



KITTITAS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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"Building Partnerships – Building Communities"

OC-10-00002 CASCADE LAND CONSERVANCY OPEN SPACE CURRENT USE APPLICATION STAFF REPORT

TO: Kittitas County Planning Commission
FROM: Jeff Watson, Staff Planner
DATE: October 21, 2010
SUBJECT: Cascade Land Conservancy Open Space Current Use Application (OC-10-00002)

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Proposal: On June 23, 2010 Cascade Land Conservancy submitted an application for classification or reclassification as open space land or timber land for current use assessment under Chapter 84.34 RCW one tax parcel totaling 215.6 acres. The application has been reviewed by Assessor staff for ownership, parcel numbers, and legal descriptions, and Community Development Services staff for land use and critical areas assessment.

Location: The subject property is located approximately 21.5 miles northwest of the City of Roslyn near the top of Snoqualmie pass in a portion of section 11, township 22, range 11, WM, in Kittitas County; Assessor's map number 22-11-11000-0004, parcel identification number 15226.

II. SITE INFORMATION

Site Characteristics: Utilizing Aerial Photography, analysis indicates the site is partially wooded with coniferous trees and undergrowth. No structures or development is visible, this was confirmed utilizing Assessor's records. The topography is steeply sloped on the eastern half with an elevation gain of approximately 1100 feet. Critical areas review indicates that the northwest area of the property is located within the FEMA firm map (panel 5300950050B) delineation of 100 yr floodplain. No other critical areas were indicated. Small R3USC (riverine upper perenial unconsolidated shore seasonally flooded) wetlands in the same area intermittently follow the northwest property line. No other critical areas were found.

III. RECOMMENDATION

The application as submitted is requesting classification as open space for current use. Justification for this proposed designation by the applicant is based on the following criteria listed in RCW 84.34.041

(a) any land area so designated by an official comprehensive land use plan adopted by any city or county and zoned accordingly. - Kittitas County currently does not designate any lands as open space under GMA Land Use designation. This property would be an excellent candidate if in the future the County should decide to do so. A conservation easement held by the Washington Department of Natural Resources guarantees that conservation goals will be honored in perpetuity.

(b) any land area, the preservation of which in its present use would

(i) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources, or

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 stipulates that applications "... based on conservation or enhancement of natural resources must meet at least one of the following: .

(1) Geologically significant rock formations that may be appropriate for educational study.

(2) Archeological sites that are registered with the state of Washington and protected.

(3) Game preserves and nesting grounds as agreed by the state of Washington Department of wildlife. (Public access may be controlled. Hunting and fishing may be denied.)

This property was acquired through "Section 6" funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to secure threatened and

endangered fish and wildlife habitat and to protect critical wildlife corridors surrounding I-90.

(ii) protect streams or water supply, or

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 stipulates that applications "... for open space on protection of streams and meet at least one of the following:

- (1) Preservation or protection of major drainage ways (major drainage ways being defined as the areas where feeder streams intersect with major streams) flowing directly into streams of 20 C.F.S. or more.*
- (2) Tracts continuous to or straddling major streams flowing at a rate of 20 C. F.S. or more .*
- (3) Significant aquifer recharge areas and areas of significant springs identified as water resources."*

This property lies approximately 1.5 miles from the confluence of Gold Creek and the Yakima River

(iii) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 stipulates that applications "...for open space classification based on promotion of the conservation of soil, control or erosion; wet lands or marshes will be restricted to at least one of the following:

- (1) Tracts with 25% or greater slope on at least 50% of the tracts or where there is physical evidence of erosion.
 - (a) Applications for this category shall be accompanied with a conservation plan prepared by the Soil Conservation Service including implementation program for the plan. (Failure to implement the plan in a timely manner will be cause for removal from the Open Space category and subject to penalties under RCW 84.34.)**
- (2) Tracts within the 100 year flood plain.*
- (3) Tracts where commercial development would destroy the natural cover and could result in erosion, loss of natural habitat and such action would result in damage to adjacent property.*

This property lies within the 100 year floodplain as identified in FIRM panel 5300950050B.

(iv) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open space, or

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 does not specifically address this criterion. The property is bounded on the east and south by the Wenatchee National Forest and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. To the north the property abuts land conserved by the Washington Dept of Transportation to enhance the effectiveness of this wildlife preservation area for a wildlife crossing structure to be built on I-90.

(v) enhance recreation opportunities, or

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 does not specifically address this criterion. The Gold Creek Trail originates at Washington State Parks managed Gold Creek Pond just south of the property and travels through the northwest portion of the property and onto National Forest land and eventually into the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. The property is situated on the western slope of Rampart Ridge a wilderness and recreation area utilized by hikers, snowshoers and skiers throughout the year. Gold Creek is a scenic waterway frequently enjoyed by hikers in the warmer summer months. Heli's Pond also has a footpath around it.

(vii) preserve visual quality along highway, road, and street corridors or scenic vistas

Kittitas County ordinance 1994-025 does not specifically address this criterion. The US Forest Service and USFWS have identified the I-90 corridor near CLC's property as a critical wildlife corridor for many species populations of the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore the densely forested and steeply sloped alpine setting of the property preserve the scenic vistas from the Snoqualmie Pass area as a part of the greenway extending along this portion of I-90.

Based on the above criteria qualifications, staff recommends approval of the application and designation as open space current use classification.