SUBJECT
Request for authorization to purchase 0.56 acres at the primary public entrance to South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve.

ISSUE
Whether the State Land Board should authorize the acquisition of 0.56 acres adjacent to the entrance of the South Slough Reserve’s Visitor Center (Appendix A). The land is located off of Seven Devils Road in Coos County at Township 26 South, Range 14 West, Section 26, Tax Lot 500.

AUTHORITY
• Oregon Constitution, Article VIII, Sections 2 and 5; pertaining to the Common School Fund and land management responsibilities of the State Land Board.
• ORS 273.055; relating to the power to acquire and dispose of real property.
• ORS 273.171; relating to the duties and authority of the Director.
• ORS 273.553; relating to the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve agreement between Oregon and federal government rules.
• ORS 273.554; relating to the powers, membership and procedures of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Commission.
• OAR 141-067; relating to the sale, exchange and purchase of state land.
• Real Estate Asset Management Plan, adopted by the Land Board; February 2012.
SUMMARY
In June of 2020, the State Land Board approved initial due diligence for the purchase of two key properties totaling 1.7 acres located at the entrance of South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) near Charleston (Appendix B). The properties are adjacent to a driveway off Seven Devil’s Road. The driveway serves as a primary access point for South Slough Reserve’s Visitor Center, a key facility for Reserve visitors and staff.

The acquisition of both properties will secure state ownership of the entrance of South Slough Reserve and allow Reserve staff to improve the health, safety, and appearance of the Reserve’s entryway.

History of Acquisitions and Current Purchase
The first of the two properties was purchased from Coos County Department of Forestry in October 2021, following approval from the Land Board in February 2021. The 1.14-acre property was purchased for $85,000, funded by a federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and a donation from the Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc.

South Slough Reserve is requesting permission to acquire the second property, which is 0.56 acres. An option agreement (See Appendix C) to purchase the property from the owner, Rolin Block, for $40,000 was signed in January 2022, subject to final Land Board approval. Funding for the sale will be provided by Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc.

Once acquired, the property will be managed by the Reserve on behalf of DSL as special stewardship lands, and the Reserve will initiate efforts to improve the overall condition of both properties; for example, removing any remaining infrastructure, clearing downed and dead vegetation, and planting native species. These efforts will help manage wildfire risk and address visual concerns expressed by the community. The Reserve will also work with the community to identify the best use of the property, such as establishing an additional parking area to maximize accessibility. It is expected that once approved for purchase, these lands will eventually be brought into the official boundary of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Reviewing Due Diligence
In May of 2020, Reserve staff requested input on the proposed acquisition from cultural and natural resources staff of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; the Coquille Indian Tribe; and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. All replied with no concerns.

The property was recently appraised to estimate its fair market value. Additionally, DSL’s archaeologist has conducted a cultural resources review of the property and concluded the property is a low risk for cultural resources. Public notice of the potential
acquisition was sent to adjacent property owners, local government agencies and tribal authorities. The Friends of South Slough wrote a letter in support of the acquisitions and confirmed their commitment to provide $40,000 for the project (Appendix D). No other public comments were received.

An environmental phase I report is in process for completion. If environmental damage is found, the sale contract requires the owner to repair or pay for any damage prior to the sale and purchase of the property.

RECOMMENDATION
The Department recommends the Land Board approve the purchase of tax lot 500, containing 0.56 acres of land adjacent to the entrance of South Slough Reserve’s Visitor’s Center.

APPENDIX
A. Map of Property
B. June 9, 2020, Agenda Item 3
C. Option Agreement
D. Letter of Support from the Friends of South Slough Reserve
E. Land Evaluation Form
APPENDIX A

SSNERR Acquisition Properties
T26S, R14W, Sections 26 & 27
Tax Lot 100: 1.14 acres
Tax Lot 500: 0.56 acres
Coos County

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