

WDFW Commission Approves Land Purchase

Local News

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Posted on : June 4, 2012 at 4:57 pm

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved several land transactions, including the purchase of nearly 52 acres of property along Dungeness Bay in Clallam County during a meeting here June 1-2. Purchasing the land, located about five miles north of Sequim, will allow the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to protect and restore key coastal wetlands important for fish, shellfish and wildlife. The property will become part of the North Olympic Wildlife Area, managed by WDFW to provide habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species as well as public access for outdoor recreation, such as fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing. The \$1 million purchase price will be funded with grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In other action, the commission approved a transfer of about 1,200 acres of wetlands located on the north and south sides of Willapa Bay to WDFW. Forterra, a non-profit organization formerly known as the Cascade Land Conservancy, is transferring the properties to the department to help protect marsh and forested wetlands important for numerous fish and wildlife species, and to ensure public access for fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing. The properties will be managed as part of WDFW's Johns River Wildlife Area. Two conservation easements in Okanogan County were also approved by the commission, a nine-member citizen panel appointed by the governor to set policy for WDFW. Under those agreements, WDFW secures the development rights to the properties while the current landowners maintain ownership, along with property tax obligations and weed control responsibilities. All land transactions were appraised by independent, state-certified appraisers. In other business, the commission received briefings on Columbia River fisheries, regional fisheries enhancement groups, the operation and maintenance of WDFW-owned lands, the department's Energy and Major Projects Program, the Karelian bear dog program, the Puget Sound shrimp fishery, implementation of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, and a commercial license buy-back program for the sea cucumber and sea urchin fishery. For more information about the commission, visit WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/>.