

Ecology Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Long Beach Mitigation

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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OLYMPIA ‐ The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is seeking public comment on a proposal to certify the establishment and operation of a privately owned, 76-acre wetland mitigation bank north of the city of Long Beach in Pacific County. The public comment period for the proposed Long Beach Wetland Mitigation Bank is Friday, Nov. 16, through Monday Dec. 17, 2012. Long Beach Mitigation Bank of Longview, the company seeking to establish and operate the bank, will permanently protect the property through a conservation easement. The bank is designed to protect portions of an important mature interdunal wetland system made up of a wide wetland swale with multiple dune ridges and extends about 15 miles along the length of the Long Beach Peninsula. The site also includes forested uplands with mature and old growth trees. Wetland banks are an important strategy for engaging the private sector and power of the marketplace to sustain Washington's remaining wetlands.

State and federal laws prohibit the loss of wetlands due to development. A wetland bank is a pre-existing wetland restoration project. The Long Beach Wetland Mitigation Bank would offer credits ‐ subject to regulatory approval ‐ to developers required to offset wetland losses that cannot be avoided. The availability of wetland credits, however, doesn't eliminate state and federal regulations requiring developers to avoid and minimize wetland damage. If approved by Ecology, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Pacific County, credits generated by the Long Beach Wetland Mitigation Bank could be purchased to offset wetland losses for development projects on the peninsula that do not drain or have an outlet to either Willapa Bay or the Pacific Ocean. The proposed bank would be located east of Ocean Beach Highway (State Route 103), at the end of 148th place north of Long Beach. It would augment other wetland protection and conservation efforts on the Long Beach Peninsula. In 2010, Ecology received a \$1 million federal grant and worked with the Columbia Land Trust to acquire and protect an additional 125 acres of coastal wetlands, forest and streamside habitat to the Island and Loomis Lakes conservation area on the peninsula. The approval of the Long Beach Wetland Mitigation Bank, located south of this conservation project, will further protect this critical wetland system by extending conservation efforts south of Loomis Lake. Comments on the proposed wetland mitigation bank can be emailed or sent to Ecology by 5 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17, 2012, to: Kate Thompson Shorelands & Environmental Assistance Program Washington Department of Ecology P.O. Box 47600 Olympia, Wash. 98504-7600 kate.thompson@ecy.wa.gov