



**DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

South Puget Sound Region

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To Whom It May Concern,

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing to expand the boundary of the existing Skookum Inlet Natural Area Preserve (NAP), located in Mason County, Washington. This letter is to inform you about the proposal and invite you to an upcoming public hearing. Please find the map of the proposed expansion area and factsheet attached.

A preserve boundary designation does not give DNR any regulatory or other land use authority over private landowners.

The boundary designation is an administrative action that allows DNR to seek funding for purchase of private lands **only** from willing sellers, at market value that is established by independent appraisal. Landowners are under no obligation, at any time, to sell their lands to DNR. No lands within the boundary are considered to be part of the natural area unless they are either acquired by DNR or are otherwise registered as such by the landowner (such as by conservation landowners or other agencies).

The proposed expansion area is located adjacent to the existing 165 acre Skookum Inlet NAP boundary. The preserve was approved by the Natural Heritage Advisory Council in 1985 to protect three salt-marsh ecosystem types: low intertidal, high salinity, silty marsh; high intertidal, high salinity marsh; and high intertidal, low salinity marsh, along with their associated plant communities. These are important examples of wetland ecosystems in the southern Puget Sound. The preserve also protects tideflats, and includes second growth forest habitat.

The purpose of the expansion is to incorporate an additional 290 acres of upland, shoreline, and tideland protection for the existing preserve. The intent is to provide long-term protection for ecological functions important to the preserve's primary features, as well as to buffer it from threats such as invasive weed species and potential future development. This will also add additional protection for the populations of Chum and Coho salmon and resident cutthroat trout that spawn in Elson Creek, the small tributary protected within the preserve.

DNR will hold a public hearing to provide information and receive testimony on the proposed boundary expansion.

Date & Time: April 20, 2022. An informational session will begin at 6:00 p.m. and the public hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m., concluding following public testimony

Location: Mason County Fire Hall District #4, at 2970 SE Arcadia Road Shelton, WA 98584

Comment Deadline: Written comments on the proposal are welcome until the close of business on Friday, April 29, 2022. Please send comments to: Washington Department of Natural Resources, Recreation and Conservation Division, ATTN: Proposed NAP Boundary Expansion, PO Box 47014, Olympia, WA 98504-7014. Comments also may be submitted by email to: ampd@dnr.wa.gov with the subject line, "Proposed NAP Boundary Expansion -- Skookum Inlet."

Coronavirus Precautions: DNR encourages written testimony from interested parties. In-person attendance at the hearing is not required to testify regarding this boundary expansion proposal; written testimony is equivalent to in-person, verbal testimony. While, thankfully, the coronavirus threat has eased in recent weeks, DNR will strive to provide a clean, appropriately distanced, safe environment for those choosing to attend the hearing. At this time masks are encouraged, but not required.

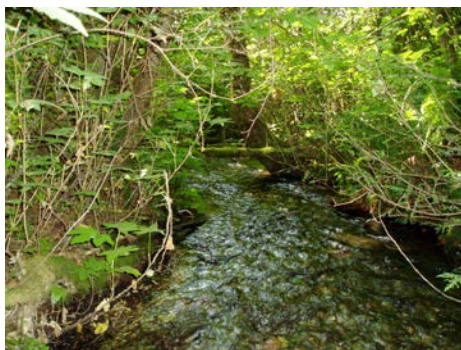
Boundary Information Online: The boundary hearing notice and related background information is available on the Department of Natural Resources website, at www.dnr.wa.gov/skookum-inlet-natural-area-preserve. This proposed boundary expansion has been reviewed and recommended by the Washington State Natural Heritage Advisory Council, a citizen review panel that helps to guide DNR's conservation programs.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Feel free to send me an email at michele.zukerberg@dnr.wa.gov or give me a call (360) 790-9770.

Sincerely,



Michele Zukerberg
Natural Areas Manager, South Puget Sound Region
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Encl: Skookum Inlet Fact Sheet & Map



Skookum Inlet NAP

Skookum Inlet Natural Area Preserve (NAP) is located in Mason County, roughly five miles south of Shelton. The Washington State Natural Heritage Advisory Council approved the original 165 acre preserve boundary in the 1980s and recommended a 291 acre boundary expansion in 2022. The current preserve includes 143 acres of conservation lands owned and managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Protecting Rare Features

The preserve protects three salt-marsh ecosystem types along with their associated plant communities, which are important high-quality examples of wetland ecosystems in southern Puget Sound: 1) Low intertidal, high salinity, silty marsh, 2) High intertidal, high salinity marsh, and 3) High intertidal, low salinity marsh. The site also protects tideflats and second growth riparian forest buffer. Chum and Coho Salmon and resident cutthroat trout spawn in Elson Creek, the small tributary protected within the preserve. The federally threatened winter steelhead is found in Skookum Creek, the major freshwater tributary to the inlet.



Proposed NAP Boundary Expansion

The purpose of the expanded boundary, which is the design for the ultimate extent of the preserve, is to enhance upland, shoreline and tideland protection for the existing conservation lands. The intent is to provide long-term protection for ecological functions important to the preserve's primary features, as well as to buffer it from threats such as invasive weed species and potential future development. The expansion area is adjacent to the existing 165 acre preserve boundary and includes roughly 290 acres of intact shoreline and estuarine mudflats as well as upland forests situated on and above steep slopes that extend to the shoreline. The proposed boundary also includes areas of salt marsh and pasture.

Threats and Site Condition

Human activities such as alterations to water quality and hydrology or introduction of non-native and invasive plant species, pose a significant threat to the natural area. Residential development, with the associated leaching of septic fields, yard fertilizers and chemicals, reduces water quality and changes the species composition of the ecosystem. And invasive non-native species from adjacent properties, commonly reed canary grass, English ivy or Himalayan blackberry, can out-compete native species, resulting in reduced species diversity and negative effects on riparian habitat form and function.

Contact

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Natural Area Preserves

NAPs are established to protect high-quality examples of Washington's natural heritage. They are designed to protect native ecosystems and rare plant and animal species. Preserves provide relatively unaltered native communities that can be used as outdoor laboratories for researchers and environmental educators, and as references in comparing relatively natural environments with managed ones. DNR manages 58 NAPs and 39 Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCAs) on more than 167,100 acres statewide.

