrush areas.
- Plan food plots on the edge of existing disturbed areas (e.g., wet hay meadows, dryland agricultural sites).
- Where possible, only plant perennial species unless the food plot will be located on recently farmed areas.
- Food plots will not be irrigated.
- Plan to control noxious weeds (Class A and County B designates).
- Have a plan for the food plot for after it is "abandoned" and reestablish a diverse mix of native vegetation.
- Food plots must comply with Wildlife Habitat Planting (420) standards, specifications, implementation records, and seeding window guidance if perennial. If food plot species will be annuals, the seeding date window must be prescribed on CUA basis and be outside of Washington NRCS's primary nesting season dates.

6.1.2. Grazing

Habitats along streams and wetlands are characterized by their "patchiness", often referred to as spatial heterogeneity. The biodiversity attributed to wetlands and streams is due to this spatial heterogeneity, where different plant communities and habitats are found within proximity to one another. As a generalization, more recently disturbed sites harbor quick-growing, typically smaller-statured grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Sites without a history of recent disturbance will often be dominated by slower growing, typically larger shrubs and trees. Without disturbance, the ecological system will shift over time to late-seral plant communities or perennial weeds, with little to no representation by early-mid seral stages. As wetland plant communities are left undisturbed and become decadent, biodiversity and habitat quality decrease, while the risk of fire and invasive weed invasion increases. The ecological functions of wetlands that depend on plant community composition, including water quality, water storage, nutrient cycling, and wildlife habitat quality, are therefore dependent on periodic disturbance. Disturbance, often grazing specifically, is explicitly described as a necessary component for plant community maintenance

As outlined in CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(F), grazing may only be used as a vegetation management tool when it is appropriate based on the wetland and habitat objectives identified in the WRPO and is prescribed and conducted in a manner that has the primary purpose of supporting or improving the identified wetland functions and values on the easement or 30-year contract area. Additionally, grazing may only be permitted when—

1. Restoration of woody vegetation is not a component of the restoration plan, unless use can be prescribed so the timing and intensity will improve the overall habitat in the woody vegetation area and will not negatively impact establishment and survival of woody vegetation. When woody vegetation is being established, Washington NRCS will exclude grazing until vegetation meets established criteria.
2. Site-specific grazing guidelines are developed to manage the vegetation to ensure the long-term functioning of the enrolled area or to restore and maintain the native plant communities on the enrolled area.
3. It contributes to establishment, maintenance, or improvement of wildlife habitat quality or other identified wetland functions and values.
4. It is timed to ensure adequate regrowth of vegetation for winter and spring habitats, as appropriate.
5. There are no adverse effects on ground-nesting birds and other wildlife.

A prescribed grazing plan must be developed for each individual site with input from the landowner, US Fish & Wildlife Service. The State can also choose to issue State-specific guidelines for grazing to use in development of the individual site grazing guidelines. The Washington State-specific guidelines that will be followed in addition to the National requirements above include:

- Any grazing practices must be covered by a grazing management plan, which must be reviewed and updated by NRCS every five years at the very least. The landowner may obtain a grazing management plan at their own expense from a professional and

provide it to NRCS for review and approval. The completion of an NRCS-approved grazing management plan alone does not guarantee that grazing management activities will be authorized on the easement area by State Resource Conservationist (SRC). The grazing management plan must meet the definition and criteria established in 7 CFR Section 1468 and Conservation Program Manual, Title 440, Part 528 in addition to the planning requirements applicable to all grazing management practices and activities. All practices planned must address wildlife concerns and the appropriate wildlife practices must be planned. Where grazing is implemented, **there must be no adverse effects on ground nesting birds and other wildlife.** In order to ensure no adverse effects on ground nesting birds, grazing is prohibited from March 15 through July 15.

- Demonstrating compliance with all applicable criteria of CPS 528 Prescribed Grazing, with a with at least one of the following purposes:
    - Improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and/or quantity;
    - Improve or maintain riparian and/or watershed function; or
    - Improve or maintain the quantity, quality, or connectivity of food and/or cover available for wildlife.
- Must follow NRCS Washington standard, specifications, and all other supporting documentation for CPS 528 Prescribed Grazing with a complete forage inventory, monitoring plots identified, documentation of sufficient vegetative growth into the winter for nesting birds and vegetative regrowth, and site-specific nesting date restrictions for wildlife considerations.
- Require CPS 472 Use Exclusion on years without grazing or haying/mowing with WRPO.
- Not exceed once (1) every two (2) years per planned land unit (PLU).
- Only be allowed between July 15 – October 29. The CPS 528 Prescribed Grazing, must meet the Washington NRCS WRCG.
- Provide clear guidance that bales, winterfeeding, and/or supplemental feeding of any sort will not be allowed on the easement.
- Fencing and watering will not impact the wildlife intent of the easement.
- Not be permitted within 120 feet of any stream or permanent waterbody unless there is documented concurrence for selected wildlife species by the Washington NRCS State Resource Conservationist (SRC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). If grazing is permitted, the landowner is required to install temporary wildlife friendly electrical fencing if no exclusion fencing exists for the 120 feet buffer.

6.1.3. Hydrology Manipulations

Depending on the existing conditions of an easement and the type of restoration that was implemented, regular or intermittent hydrology manipulations may be required. All hydrology manipulations planned in a WRPO and implemented through a CUA must meet all the following conditions:

- Obtain written approval from the ditch company, State Water Engineer, or other authority when supplemental irrigation water is required for hydrology;
- Obtain written confirmation that the proposed water use is permitted and compliant with State water laws;
- Produce copies of the water rights associated with the easement;
- Inventory of all structures; and
- Demonstrate compliance with all applicable criteria of CPS 646, Shallow Water Development and Management in a plan, including but not limited to:
    - Target water depths;
    - Water levels necessary for habitat objectives
    - Draw down rates and timing; and
    - Flooding or drainage schedules.

6.1.4. Weed Control

Control of Class A and County B designates noxious weeds on an easement is a responsibility of the landowner as reflected in each easement deed. Vegetative pest prevention and control is considered an activity and therefore requires a CUA before the landowner may proceed with any type of treatment. Whether mechanical, chemical, cultural, or biological, treatment must comply with all Federal and State laws and all applicable NRCS National policy and State guidance, including General Manual, Title 190, Part 404. Treatments must meet the criteria for the following conservation practices where applicable: CPS 314 Brush Management, CPS 315 Herbaceous Weed Treatment, and CPS 595 Pest Management Conservation System. Avoidance or mitigation efforts must be taken to ensure the wetland and wildlife habitat resources present on the easement are not compromised. For any herbicide treatments, the appropriate NRCS screening tools (i.e. WIN-PST) must be utilized and appended to the CUA request that includes the chemicals, rates, date, and record keeping.

6.1.5. Haying or Mowing

As outlined in CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(E), haying or mowing may only be used as a vegetation management tool when it is appropriate based on the wetland and habitat objectives identified in the WRPO and is prescribed and conducted in a manner that has the primary purpose of supporting or improving the identified wetland functions and values on the easement or 30-year contract area. Approved haying or mowing will be identified in a CUA and as appropriate, in the WRPO. Any haying or mowing must be scheduled and subject to the following limitations: (i) Must occur between July 15 and September 1. (ii) Must ensure there is adequate regrowth of vegetation to provide winter cover and early spring nesting cover. (iii) Must ensure maintenance of adequate wildlife habitat quality and other wetland functions and values. (iv) Not allowed in areas where woody vegetation is being established or maintained. (v) Limited to mowing for access to manage and maintain such structures as levee tops and nature trails, or as prescribed to restore and maintain native plant communities or manage succession for special-status species. (vi) Grazing is not allowed in the same year on the same acreage that is hayed or mowed.

The State can also choose to issue State-specific guidelines for haying or mowing to use in development of the individual site guidelines. The Washington State-specific guidelines that will be followed in addition to the National requirements in 440.528.152(E) include:

- Haying or mowing will only occur between July 15 – September 1 with an approved CPS 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management.
- Haying or Mowing will not be permitted within 120 feet of any stream or permanent waterbody unless there is documented concurrence for selected wildlife species by the Washington NRCS State Resource Conservationist (SRC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).
- Haying or mowing will not be permitted on the same acreage in the same calendar year as an approved CUA for grazing.
- CUAs for haying or mowing in Washington will not exceed once (1) every two (2) years per planned land unit (PLU).
- Equipment access routes will be determined based on soil condition considerations.
- All bales must be removed by September 30.
- Mowing for recreational trails in accordance with warranty easement deed quiet enjoyment will be allowed each year in accordance with an approved CUA. Mowing trails is not permitted within 120 feet of any stream or permanent waterbody.

6.1.6. Forest Management Activities

The United States possesses the right to prohibit all forest management activities on the easement or 30-year contract area, unless NRCS determines that forest management activities will further the wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values of the easement or 30-year contract. Before any forest management activities, including timber harvest, may be authorized on an ACEP-WRE through a CUA, a forest management plan must be developed and appended to the WRPO.

The primary goal of the forest management plan component of the WRPO is to restore, protect, and enhance wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values within the forested portions of the easement. A forest management plan must be developed by an NRCS forester, or the landowner may obtain a forest management plan at their own expense from a professional, certified forester, and provide it to NRCS for review and approval by the State Resource Conservationist (SRC). The completion of an NRCS-approved forest management plan alone does not guarantee that forest management activities will be authorized on the easement area. Forest management activities described in the forest management plan that are approved by NRCS for implementation must be identified in a CUA and are subject to the following limitations per CPM, Title 440, Part 528, Section 528.152(G):
(i) Forest management activities must be implemented in a manner and during timeframes that will minimize impacts to forest-nesting birds. (ii) Maximization of timber harvest for economic gain is not a consideration in developing the forest management plan or authorizing a CUA; however, any proceeds derived from the sale of timber harvested in compliance with the forest management CUA, may be kept by the easement owner. (iii) NRCS must inspect any timber harvest operation during implementation to ensure the CUA is being implemented as written.

NRCS will not authorize forest management activities that may negatively impact at-risk or listed species or fragile or rare habitats found on any easement. Except where authorized by the national ACEP-WRE manager in consultation with the NRCS national biologist, clearcutting of forested habitat is not permitted. Clearcutting may only be considered in unique situations where NRCS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) agree that forest conditions or special wildlife habitat needs require such a measure.

Table 5. Common Permissible CUAs

All planned practices and activities must meet all applicable NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and supporting documentation found in the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance. **Please see Appendix 7 for additional requirements.**

Eligible Practice/Activity	CUA Type, as listed on Annual Monitoring Worksheet (AMW)	Typical Associated Practice Code	Conditions and Technical Considerations for Application
Grazing	Grazing	472, 516, 528, 614, 644, 645	Any grazing practices must be covered by a grazing management plan, which must be reviewed and updated by NRCS every five years at the very least and meet all CUA criteria as indicated under WA WRCG 6.1.2 section. For vegetation management that directly supports the wetland functions and values and wildlife habitat for which the easement was originally purchased. Consider all of the following at a minimum: timing, intensity, duration, and extent; nesting bird disturbance; maintenance of winter cover and spring nesting cover; protection of riparian areas; fencing and watering locations. **There must be no adverse effects on ground nesting birds and other wildlife.** NRCS can require, at the landowner's expense, the installation of temporary fencing and watering facilities. Grazed areas may not be hayed/mowed in the same year.
Fence maintenance	Management/Maintenance Activities	382, 645	Repairs to existing fence are permitted under specific circumstances. Existing fence can be repaired to existing standards only if the repairs are considered minor. Major repairs to existing fence or fence replacement require adherence to wildlife-friendly fence standards. New non-wildlife-mitigated fence is prohibited.
Food Plots	Food Plots	420, 645, 647	Typical supporting management practice; some scenarios for payment appear on the payment schedule. If vegetation or ground disturbance, can only be performed outside the nesting season (March 15 – July 15). Please reference WRCG section 6.1.1 for WA NRCS specific parameters.
Water level management	Management/Maintenance Activities	644, 646	For water management using water control structures or other acceptable means. Research water rights applicable to the property prior to use to ensure compliance with water laws. If there is a water issue, contact the Easements Program Manager immediately. Ensure drawdown timing and

			duration is compatible with local wildlife needs. Added water depth and duration may be used as a method to control unwanted vegetation; ensure water depths are designed to provide habitat for target wildlife species.
Water well usage	Management/Maintenance Activities	516, 533, 644, 646	For use in maintaining wetlands and wildlife habitat. Research water rights applicable to the property prior to use to ensure compliance with water laws and the easement deed, if water rights were included. If there is a water issue, contact the Easements Program Manager immediately.
Herbaceous Weed Treatment	Pest Management	315	For eradication and maintenance of noxious weeds, non-native invasive plants, and/or plants inconsistent with the plant communities of the easement outlined in WRPO. Treatment must comply with all Federal and State laws and not compromise intended functions, values, or restoration goals of the easement. NRCS may not make specific chemical recommendations. Spot treatment and chemicals registered for aquatic use when feasible is highly encouraged.
Brush management	Pest Management	314	**For eradication and maintenance of noxious weeds, non-native invasive plants, and/or plants inconsistent with the plant communities of the easement outlined in WRPO**. Treatment must comply with all Federal and State laws and not compromise intended functions, values, or restoration goals of the easement. NRCS may not make specific chemical recommendations. Spot treatment and chemicals registered for aquatic use when feasible is highly encouraged.
Haying	Haying or Mowing	315, 314, 643, 644, 645, 647 *511 only allowed when used in conjunction with 643, 644, 645, 647.	May only be used for vegetation management on areas of excessive thatch build-up, on areas with noxious weeds (Class A and County B designates) that cannot be treated another way, or management for identified priority wildlife species in the WRPO. Consider timing and extent, consistency with wildlife/wetland purposes, and maintenance of winter cover and spring nesting cover, and stubble height. Haying can only occur between July 15 and September 1 and is prohibited all other times. Not permitted where woody vegetation is establishing. Hayed areas may not be grazed in the same year. **All bales must be removed by September 30.** Please reference WRCG section 6.1.5 for WA NRCS specific parameters.
Mowing/Trails	Haying or Mowing, Trails	315, 314, 575, 643, 644, 645, 647	May only be used for vegetation management for trails and walkways, on areas of excessive thatch build-up, on areas with noxious weeds (Class A and County B designates) that cannot be treated another way, or management for identified priority wildlife species in the WRPO. Consider timing and extent, consistency with wildlife/wetland purposes, and maintenance of winter cover and spring nesting cover, and stubble height. Mowing can only occur between July 15 and September 1 and is prohibited all other times. Not permitted where woody vegetation is establishing. Mowed areas may not be grazed in the same year. Mowed access may not be more than 16 feet wide. Reasonable operation, repair, and maintenance of existing access and service roads and trails. New road and trail

			construction is prohibited. Trails must be non-constructed, native soil material without fill. Please reference WRCG section 6.1.5 for WA NRCS specific parameters.
Disking	Other	490, 327, 342, 644, 647, 315, 314	For vegetation and early successional habitat management or to facilitate seeding or regeneration, where appropriate. Leave at least 30% residue on the soil surface. May not be used on slopes >7% without ASTC-P & SRC approval.
Forest management	Timber Harvest, Carbon Sequestration	384, 314, 490, 612, 643, 645, 649, 666	For removal of dangerous debris, or forest health improvement and related wildlife friendly practices as recommended in a forest management plan completed by a professional forester or other certified entity. Forest plans will be approved by NRCS.
Installation & maintenance of acceptable structures	Installation/Maintenance of Acceptable Structures, and/or Developed hunting/fishing	None.	Semi-permanent hunting or observation blinds will be "rustic and customary" to region and not exceed 80 sq. feet in size and 8 feet in height (approx. four-person capacity). No concrete or metal will be allowed. The installation footprint will be minimized, and disturbed areas will be revegetated with native vegetation. Blind will be maintained and kept in good working order, and blend with the natural environment. A CUA is not needed if blinds are temporary, nonpermanent and constructed out of natural and untreated materials (without metal, plastic, manufactured wood products, or concrete).
Infrastructure maintenance	Maintenance of Private Drainage,	Multiple – consult eFOTG.	Includes the reasonable operation, repair, and maintenance of bridges, culverts, water control structures, ditches, dikes, pumps, wells, and existing roads. Any removal or relocation of infrastructure is prohibited without NRCS preapproval. Consider the timing of activities to minimize disturbance to wildlife. Ensure landowner(s) obtain all permits.

6.2. Maintenance

An ACEP-WRE or WRP easement may be eligible for further financial assistance if determined necessary for maintenance or for further restoration goals and activities. Practices and/or activities may be funded through a conservation program contract (CPC) with the landowner, a Federal contract, or other acceptable means. Only the practices listed in the current version of the applicable program payment schedule and that further the purposes of the easement may be funded under stewardship maintenance or follow-up restoration contract.

Any necessary practices or activities must meet all applicable NRCS Conservation Practice Standards, National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance. Practices must also be planned within the most current version of the planning Business Tool. Ranking of these activities is not required. The planner or their assignee must have job approval authority (JAA) to plan and oversee implementation of the practices and follow all Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) and supporting documentation contained in the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG).

Final determination of necessity is made by the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P), in consultation with the State Resource Conservationist (SRC) and Easements Program Manager (EPM). The Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P) will consider the planning and recommendations from the Field and/or Area Offices when authorizing such activities. When necessary, the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P) will defer the final decision to the State Conservationist (STC). Upon approval, the Easements Program Manager (EPM) will work with staff to obligate and manage the contract.

Proper permitting not obtained by landowner(s) that is required by local, state, and/or federal agencies will halt any restoration or enhancement activities; NRCS reimbursement will not be executed until such violation(s) are fully and properly remediated in accordance with a Washington NRCS Violation Remediation Plan (VRP) or permitting agencies requirements.

6.3. Other Management Considerations

Reserved. Other management considerations may be added in subsequent versions upon consultation with the STAC.

6.4. Monitoring

Every non-stewardship and stewardship easement has monitoring requirements to ensure that the program purposes and terms of easement deeds are being met. ACEP-WRE, and previous WRP acquisitions, are stewardship easements that are held by the US Government. Different activities covered by this WRCG may require additional monitoring requirements outside of a “normal” schedule. For more information on monitoring these easements, see CPM, Title 440, Part 527, Subpart P and the most current Washington State-issued guidance.

6.5. Violations

The purposes of monitoring and enforcement activities are to ensure that all easements and 30-year contracts under NRCS jurisdiction achieve the purposes of the programs under which they were acquired and to ensure that the resources and taxpayer investment are adequately protected. Regular monitoring is crucial to NRCS’ ability to determine if program purposes and objectives are being achieved, identify what actions may be needed to achieve those purposes and objectives, prevent violations from occurring, and ensure that violations that do occur are cured in a timely manner. The goal of easement enforcement is to return the easement or 30-year contract to its pre-violation condition. Therefore, Washington NRCS will not consider any CUA requests on any U.S. held easement that is in a current violation status until such violations are remedied in accordance with a Washington NRCS Violation Remediation Plan (VRP). In addition, Washington NRCS will also halt any restoration work and not complete any reimbursement(s) until violations are remedied in accordance with a Washington NRCS Violation Remediation Plan (VRP). Proper permitting not obtained by landowner(s) that is required by local, state, and/or federal agencies will halt any restoration or enhancement activities; NRCS reimbursement will not be executed until such violation(s) are fully and properly remediated in accordance with a Washington NRCS Violation Remediation Plan (VRP) or permitting agencies requirements. For more information on violations and enforcement, see CPM, Title 440, Part 527, Subpart S and the most current Washington State-issued guidance.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1. NRCS Resource Concerns

Appendix 2. Washington NRCS ACEP-WRE Priority Areas Map

Appendix 3. Washington NRCS Prime and Unique Soils Map

Appendix 4. Washington Department of Natural Resources Ecoregions Map

Appendix 5. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan: 2022-2026" Focus Areas Map

Appendix 6. Washington ACEP-WRE Screening & Land Eligibility Worksheet

Appendix 7. List of Eligible Practices & Activities for Wetland and Upland Wildlife Habitat Restoration, Management, and Enhancement

Appendix 8. List of Resources

Appendix 9. Washington NRCS WRCG Approval

Appendix 1. NRCS Resource Concerns

SWAPA+E	Resource Concern Category	Resource Concern
Soil	*Wind and water erosion*	Sheet and rill erosion
		Wind erosion
	Concentrated erosion	Ephemeral gully erosion
		Classic gully erosion
		Bank erosion from streams, shorelines or water conveyance channels
	Soil quality limitations	Subsidence
		Compaction
		Organic matter depletion
		Concentration of salts or other chemicals
		Soil organism habitat loss or degradation
		Aggregate instability
Water	*Weather resilience*	Ponding and flooding
		Seasonal high water table
		Seeps
		Drifted snow
		Naturally available moisture use
	Source water depletion	Surface water depletion
		Groundwater depletion
		Inefficient irrigation water use
	Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	Nutrients transported to surface water
		Nutrients transported to groundwater
		Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to surface water
		Sediment transported to surface water
	Field Pesticide loss	Pesticides transported to surface water
		Pesticides transported to groundwater
	Storage and handling of pollutants	Nutrients transported to surface water
		Nutrients transported to groundwater
		Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to surface water
		Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to groundwater
	Salt losses to water	Salts transported to surface water
		Salts transported to groundwater
Plants	*Pest pressure*	Plant pest pressure
	Degraded plant condition	Plant productivity and health
		Plant structure and composition
	Fire management	Wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation
Animals	*Livestock production limitation*	Feed and forage balance
		Inadequate livestock shelter
		Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality and distribution
	Terrestrial habitat	Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
	Aquatic habitat	Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
		Elevated water temperature
Energy	*Inefficient energy use*	Energy efficiency of equipment and facilities
		Energy efficiency of farming/ranching practices and field operations

Appendix 2. Washington NRCS ACEP-WRE Priority Areas Map

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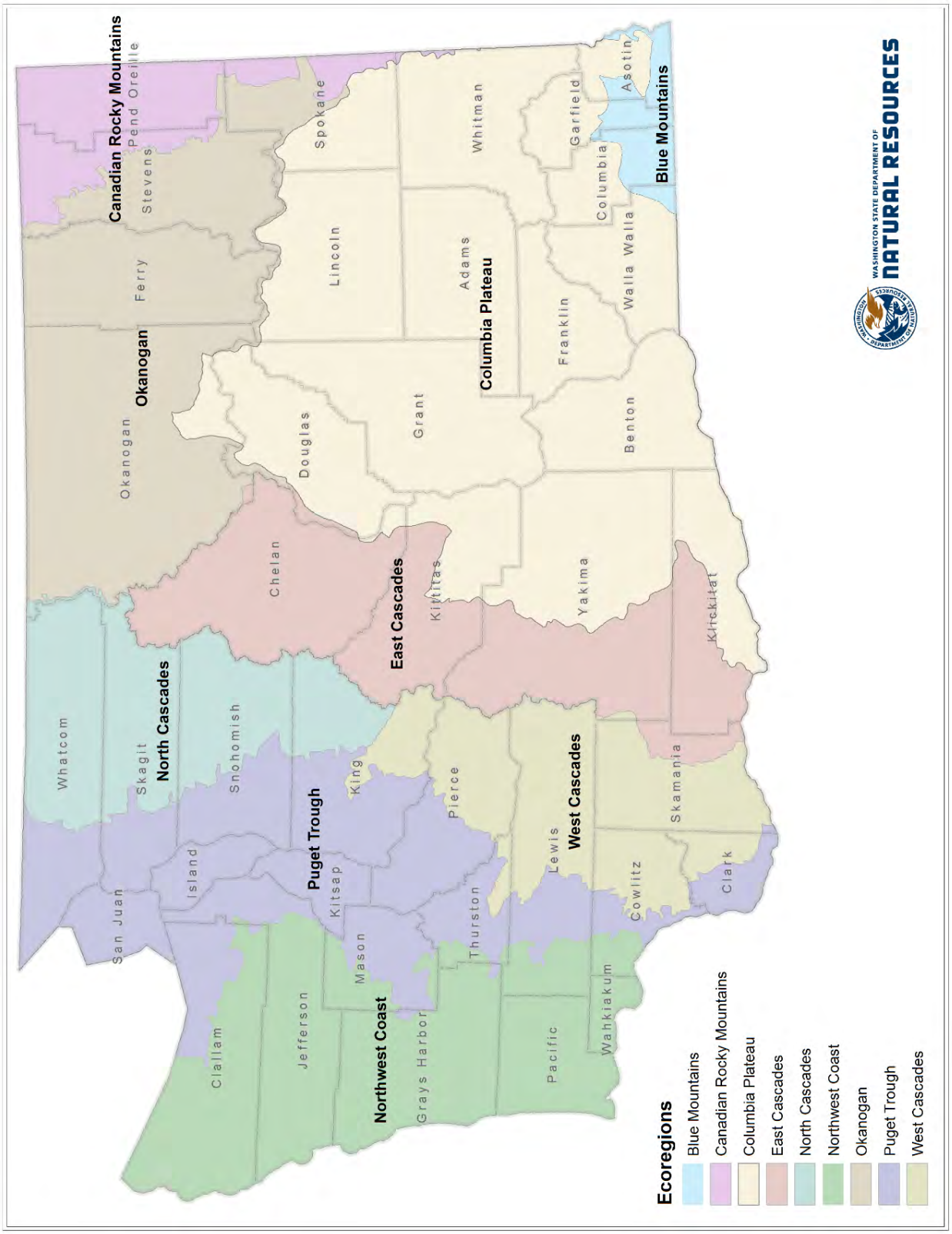
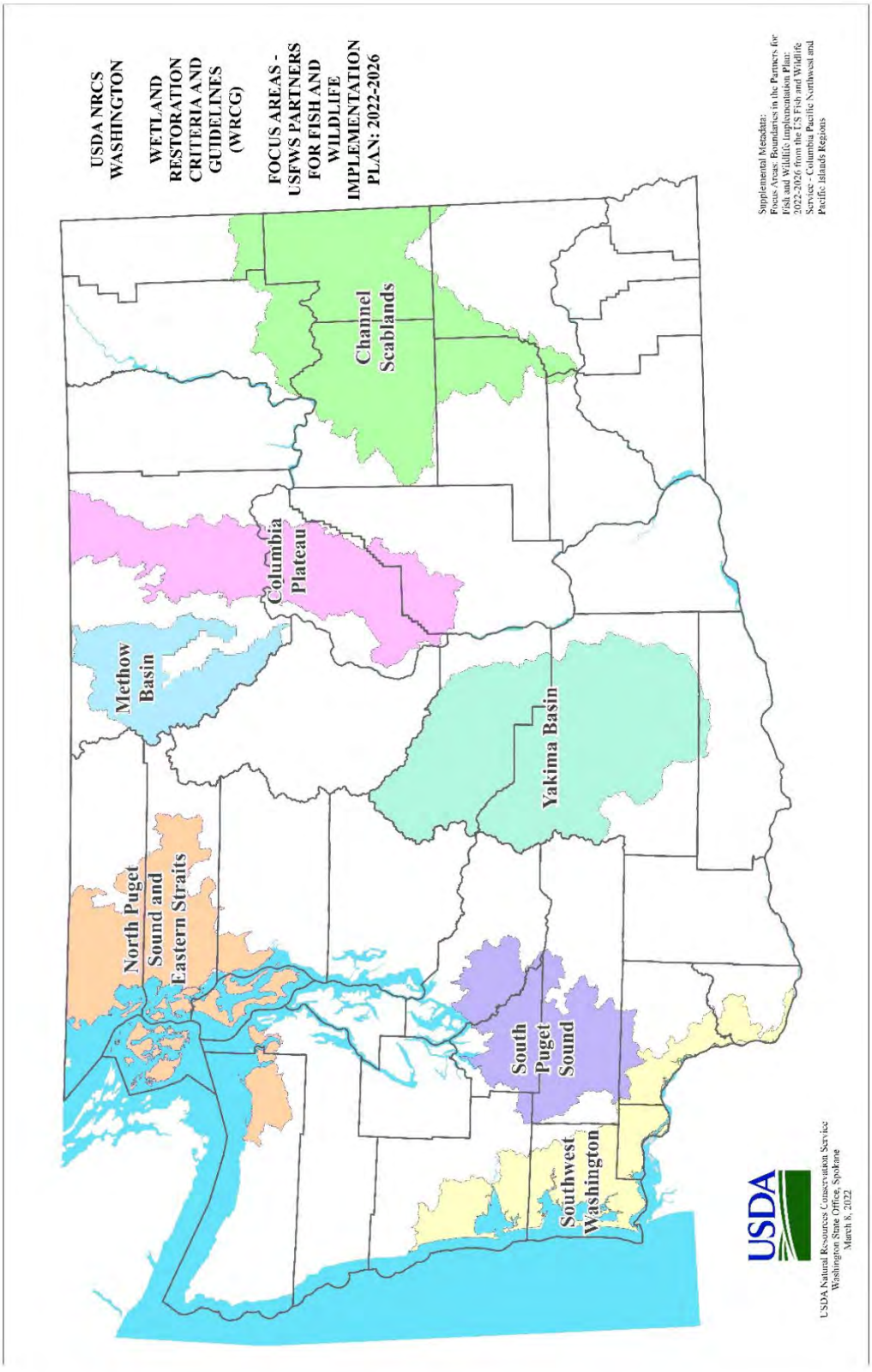
Appendix 3. Washington NRCS Prime and Unique Soils Map

Insert Finalized Map Here

Appendix 4. Washington Department of Natural Resources Ecoregions Map



Appendix 5. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan: 2022-2026" Focus Areas Map



Appendix 6. Washington ACEP-WRE Screening & Land Eligibility Worksheet

Washington NRCS
Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Screening & Land Eligibility Worksheet
Fiscal Year (FY) 2023

This land eligibility & screening worksheet is required to be completed by NRCS for each WRE application.

Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each WRE application. The goal of this screening worksheet is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and WRE benefits are allocated in an efficient and equitable manner to best meet the program requirements. Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute approval of a WRE. The original screening worksheet must be kept in the official state office (SO) case file in accordance with policy. The screening priority (High, Medium, Low, Ineligible) must be recorded in the SO case file and appropriate business tool(s). **All eligible applications will be ranked.** Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant.

Land eligibility is determined during on-site field reviews by NRCS and an appropriate interdisciplinary team of partner specialists, including USFWS. The landowner should be invited to participate in these field reviews. It is recommended that the field reviews be completed only after all requirements outlined in section 528.103 of the ACEP Manual have been completed to the satisfaction of NRCS. Section 528.105 of the ACEP Manual provides direction on determining Land Eligibility.

528.105A(4) The easement case file must contain documentation that identifies which portions of the offered area meets which technical land eligibility criteria. If lands meeting the "other eligible lands" criteria are included in the easement area, the case file must document the basis for the inclusion of those lands along with any applicable waivers.

528.105B(i) During the on-site field reviews of the offered acres, NRCS will— (i) Determine if the land meets one or more of the eligible land type requirements to be eligible for enrollment as listed in the ACEP-WRE policy section 528.105C through 528.105I.

Detailed Screening Worksheet – Complete for Each WRE Application

Applicant Name(s): (All names listed on deed)		County, Legal Description (Section,Township,Range):	
		NEST/Protracts Application Number:	
Evaluator Name(s) and Agency:		Application Date:	
		Estimated Total Acres:	
		Date of Site Visit:	

Instructions: For each application submitted provide a Conservation Desktop map showing the offered area. Check the appropriate box in step one and and applicable priority in step 2.

Step One:		Yes		No	
A	**Has the applicant owned the land for at least 24 months or acquired it from an immediate family member within the last 24 months per deed?** *Examples: A death in the family and blood relative inherits land. Land is transferred from an individual to trust or other entity with the former owner as part of the trust or entity.*	☐	**Yes, continue to step 2.**	☐	**No, Application is low priority.** *NRCS to confirm and evaluate if waiver is applicable.*
B	**Does the offered area contain land subject to existing easement or protection?** *Examples: USFWS wetland or grassland easements*	☐	**Yes, Application is medium priority. Confirmed by SO.**	☐	**No, continue to step 2**

Step Two: Special Ranking Consideration: Prioritization of Offer Type.

Offer Type	Priority	
Any offer that falls within WA NRCS's set priority areas as defined within the state WRCG.	☐	High
Any offer that is a 30-year Contract (Tribal only).	☐	Medium

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Appendix 6. Washington ACEP-WRE Screening & Land Eligibility Worksheet

Any offer with more than 2:1 Upland to Wetland ratio.	☐ Low
The following land is not eligible for enrollment in the ACEP-WRE per CPM 440.528.106: • Converted wetlands (180-NFSAM designations "CW" and "CW+year") if the conversion was commenced after December 23, 1985, except as noted above in section 528.105I(6). • Lands established to trees under a CRP contract, except as provided below in paragraph B(2) of this section. • Lands that would exceed the county cropland enrollment limitations tracked by FSA per 528.106 B(3). No more than 25% of the total cropland in any county, as determined by FSA, may be enrolled in CRP and in ACEP-WRE easements. No more than 15% percent of the total cropland in the county may be subject to easements acquired under ACEP-WRE. • Lands owned by an agency of the United States, other than acreage owned by Indian Tribes. • Lands owned by a State, including an agency or a subdivision of a State or a unit of local government. • Land subject to an easement or deed restriction that, as determined by NRCS, provides similar restoration and protection of wetland functions and values as would be provided by enrollment in ACEP-WRE. • Lands where the purposes of the program or implementation of restoration practices would be undermined due to onsite or offsite conditions, such as risk of Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual (440-528-M, 1st Ed., Amend. 131, Feb 2020) 528-K.21 hazardous materials or petroleum products, permitted or existing rights-of-way, infrastructure development, or adjacent land uses. • Restoration, maintenance, management, or monitoring costs to the Federal Government that are determined to be excessive for the area or type of wetland as outlined in ranking & WRCG. • Land that NRCS determines to have unacceptable exceptions to clear title or legal access that is encumbered, nontransferable, restricted, or otherwise insufficient.	☐ Ineligible

Complete this section only if application is eligible. If application is ineligible, first and second review signature blocks must still be completed.

Eligible Land Types per CPM440.528.105:	Acres
C.2.i Farmed or Converted Wetlands *(Attach supporting documentation for wetlands farmed under natural conditions, prior converted, or farmed wetland (FW or FWP) designation e.g. CWD, Hydric Soils Map as specified under section 528.105C (2i)).*	
C.2.ii Former or Degraded Wetlands *(Attach supporting documentation from site inspection and provide method of restoring Former or Degraded Wetland as specified under section 528.105C (2ii)).*	
C.2.iii Lands Substantially Altered by Flooding *(Attach supporting documentation detailing flood altering conditions as specified under section 528.105C (2iii))*	
D. Grassland or croplands *(Attach supporting documentation for pothole/basin flooding non-wetlands that documents eligibility requirements specified under section 528.105.D(1)-(3)).*	
E. Riparian Areas *(Attach supporting documentation that site provides link between protected wetlands and meet requirements specified under section 528.105.E(1)-E(6)).*	
F. Lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) *(Attach supporting documentation that site meets eligibility requirements specified under section 528.105F(1) -F(3). Lands established to trees under CRP are ineligible unless they meet the requirements identified in section 528.106B(2)).*	
G. Wetlands Restored or Protected Under a Private, State, or Federal Program *(Attach supporting documentation that documents eligibility as specified under section 528.105G(1)-G(4)).*	
H Hydric Soil Minor Components(Inclusions) and Problematic Hydric Soils (Non-Typical Situations) *(Attach supporting documentation from site inspection by wetland team leader or resource soil scientist that site is eligible based on the specifications in section 528.105H(1)-(5)).*	
Total Eligible Acres	0
I. Other Eligible Lands: Adjacent Lands *(must meet the eligibility criteria specified in 528.105I 1(i)-(iii)). Up to 4:1 upland to wetland ratio per Washington WRCG (and as specified in 528.105I 2 - 4).*	
Total Easement Acres	0

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Appendix 6. Washington ACEP-WRE Screening & Land Eligibility Worksheet

Additional Information: Complete this section only if application is high or medium priority.
Total Estimated Preliminary Restoration Costs *Applicable restoration CPS are located within Washington NRCS's WRCG.* *Use current FY payment schedule at 100%.*
Estimated Easement Value *Use approved Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for estimation.* *Acres Offered x GARC = Estimated Easement Value*
RESERVED
RESERVED
RESERVED
RESERVED

I have reviewed the application information and certify that this application should be considered for potential WRE funding and acquisition as indicated above.

First Level Reviewer:	Title:
Second Level Reviewer (State Office):	Title:

If applicable. The following special consideration has been made by State Conservationist for selection out of ranking order per CPM 440.528.41B(6):

State Conservationist:	Date:

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Appendix 7. List of Eligible Practices & Activities for Wetland and Upland Wildlife Habitat Restoration, Management, and Enhancement

Wetland Restoration, Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, Wetland Enhancement, and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management are the umbrella practices eligible to implement on ACEP-WRE's. Practices and activities planned on ACEP-WRE's must meet the intent of the program, for the purpose of wetland wildlife habitat restoration.

NOTE: **Please see Table 5 for additional requirements.** If not expressly noted, all practices with vegetation or ground disturbance should consider potential adverse effects on ground nesting birds if work will be completed during March 15 – July 15. All planned practices and activities must meet all applicable NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and supporting documentation found in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), National Planning Policy Handbook (NPPH), National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other related National and State planning policies and guidance.

Practice Code	Eligible Practice/Activity	Washington NRCS Funding Potential	Note
314	Brush Management	No, for routine treatment, which is responsibility of landowner(s). Yes, when used for site prep and post plant in conjunction with establishing desirable plant communities.	A mechanism for the landowner to implement a compatible use authorization to control noxious weeds (Class A and County B designates) as required; to control invasive plants or other vegetation consistent with purpose. Can only be performed outside the primary nesting season (March 15 – July 15).
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	No, for routine treatment, which is responsibility of landowner(s). Yes, when used for site prep and post plant in conjunction with establishing desirable plant communities.	A mechanism for the landowner to implement a compatible use authorization to control noxious weeds (Class A and County B designates) as required; to control invasive plants inconsistent with purpose. Special considerations can be made with ASTC-P and SRC approval to allow funding potential.
326	Clearing and Snagging	Yes	Used to remove stream or ditch crossings when no longer needed to assist in hydrology restoration and aquatic organism passage.
327	Conservation Cover	Yes	To improve cover consistent with the easement purpose and region. Native species only.
340	Cover Crop	No	The only practice that can use plant species that are non-native specifically allowed by the practice standard and only to facilitate establishment of native cover via another conservation practice.
342	Critical Area Planting	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration construction and as called for on a design. Native species required unless infeasible to achieve stabilization and waiver from ASTC-P and SRC is granted.

351	Well Decommissioning	Yes	Contact EPM if practice is needed.
353	Monitoring Well	Yes	Contact EPM if practice is needed.
355	Ground Water Testing	Yes	Contact EPM if practice is needed.
356	Dike or Levee	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
378	Pond	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Approval by ASTC-P and SRC is required.
382	Fence	Yes, if in accordance with Warranty Easement Deed (WED). No, if CUA requires fencing for waterbody exclusion.	Only wildlife-mitigated fence may be planned.
384	Woody Residue Treatment	Yes	To reduce fire hazard.
587	Structure for Water Control	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	Yes	Native species only.
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	Yes	Native species only.
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	Yes	If associated planting, native species only.
396	Aquatic Organism Passage	Yes	For use where there are obstructions to fish and other aquatic organism passage.
402	Dam	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting	Yes, as a supporting management practice. No, for all food plots.	Establishing wildlife habitat by planting herbaceous vegetation or shrubs.
430	Irrigation Pipeline	Yes	May only be planned in limited circumstances where needed to facilitate the necessary hydrology to meet the purpose of the easement and the requirements in this WRCG.
462	Precision Land Forming and Smoothing	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as

			called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
472	Access Control	Yes	Where needed to prevent or discourage unauthorized access or use.
484	Mulching	Yes	Use in conjunction with planting practices, including those associated with construction.
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	Yes	To facilitate planting or regeneration of native tress/shrubs.
500	Obstruction Removal	Yes	To remove debris and other unwanted objects or material inconsistent with the purpose (e.g., non-wildlife-mitigated fence, household trash).
511	Forage Harvest Management	No	Only to facilitate delayed haying outside of primary nesting season (March 15 – July 15) to remove excessive thatch build up.
516	Livestock Pipeline	Yes	May only be installed to facilitate grazing for habitat/wetland improvement purposes and only where there is no feasible water source accessible from the easement that would not cause environmental damage or where hauling water is infeasible.
520, 521, 522	Pond Sealing or Lining (various treatments)	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
528	Prescribed Grazing	No	For vegetation management that directly supports the wetland functions and values and wildlife habitat for which the easement was originally purchased. Consider all of the following at a minimum: timing, intensity, duration, and extent; nesting bird disturbance; maintenance of winter cover and spring nesting cover; protection of riparian areas; fencing and watering locations. **There must be no adverse effects on ground nesting birds.** In order to ensure no adverse effects on ground nesting birds, grazing is prohibited from March 15 through July 15 unless concurrence from the Area or State biologist is obtained. NRCS can require, at the landowner's expense, the installation of temporary fencing and watering facilities. Grazed areas may not be hayed/mowed in the same year.
533	Pumping Plant	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the

			purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
550	Range Planting	Yes	Only where appropriate to facilitate planting of native species.
560	Access Road	Yes	May not be used to create new roads or travel ways or expand existing. Only for maintenance of existing roads predating the easement and specifically to facilitate effective management of the easement.
570	Stormwater Runoff Control	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
572	Spoil Spreading	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Spoil may not be spread on the easement unless it will have a neutral or positive effect on the easement values.
574	Spring Development	Yes	May only be installed to facilitate grazing for habitat/wetland improvement purposes and only where there is no feasible water source accessible from the easement that would not cause environmental damage or where hauling water is infeasible.
578	Stream Crossing	Yes	Generally, not acceptable except to improve an existing crossing that is in disrepair, and which also is necessary to access and manage the easement. Must support the purpose of the easement and meet all other WRCG criteria.
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Must meet the purposes of the easement and be the most viable option to address the resource concern while having the least effect on the natural condition.
582	Open Channel	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
584	Channel Bed Stabilization	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Must meet the purposes of the easement and be the most viable option to address the resource concern while having the least effect on the natural condition.

587	Structure for Water Control	Yes	To facilitate hydrology management consistent with the easement purpose and WRCG criteria.
601	Vegetative Barrier	Yes	For use where necessary; native species only.
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	Yes	Native species only. If over dominate grass species are creating a monoculture environment, NRCS should consider planting tree and shrub species to increase plant diversity.
614	Watering Facility	Yes	May only be installed for wildlife or to facilitate grazing for habitat/wetland improvement purposes and only where there is no feasible water source accessible from the easement that would not cause environmental damage or where hauling water is infeasible. Must include a wildlife ramp, if applicable.
620	Underground Outlet	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
642	Water Well	Yes	Check deed restrictions. If allowed, only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Installation must be compliant with state and local water laws. If to facilitate grazing, see restrictions under 516.
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	Yes	Engineering scenarios: Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria. Ecological scenarios: Planting must be native species only. Must meet all WRCG criteria.
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	No	Typical supporting management practice. If vegetation or ground disturbance, can only be performed outside the primary nesting season (March 15 – July 15).
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	Yes, as a supporting management practice. No, for all food plots.	Typical supporting management practice. If vegetation or ground disturbance, can only be performed outside the primary nesting season (March 15 – July 15).

646	Shallow Water Development and Management	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management	Yes, as a supporting management practice. No, for all food plots.	Typical supporting management practice; some scenarios for payment appear on the payment schedule. If vegetation or ground disturbance, can only be performed outside the primary nesting season (March 15 – July 15).
649	Structures for Wildlife	Yes	Only where appropriate to facilitate habitat improvement for documented target species.
656	Constructed Wetland	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
657	Wetland Restoration	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
658	Wetland Creation	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
659	Wetland Enhancement	Yes	Only for use in conjunction with restoration/maintenance construction and as called for on a design that supports the purpose of the easement and meets all other WRCG criteria.
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning	Yes	For landowner to maintain clearance on existing travel ways (no payment). May also use to maintain wildlife habitat where appropriate and prescribed by NRCS.
666	Forest Stand Improvement	No	For landowner to remove safety hazards on forest land that affect their quiet enjoyment of the property (no payment). Where prescribed as NRCS to appropriate manage the forest for the purpose of the easement.
Any other practice as determined by NRCS Certified Planner with JAA.		Scenario dependent	SRC, State Engineer, and ASTC-P will determine if practice or activity is needed to accomplish the restoration.

Appendix 8. List of Resources

1. Austin, J. E. et al. 2018. Interactions and impacts of domesticated animals on cranes in agriculture. - Cranes and Agriculture: A Global Guide for Sharing the Landscape. Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA: International Crane Foundation. p: 72–82.
2. Conservation Program Manual (CPM), Title 440, Part 528 – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, February 2020.
3. Donnelly, J. P. et al. 2016. Public lands and private waters: scarce mesic resources structure land tenure and sage-grouse distributions. - Ecosphere in press.
4. Donnelly, J. P. et al. 2020. Climate and human water use diminish wetland networks supporting continental waterbird migration. - Glob. Chang. Biol. in press.
5. Localized Areas Statewide: 2018 WA Natural Heritage Plan List of Plant Communities https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/amp_nh_plan_communities.pdf
6. National Audubon Society. 2019. Guide to North American Birds. (https://www.audubon.org/field-guide)
7. NRCS Electronic Field Office Technical Guide. U.S. Department of Agriculture.
8. Smith, J. T. et al. 2018. Effects of livestock grazing on nesting sage-grouse in central Montana. - J. Wildl. Manage. 82: 1503–1515.
9. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2022. Columbia Pacific Northwest and Pacific Islands Regions Partners for Fish and Wildlife Strategic Plan: 2022-2026. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, OR.

Appendix 9. WRCG Approval

All the information located within this WRCG remains in effect until replaced by an updated version. Washington NRCS's WRCG is not all inclusive and does not prevent the agency from completing due diligence analysis of restoration and/or management actions on a case-by-case basis according to the WRPO. Any additional requirements to Washington's WRCG will be incorporated on an as-needed basis, and will be reviewed every Farm Bill at the very least.

Reviewed by the State Technical Advisory Committee: April 21, 2022

Approval by Washington NRCS State Conservationist:

ROYLENE COMES AT NIGHT
State Conservationist