

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

The development of a public boat launch facility on the lower Alsea River has been a high priority for both Lincoln County and ODFW in recent years. The Alsea River supports a very popular and heavily utilized fall salmon fishery. The vast majority of fishing pressure occurs within the tidewater portion of the Alsea River by motor boat anglers. The largest portion of this occurs in close proximity to the proposed boat launch facility. The nearest public boat launches are the Port of Alsea, about seven river miles downstream, and in a private community about four river miles upstream. Upriver travel to prime fishing grounds from the Port of Alsea boat launch is often difficult or impossible because of navigational hazards such as shallow water, large sand bars, and embedded large woody debris. The upriver boat launch can only support parking for about five vehicles and trailers with no room for expansion.

The Mid Coast District has been looking for opportunities to help facilitate a public boat launch in the mid-tidewater portion of the Alsea River, but options have been very limited. The most difficult factor has been locating a parcel of land large enough to construct a public boat facility. This section of the river is constrained by a relatively narrow valley which is developed in small lot housing communities or consists of large wetlands.

The proposed site appears to have the qualities necessary for a successful project. There is adequate acreage, access to Highway 34, and some existing infrastructure including onsite electricity, septic system, RV pads, and a dock. The location is also key, as it will allow for easy access to productive fishing grounds as well as access to the river for a variety of other recreational uses.

Lincoln County initiated negotiations to acquire the property in 2013. Due to changes in the requirements of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Grant Program, ODFW can no longer serve as a conduit for these SFR funds to local governments and must now hold title to properties acquired under this program. As a result, ODFW has been working closely with Lincoln County since mid-2013 on the acquisition of this property.

The property consists of 9.99 acres. A significant portion is wetland, but there is sufficient remaining land to permit development of the proposed boat ramp, with associated parking and access. The Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) has prepared several proposed site plans. The most recent of these (Attachment 2) proposes 30 boat/trailer spaces and an additional six car-only parking spots.

The negotiated purchase price for the property is \$330,000. The yellow book appraisal valued the property at only \$295,000, but the sellers would not agree to that price. Consequently, the SFR grant (75%) and funds provided by OSMB (25%) will provide the \$295,000 appraised value, and the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation has agreed to provide the additional \$35,000 funding needed to consummate the transaction. This purchase will cover land acquisition only, and Lincoln County and ODFW will subsequently apply for additional grants from USFWS and OSMB to cover construction costs of the facility.

ODFW will hold title to the property per the requirements of the USFWS grant, but maintenance and operations will be the responsibility of the Lincoln County Parks Department.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There have been several newspaper articles in the Newport News-Times, the Lincoln County Dispatch, and the internet News Lincoln County. All reporting was favorable to the project (Attachment 4). We have also received a letter of support from the Alsea Sportsman’s Association (Attachment 3). There are multiple public and private entities involved in the process, including Lincoln County, The Port of Alsea, The Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation, and ODFW.

ISSUE 1

ACQUIRE THE ALSEA RIVER BOAT RAMP PROPERTY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED PUBLIC BOATING ACCESS TO THE ALSEA RIVER.

ANALYSIS

There is very high demand for a public boat ramp at this location. The project has received support from the angling community, the county, and local sport fishing groups. Funding for the acquisition will be provided by USFWS, OSMB, Lincoln County, and the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation. ODFW will hold title to the property, but will have no responsibility for management and no ongoing financial exposure.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the acquisition of the Alsea River Boat Ramp property
2. Disapprove the proposed acquisition

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve acquisition of the Alsea River Boat Ramp Property with funding obtained from the Oregon State Marine Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants and additional funding from Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation.

DRAFT MOTION

I move to approve the acquisition of the Alsea River Boat Ramp property and direct staff to proceed to escrow closing upon completion of the due diligence processes required under Oregon Administrative Rules for Land Acquisition and Exchanges.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon Commission Approval / June 6, 2014