



Background

The purpose of the Bush Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is to allow for appropriate growth in accordance with local and state laws and adopted land uses within the City and at the Port of Olympia, while protecting biological resources, including species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 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 and other recurring activities.

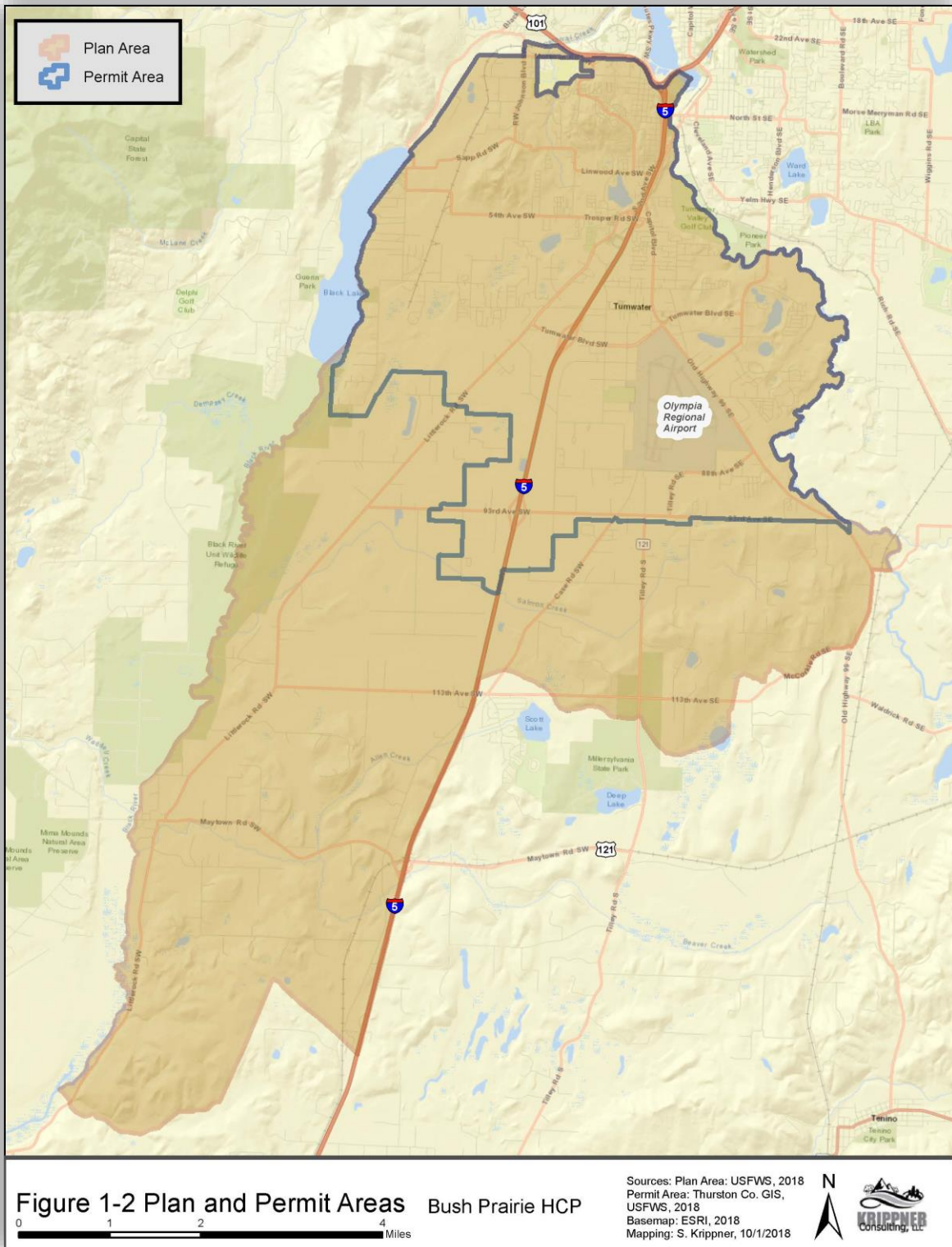
The prairies of South Puget Sound are among the rarest habitats in the United States and are home to three ESA-listed species, which could be adversely affected by urban growth. The HCP will serve as the basis to apply for an incidental take permit (ITP) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 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 City and Port 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.

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 City and Port where covered activities 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 City and Port. 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 vesper 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 City and Port. 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, such as residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional projects subject to construction permits issued by the City.
- Agricultural development– agricultural projects that are subject to City review.
- 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).
- Facilities 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 City and Port are working closely with the USFWS and WDFW to draft the HCP document. The Draft HCP is expected to be released for public comment in 2020. Once the draft HCP is complete, environmental review 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 mid-2020 and continue through 2021. During this time, there will be two opportunities for the public to comment; first during NEPA/SEPA scoping at the beginning of the process and secondly during the public review process once the public draft has been released.

To keep stakeholders informed about the HCP and NEPA/SEPA development process, there will be stakeholder meetings continuing during 2020, as well as another community workshop during the NEPA/SEPA process. Those dates and locations will be set in early 2020.

