

TO: City Council
FROM: John Doan, City Administrator
DATE: February 14, 2023
SUBJECT: Mazama Pocket Gopher Mitigation Credits

1) Recommended Action:

Discussion only.

2) Background:

The Bush Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is being developed by the City and the Port of Olympia (Port) to serve as the basis for an application for an incidental take permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The incidental take permit will cover effects on four covered species, including the listed Olympia pocket gopher, from urban development and operations and maintenance activities within the City, as well as on Port owned properties in the City.

The purpose of the Bush Prairie HCP is to facilitate development, allow growth in accordance with local and state laws in the City, and protect biological resources, including Olympia pocket gopher and their habitat. The Bush Prairie HCP will help the City and Port develop a shared long-term framework for management tools to provide for the long-term preservation of four covered species and assurances for all participants. Mitigation pursuant to the HCP requires permanent acquisition and “development” of large parcels of land into viable mitigation sites so that prairie species may flourish into perpetuity.

The acquisition of mitigation credits will be used as part of the Bush Prairie HCP for the Olympia pocket gopher and is an interim measure until the City can launch a land acquisition program and develop suitable permanent mitigation sites. It will take time for the City to acquire the first properties of the Reserve System for the Bush Prairie HCP, because the City will need time to accumulate funds from fees, negotiate with landowners to acquire land, and ensure that the land purchased is improved to provide the necessary level of conservation value. The City is requesting funding from the Legislature to initiate the land acquisition. This discussion will be about the purchase of existing approved credits.

Additional information about the HCP is at: <http://www.bushprairiehcp.org/index.html>

3) Policy Support:

Strategic Priority: Be a Leader in Environmental Sustainability
Goal: Complete and Implement Habitat Conservation Plan

4) Alternatives:

☐ This proposal is one alternative for initial implementation of the HCP.

5) Fiscal Notes:

Staff will discuss the proposal for an inter-fund loan to finance this purchase in anticipation that the majority of the credits would be sold to other parties.

6) Attachments:

No attachments.