



## **Protocol & Procedure for Mazama pocket Gopher Inspections in the City of Yelm**

### **INSPECTION PROTOCOL & PROCEDURE**

The following information describes the Yelm screening protocol to assess the likelihood of take of the of Mazama pocket gopher (*Thomomys mazama*) (MPG) protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

#### **A. General Information**

1. The MPG review season will run June 1-October 31.
2. The protocol described in this memorandum will only apply to properties not known to be occupied by MPG since April 2014, the date of the federal listing
  - a. Exception: Properties that were found to be occupied by MPGs can apply for another review five years after the initial determination.
3. Negative determinations will be valid for the length of the underlying City permit or approval, per City code.
4. Qualified consultants may perform field reviews and submit results for City evaluation, per the CAO. Consultants must have received training from USFWS at one of the two trainings offered in May/June 2018, and in 2019.

#### **B. In-Office Procedures**

1. City staff will review land use applications to determine if the MPG field screening protocols described in this memorandum must be initiated for the following:
  - a. On a soil type known to be associated with MPG occupancy.
2. City staff will determine if other factors preclude the need for field screening. See Preliminary assessment below.
3. City staff will notify applicants if their application cannot be excluded from further review.
4. City staff will review critical area reports submitted by consultants.

### **C. Preliminary Assessment**

As land use applications are received, properties mapped with gopher soils undergo the following preliminary assessment in-office.

1. The following criteria may release a project from further gopher review.
  - a. Sites submerged for 30 consecutive days or more since October 31, 2021.
  - b. Sites covered with impervious surfaces.
  - c. Fully forested (>30%) sites with shrub and fern understory.
  - d. Sites that consist of slopes greater than 40 percent, or that contain landslide hazard areas (per existing City regulations).
  - e. Building to take place in the footprint of an existing structure (also mobile home replacements in the same footprint).
  - f. Mobile home replacements in existing lots in an existing mobile home park.
  - g. Heating oil tank removal
  - h. Foundation repair
  - i. Projects which lie >300 feet from mapped gopher soils.
  - j. Replacement wells and utilities.

### **D. Site Visit Overview**

City field personnel or hired consultants will conduct field observations to determine MPG presence on sites with potential habitat. These site visits will be conducted as follows:

1. All valid site visits must be conducted from June 1 through October 31. Site visits outside that survey window will not be considered valid.
2. A site or parcel is considered to be the entire property, not just the footprint of the proposed project.
3. Sites with less preferred soils (see Attachment A) will be visited two (2) times, at least 30 days apart.
4. Sites with more preferred soils (see Attachment A) will be visited two (2) times, at least 30 days apart.
5. Site conditions must be recorded on a data sheet. A separate data sheet shall be submitted for each site visit. Similar information may also be documented in narrative form. A template data sheet can be found on the City website at: [https://www.ci.yelm.wa.us/connect/community\\_development/index.php](https://www.ci.yelm.wa.us/connect/community_development/index.php)

Document and describe which areas of the parcel cannot be screened due to limited accessibility and/or dense understory. This should be depicted on an aerial or site plan submitted to the City.

6. The ground must be easily visible to ensure mound observation and identification. Request mowing if necessary, to ensure visibility. Wait two to three weeks after mowing before beginning screening.

## **E. Detailed Field Methodology**

1. The survey crew orients themselves with the layout of the property using aerial maps, and strategizes their route for walking through the property.
2. Start GPS to record survey route.
3. Walk the survey transects methodically, slowly walking a straight line and scanning an area approximately 2-3 meters to the left and right as you walk, looking for mounds. Transects should be no more than five (5) meters apart when conducted by a single individual.
4. If the survey is performed by a team, walk together in parallel lines approximately 5 meters apart while you are scanning left to right for mounds.
5. At each mound found, stop and identify it as an MPG or mole mound. If it is an MPG mound, identify it as a singular mound or a group (3 mounds or more) on a data sheet to be submitted to the City. (Data sheets may be found on the City's website at:  
[https://www.ci.yelm.wa.us/connect/community\\_development/index.php](https://www.ci.yelm.wa.us/connect/community_development/index.php))
6. Record all positive MPG mounds, likely MPG mounds, and MPG mound groups in a GPS unit that provides a date, time, georeferenced point.
7. Photograph all MPG mounds or MPG mound groups. At a minimum, photograph MPG mounds or MPG mound groups representative of MPG detections on site.
8. Photos of mounds should include one that has identifiable landscape features for reference. In order to accurately depict the presence of gopher activity on a specific property, the following series of photos should be submitted to the City:
  - a. At least one up-close photo to depict mound characteristics
  - b. At least one photo depicting groups of mounds as a whole (when groups are encountered).
  - c. At least one photo depicting gopher mounds with recognizable landscape features in the background, at each location where mounds are detected on a property
  - d. Photos can be taken with the GPS unit or a separate, camera, preferably a camera with locational features (latitude, longitude)
  - e. Photo point description or noteworthy landscape or other features to aid in relocation.
  - f. The approximate building footprint location from at least two cardinal directions.
  - g. Landscape photos to depict habitat type and in some cases to indicate why not all portions of a property require gopher screening.
9. Describe and/or quantify what portion and proportion of the property was screened, and record your survey route and any MPG mounds found on either an aerial or parcel map.

10. If MPG mounds are observed on a site, that day's survey effort should continue until the entire site is screened and all mounds present identified, but additional site visits are not required.

11. In order for the City to accurately review Critical Area Reports submitted in lieu of City field inspections, the information collected in the field (GPS, data sheets, field notes, transect representations on aerial, etc.) shall be filed with the City prior to October 31st.

Table 1. Soils known to be associated with Mazama pocket gopher occupancy.

<b>Mazama Pocket Gopher Preference Category</b>	<b>Soil Type</b>
<b>More Preferred (formerly High and Medium Preference Soils)</b>	Nisqually loamy fine sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes Nisqually loamy fine sand, 3 to 15 percent slopes Spanaway-Nisqually complex, 2 to 10 percent slopes Cagey loamy sand Indianola loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes Spanaway gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes Spanaway gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 15% slopes
<b>Less Preferred (formerly Low Preference Soils)</b>	Alderwood gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes Alderwood gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes Everett very gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes Everett very gravelly sandy loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes Indianola loamy sand, 3 to 15 percent slopes Kapowsin silt loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes McKenna gravelly silt loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes Norma fine sandy loam Norma silt loam Spana gravelly loam Spanaway stony sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes Spanaway stony sandy loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes Yelm fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes Yelm fine sandy loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes