



Background

The prairies of South Puget Sound are among the rarest habitats in the United States and are home to four Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, which could be adversely affected by urban growth. The Bush Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) will serve as the basis to apply for an incidental take permit (ITP) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for urban development and related activities within the City of Tumwater (City) and on the Olympia Regional Airport, managed by the Port of Olympia (Port).

The purpose of the Bush Prairie HCP is to allow for appropriate growth in accordance with local and state laws and adopted land use within the City and at the Port of Olympia, while protecting biological resources, including listed species and their habitats. The HCP provides a framework from which the City and Port can avoid, minimize, and mitigate effects to ESA listed species associated with development.

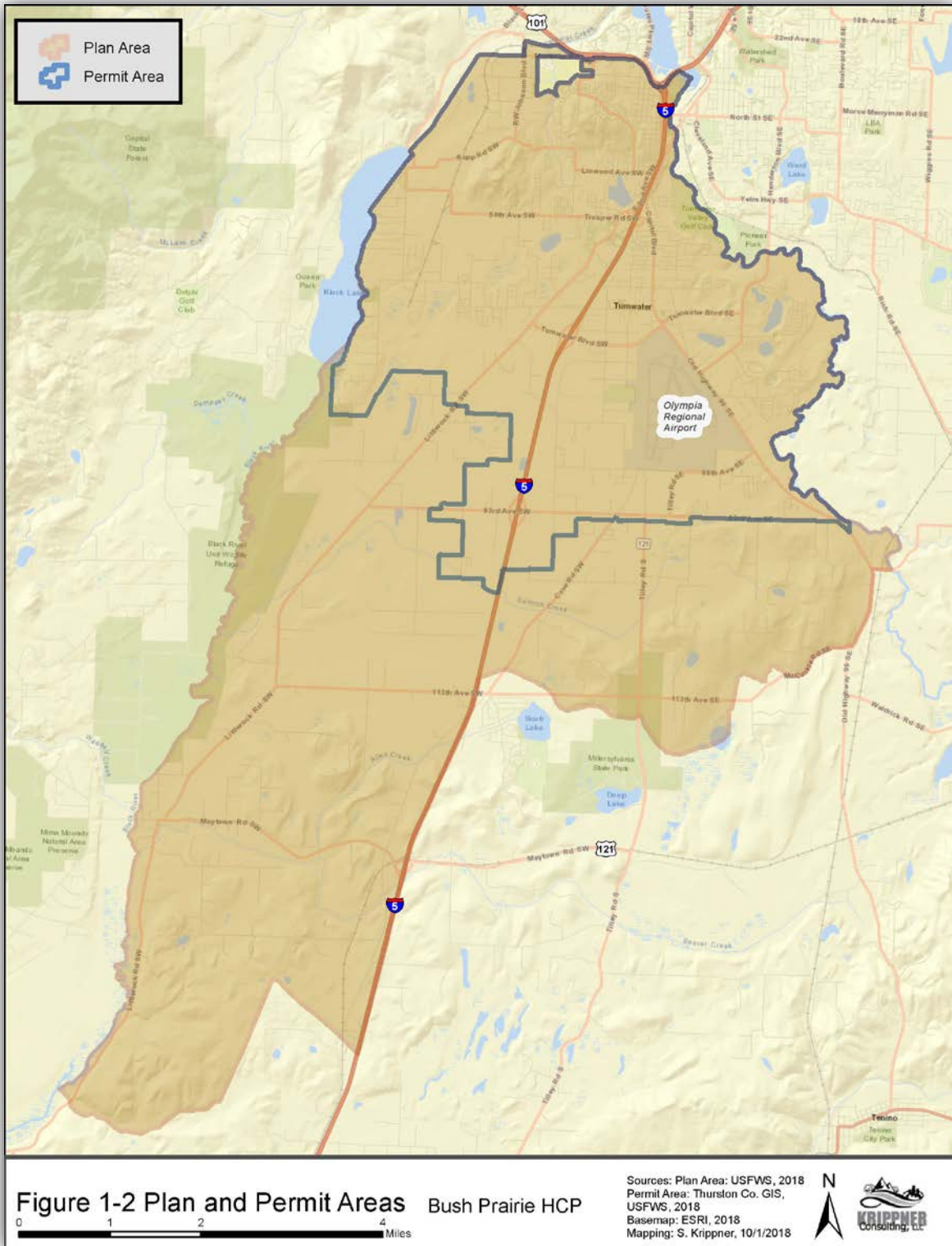
The City and Port (Applicants), will apply for a Section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP from USFWS for all species addressed in the HCP. The Applicants have determined that a 30-year permit term is appropriate to address regulatory and biological considerations. The permit term represents the time when all covered activities can receive take authorization under the HCP, consistent with the Plan's requirements. It is also the time when all mitigation actions must be successfully completed to offset impacts of the covered activities.

Take authorization for all covered activities, including covered operational and maintenance activities, will expire at the end of the permit term, unless the permit is renewed or replaced.

Covered Area

The area addressed in the HCP is split between the Plan Area and Permit Area. The Plan Area is defined as the Tumwater Urban Growth Area (UGA) and additional areas south of the UGA where mitigation may occur¹. The Permit Area is the geographic area where the ITP applies and includes the area under the control of the applicants where covered activities described below will occur. An overlay of these two areas is shown in the attached Figure 1-2.

¹ The extent of the potential mitigation area was defined by the range of the Olympia pocket gopher.



Covered Species List

Covered species are those species for which take authorization is being requested by the Applicants. The Plan area provides habitat for a variety of species, including species listed under state and federal endangered species protection laws. Covered species were selected for the HCP based on review of all species of conservation concern known or suspected to occur in the plan area during the permit term. The Bush Prairie HCP would cover four species: Olympia pocket gopher, Oregon spotted frog, streaked horned lark, and Oregon vespers sparrow. Species ESA-status and their habitat requirements are provided in Table 1, below.

Table1. Proposed covered species

Species	Status		Habitat Type
	Federal	State	
Olympia pocket gopher	Threatened		Open meadows, prairies, and grassland habitats of the glacial outwash plain where there are porous, well-drained soils.
Oregon spotted frog	Threatened	Endangered	Prefers large (≥9 acres), warm marshes but can occur at smaller sites (2.5 acres) of perennial bodies of water (e.g., pond, sluggish stream, roadside ditch).
Streaked horned lark	Threatened	Endangered	Ground dwelling bird that utilizes open habitats (flat and treeless).
Oregon vesper sparrow	--	Species of Concern	Open areas with short, sparse grass and scattered shrubs.

Covered Activities

Covered activities are those projects or ongoing activities that will receive incidental take authorization under the ITP issued to the Applicants. A comprehensive list of potential covered activities was reviewed, and seven categories of covered activities were identified to be addressed in the HCP. Below is a list of the categories with a brief explanation of what they encompass.

- Urban development – projects to accommodate urban growth, subject to construction permits issued by the City.
- Resource development– projects to utilize or extract natural resources (e.g., forestry and agriculture).
- Recurring activities – activities that are subject to City authorizations or permits and that do not entail land clearance (e.g., authorized public or private event).
- Operations and maintenance - maintain the utility of existing land uses, facilities, and services within the City.
- Aeronautical activities - activities that occur on the Port of Olympia that receive funding through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants (e.g., infrastructure construction).

- Non-aeronautical activities – Port of Olympia urban development activities, including operations and maintenance.
- Conservation strategy implementation – activities to create and maintain mitigation lands.

Schedule and Stakeholder Engagement

HCP preparation is underway and the Applicants are working closely with the USFWS and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop the document. The Draft HCP is expected to be released for public comment in Spring 2018. Once the draft HCP is complete, an analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) will be completed. It is expected the NEPA and SEPA processes will take one year beginning in Spring 2019 and continue through Spring 2020. During this time there will be two opportunities for the public to comment; first during NEPA/SEPA scoping (Spring 2019) and secondly during the public review process (Winter 2019/2020).

To keep stakeholders informed about the HCP and NEPA/SEPA development process, there will be quarterly stakeholder meetings during 2019. Those dates and locations will be set in early 2019.

