

andy.hover@co.oka...
Mazama Bridge Habitat ...

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*Project Title	Mazama Bridge Habitat Acquisition
*Sponsor	Okanogan County
*Primary Contact	Commissioner Andy Hover
*E-Mail Address	andy.hover@co.okanogan.wa.us
*Anticipated Request - SRFB	\$160,000
*Anticipated Request - Tributary Committee	\$27,500
*Anticipated Other Funding	0
*Anticipated TOTAL Budget	\$187,500
*Briefly describe the location of the project	The project site is on the Methow River, just upstream of the Lost River Road bridge north of the SR 20 Mazama Junction at RM 68.
*Latitude (decimal degrees)	48.590191
*Longitude (decimal degrees)	-120.407695
*Project subbasin	Methow
*Methow Assessment Unit(s)	Methow River-Fawn Creek
*Reach(es) Name	Methow River Fawn 11
1. *In one or two sentences, what do you propose to do?	Okanogan County seeks grant to purchase an intact riparian property located in a priority area on the Methow River near Mazama for Spring Chinook, Steelhead and Bull Trout being offered by Washington State Department of Transportation prior to WSDOT's planned disposition by way of public auction.
2. *What species will the project benefit?	Spring Chinook Steelhead Bull Trout Summer Chinook Numerous upland species and birds.

3. *Select the project's objectives and the associated tracking metrics

Acquisition, Easements, Leases

Acquisition, Easements, Leases: Reporting Code

Acres of land, wetland or estuarine area protected from degradation or development

Miles of stream bank or riparian protected

4. *Does this project or any of its phases (e.g., design) already exist in Salmon Recovery Portal or PRISM?

No

5. *Has this project been submitted previously for funding through the SRFB and/or Targeted process(es)?

No

6. *What category is the project?

Protection

7. *What type of protection are you proposing?

Fee Simple

8. *Is this protection project associated with a current or future restoration project?

Maybe

9. *Placement - Does the project protect important high quality habitat and/or watershed processes and to what degree?

Yes, this property is located immediately adjacent to an area of high spawning activity and consists primarily of mature cottonwood forest on the south side of the river which provides shading. Much of the property is located within the flood plain. Additionally, the property is located in an area where there has been significant private land conservation in support of salmon recovery where this parcel exists as an "in-holding" of sorts and acquisition would represent an opportunity to build upon these previous investments by private individuals and other public funders.

10. *Freshwater Benefit - What would be the anticipated loss in survival, capacity or distribution for target species at the project scale if the proposed area is not protected?

Sale of this property at public auction to the lowest bidder, and subsequent commercial or residential development in almost any scenario where vegetation removal occurs would result in the degradation of the mature cottonwood gallery, and potential negative impacts along the shoreline in an area of documented spawning habitat.

11. *Threat - How imminent is the threat of habitat degradation to the proposed land if the project is not implemented?

If Okanogan County is not successful in obtaining funding, WSDOT will re-start the property surplus process they already had underway in late 2020. That public auction would take place sometime in early 2021. Actual development post-auction is unknown at this time, though any development of the parcel would have likely negative impacts upon the site's current natural status as a mature cottonwood forest located within and adjacent to the flood plain. Because public funding sources are

typically too slow to support participation in the auction by a non-profit entity, it is unlikely that a conservation-oriented organization will be able to participate in an auction if that process moves forward.

12. Conditions - Briefly describe if there are any conditions regarding the protection of the property that could limit the protection benefits

We are not aware of any such conditions.

13. Will there be public access?

No

1. *What is the landownership?

Washington State Department of Transportation

2. *Have you secured landowner participation in or acceptance for this project?

Yes

*Please explain

WSDOT has agreed to halt the public auction process they had underway to allow Okanogan County, working with support from the Methow Conservancy, to secure funding for a purchase by Okanogan County as allowed by RCW 47.12.063 for WSDOT surplus properties.

3. Describe any land owner requirements (e.g., design elements, right-of-ways, access agreements, liability waivers, etc.) and if/how they could affect the project

Aside from negotiating the purchase itself, we are not aware of any landowner / WSDOT requirements.

4. Will the project raise potential concerns for interest groups (e.g., recreational users) or the community at large (including upstream/downstream/ adjacent landowners)?

Given that the project is located in an area where significant land conservation work has been completed over the past 20 years, we do not anticipate public concerns with a habitat protection strategy on this parcel which has been in public ownership for 70+ years.

5. Who will have the responsibility to manage and maintain the project? What is the responsibility of current or future landowners?

Okanogan County has responsibility for parcels that it owns, but may seek future partnership opportunities in the future to work with organizations like the Methow Conservancy or others who have resources, including volunteer labor, available to support on-going stewardship needs, if any.

6. Please describe the risk of failure associated with this project.

If this property is not secured by Okanogan County, or another eligible entity (we are aware of none who are pursuing this), then it will be auctioned to the highest bidder in a WSDOT public auction. Because most public funding processes are slow, it is unlikely that a conservation-oriented organization working in the watershed will be able to participate successfully in a public auction. While private ownership does not necessarily mean a loss of conservation value on the property, any significant development activity would result in degradation to what is an otherwise intact piece of high quality riparian habitat.

7. Is there any public outreach planned during and/or after implementation? Does the project build community support for salmon recovery efforts?

Okanogan County will consult with the Mazama Advisory Committee (County appointed citizen advisory committee on land use matters in Sub-Unit "A" of Okanogan County) for input as part of development of the final project application. Given the historic salmon recovery work in this part of the Methow Valley, we believe that a successful project will help to build community support for salmon recovery.

8. Does the project represent an opportunity for economic benefit? How much benefit does the project create for the dollars invested?

This property is located at the gateway from Scenic Highway 20 to the community of Mazama, a fast-growing and increasingly popular tourist and recreation destination at the foot of the North Cascades. People travel the Scenic Highway corridor, and recreate in Mazama to enjoy the natural setting along the many trails in the area. This project is located along the Methow Community Trail, and contributes to the visitor experience to this part of Okanogan County. Additionally, the project site builds upon previous conservation investments in the immediate vicinity, including the Methow Conservancy's recent acquisition and planned public access point located immediate downstream (across Lost River Road). While it is difficult to quantify the direct economic benefit per dollar invested, it is clear that in-tact habitat and the rural character of Mazama contribute to its desirability and the level of private economic investment underway currently, and over the past decade in the upper Methow Valley.

9. Describe any partnerships, their experience, and types of contributions supporting the project.

Okanogan County is working with support from the Methow Conservancy which has offered staff support in taking advantage of the opportunity provided by WSDOT for Okanogan County to pursue this acquisition.