



City of Yelm
EST. 1924

WASHINGTON

"Pride of the Prairie"

Yelm HCP Interested Parties Meeting #2 Minutes

April 24, 2023

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

PURPOSE

The overall goal of Yelm Habitat Conservation Plan (Yelm HCP) Interested Parties Meetings is to seek feedback on the process and outcomes of the Yelm HCP during the development process. Interested Parties meeting #2 reviewed the purpose and process of HCP development, shared current progress, anticipated project milestones, timeline and engagement opportunities.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Presentation (see Interested Parties Meeting #2 slides)
3. Questions from interested parties' group and responses from City of Yelm (Yelm) and Confluence Environmental Company (CEC)

ATTENDANCE

Name	Affiliation	Attendance Method
Phil Bloch	CEC	In-person
Alexis Huynh	CEC	Virtual
Steve Craig	Citizen (Retired, Department of Ecology)	In-person
Brian Stewart	Conservation Northwest	Virtual
Curtis Wambach	EnviroVector	Virtual
Jessica Jackson	Puget Sound Energy	Virtual
Kurt Wilson	Soundbuilt Homes	Virtual
Gary Cooper	Yelm	In-person
Maryam Moeinian	Yelm	In-person
Joshua Crossman	Yelm City Council	Virtual
Sara Wattenberg	Puget Sound Energy	Virtual

Notes:

Yelm = City of Yelm

CEC = Confluence Environmental Company

SUMMARY OF INTERESTED PARTIES' QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

From	Via	Question	Response
Steve Craig	In-person	Is it possible to revisit the plan within the 30-year period?	The HCP is like a contract with a no surprises agreement between the applicant and USFWS. The good faith agreement considers best science available for implementation. There is an adaptive management chapter that addresses

From	Via	Question	Response
			how new information and science is considered and how to incorporate into the plan. If an unforeseen species listing occurs, there is a mechanism to update the HCP, though it would require another full public process.
Brian Stewart	Virtual	Can you send out maps or GIS layers of the extent of the HCP, as well as the potential growth via GMA or annexation?	We are still creating datasets, though many of the layers we are using, such as the city limits and UGA, are publicly available.
Brian Stewart	Virtual	With the lack of habitat representation, some species won't have representation in the HCP – are you planning to include those species, such as the western gray squirrel?	HCP is driven by listing status; it is not meant to be comprehensive for all habitats within the area. WDFW shares your concern with the western gray squirrel. USFWS considers the regional population of WGS to be part of much larger population that is not currently in a sensitive status; thus, they don't anticipate it being listed under the ESA in the foreseeable future.
Joshua Crossman	Virtual	What about the bald eagle, since their habitat and nesting sites occur in the area?	The species is not currently listed under ESA, and the population is looking healthy and not anticipated to be listed in the future. Bald eagles still have protection under other policies and regulations including the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Steve Craig	In-person	Could salmonids and their habitat be referenced as an issue in the HCP? Yelm Creek was historical habitat for salmonids.	HCP is primarily for ESA-listed species that currently occur in the area and have a potential to be impacted by city activities. If the city is interested in other initiatives for habitat restoration, discussion of Yelm Creek may be included in other restoration plans.
Brian Stewart	Virtual	What about transient species like fisher? That could pass through in the next 30 years, wolves?	If the occurrence of species is incidental and not predictable then they do not tend to be included in habitat conservation plans. There is some recognition that species could potentially pass through the area, but if they become more active in area, determination can change.
Curtis Wambach	Virtual	Chinook are listed as Threatened. The WDFW Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database mapped Chinook in Yelm Creek. Should Chinook be included? The WDFW does not recognize artificial barriers.	We will take a further look at Yelm Creek. NMFS has a history of recognizing current use as a determination for species inclusion. We would need to engage NMFS in the process.

From	Via	Question	Response
Steve Craig	In-person	Camas/plants – could plant species be referenced as an issue in the plan?	The plan will focus on the covered species, but may also reference or benefit habitats associated with prairie species like the Yelm Pocket Gopher. Maintenance of prairie habitat and management regime that might maintain them may be discussed.
Steve Craig	In-person	Where does the 1000 gopher number come from? How many gophers typically make a home per acre? What is their need in terms of acreage?	Recovery criteria and the basis for those criteria are enunciated in the recently approved FWS Recovery Plan for Pocket Gophers (https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/MazamaPocketGophers_FINAL_RP_20220825_Signed.pdf). Common criteria for each subspecies include: 1) reserve establishment, 2) demographic viability (which is where 1,000 individuals is set as a target), and 3) habitat area. USFWS states that “model results [show] that ... a minimum population of 1,000 individuals would meet our probability of persistence goals.” They are invited but have their own public comment process. Ultimately, an HCP proposal is an applicant’s proposal and these interested party meetings are to address comments to the City of Yelm on its proposal.
Steve Craig	In-person	Why isn’t there someone from USFWS here?	USFWS will lead the public review and evaluation of the HCP once it is finalized. At this stage the effort is a locally directed effort and Yelm should be leading this.
Kurt Wilson	Virtual	Is it 120 sq ft structure per parcel or multiple structures on a parcel?	For each structure, if it’s less than 120 sq ft, it doesn’t need permit/approval.
Gary Cooper	In-person	What about replacement of a structure?	That will be clarified in the covered activities. Replacement structures that require building permits would be covered activities.
Gary Cooper	In-person	Will USFWS be the one conducting public meetings?	USFWS will be the administrative lead for public meetings associated with NEPA when the draft HCP is published for review. They may hire a consultant to facilitate those meetings.
Kurt Wilson	Virtual	When would you start talking about project specific mitigation?	CEC is currently developing drafts of specific mitigation proposals for City of Yelm consideration. We anticipate being prepared to discuss specific mitigation activities at the next Interested Parties meeting in 3-5 months.
Kurt Wilson	Virtual	Can you highlight some of the differences between Thurston and Tumwater HCP?	Thurston HCP proposed conservation actions at the beginning of the plan term before impacts occur and would be providing conservation benefits before impacts. Tumwater has

From	Via	Question	Response
			struggled to identify a funding mechanism for offsetting actions to occur prior to impacts. USFWS has enunciated that within an HCP mitigation actions should precede or occur at the same time as impacts.

Notes:

City = Yelm

ESA = Endangered Species Act

HCP = Habitat Conservation Plan

PSE= Puget Sound Energy

UGA = urban growth area

USFWS = US Fish and Wildlife Service

WDFW= Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

WGS = western grey squirrel