



Oregon

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Department of State Lands

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State Land Board

State Land Board

Regular Meeting

April 9, 2024

Agenda Item 2

Tina Kotek

Governor

LaVonne Griffin-Valade

Secretary of State

Tobias Read

State Treasurer

SUBJECT

Acquisition of Coos County properties adjacent to the South Slough National Estuarine Reserve.

ISSUE

Whether the Land Board should authorize the due diligence to support the acquisition of two properties in Coos County, totaling 113 acres, to increase the lands of the South Slough Reserve and protect those habitats.

AUTHORITY

Oregon Constitution, Article VIII, Sections 2 and 5; relating 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 273.316 and 273.321; relating to the exchange of state lands.

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.

BACKGROUND

The Department of State Lands oversees the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve) on the southern Oregon coast. The Reserve manages nearly 7,000 acres of natural habitat which include open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested lands. This area is managed for long-term research, education, and public recreation with a focus on the stewardship and protection of natural and cultural resources.

This proposed acquisition includes two properties owned by Coos County:

- The first property is a rectangle-shaped 100 acres, known as the “Deal property”, that will need to be separated out of three existing tax lots. This property was owned by Elwin Deal before Coos County acquired it.
- The second property, known as the “triangle property,” is a triangle-shaped 13-acre parcel along Seven Devils Road, near the South Slough Visitor Center.

South Slough staff met with the Coos County Commissioners in January 2024 and agreed on the area of land for sale for both properties. The Commissioners agreed to sell the Reserve both properties at their yellow book appraised value. Additionally, Coos County will remove the derelict buildings of two homesteads after the purchase of the properties. See the signed agreement in Appendix B.

Deal Property (100 acres)

The 100-acre Deal property is adjacent to the southern border of the Reserve and is a lowland, former-wetland pasture area with great potential for fish habitat. This area is the only suitable spawning habitat for coho salmon in the local watershed. The spawning reach is approximately three-quarters of a mile long and is located within the Coos County Forest, approximately 2 miles south of the Reserve. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife conducts annual surveys for coho salmon in the spawning area and has fish traps on the Reserve to monitor adults moving upstream.

The Deal property also supports habitat for lamprey and marbled murrelet and contributes to the goals of several local and state conservation plans and priorities. Acquisition of this property supports the Department’s Marbled Murrelet Management Plan, as well as the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan, the Coos Basin Coho Strategic Action Plan, Wild Rivers Land Trust’s Conservation Plan, the Oregon Conservation Strategy, and Oregon’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Acquiring and transferring management of the Deal property to the Reserve will ensure that critical habitat for threatened and endangered species is not only protected in perpetuity, but that efforts to improve habitat for these species will be prioritized as well.

Triangle Property (13 acres)

The triangle property consists of 13 acres of upland forest along Seven Devils Road with Reserve land behind the property to the north and east. An old road runs through

the property and serves to access the land behind it. Acquiring this land would improve access to the Reserve and prevent future timber harvest on lands adjacent to the Reserve. Coos County wants to sell the Reserve the triangle property because the size and position make it unsuitable for commercial forestry.

NERRS Grant Funding Opportunity

With several million dollars recently becoming available to National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRS) through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Reserve is in a favorable position to resume this acquisition project. In 2022, the Reserve received capacity-building funding from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and partnered with the Wild Rivers Land Trust to complete preliminary due diligence activities and develop a grant proposal for the next round of the NOAA-NERRS-BIL competitive funding program.

Following a favorably ranked pre-proposal, the Reserve submitted a full grant proposal to NOAA in February 2024, for the purchase and restoration of the properties.

If a grant is awarded, an appraisal and other due diligence work will be undertaken, and the Department will bring this before the Land Board in late 2025 or early 2026 for approval to complete the acquisition and transfer the property to the Reserve to be managed under the authority of the South Slough Reserve Management Commission.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The South Slough Reserve Management Commission approved these land acquisitions at their meeting on March 20, 2024. These meetings are open to the public to attend, and no public comments were received.

The Reserve will collaborate with Coos County and the Wild Rivers Land Trust to acquire and transfer the properties to Reserve management. The Reserve regularly partners with all the three federally recognized Tribes on the Oregon Coast: the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI), the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The property acquisition has been discussed with the Coquille Indian Tribe, the CTCLUSI, and the Coos Basin Coho Partnership, all who support this initiative due to the alignment with the Reserve's mission and Tribal priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the State Land Board authorize the Reserve, working through the Department of State Lands' Real Property Program, to complete due diligence work in support of the acquisition of these properties in Coos County.

APPENDICES

- A. Map of Properties
- B. Coos County Letter of Intent