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**PART I - ADMINISTRATIVE****Section 1. General administrative information****Title of project**

Eagle Lakes Ranch Acquisition And Restoration

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**BPA project number:** 20074

**Contract renewal date (mm/yyyy):**

**Multiple actions?**

**Business name of agency, institution or organization requesting funding**

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, COLUMBIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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**Business acronym (if appropriate)** USFWS

**Proposal contact person or principal investigator:**

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**NPPC Program Measure Number(s) which this project addresses**

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**FWS/NMFS Biological Opinion Number(s) which this project addresses**

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**Other planning document references**

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**Short description**

Protect wetland and shrub steppe habitats from imminent development. Restore proper function to wetland and upland habitats.

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**Target species**

Mallard, Calif. Quail, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Sage Thrasher, Sage Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, WA Ground Squirrel, Badger, Mule Deer, Sagebrush Lizard

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## Section 2. Sorting and evaluation

### Subbasin

Lower Mid-Columbia

### ***Evaluation Process Sort***

<b>CBFWA caucus</b>	<b>Special evaluation process</b>	<b>ISRP project type</b>
Mark one or more caucus	If your project fits either of these processes, mark one or both	Mark one or more categories
<input type="checkbox"/> Anadromous fish <input type="checkbox"/> Resident fish <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-year (milestone-based evaluation) <input type="checkbox"/> Watershed project evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Watershed councils/model watersheds <input type="checkbox"/> Information dissemination <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Operation & maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> New construction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research & monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation & management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wildlife habitat acquisitions

## Section 3. Relationships to other Bonneville projects

***Umbrella / sub-proposal relationships.*** List umbrella project first.

<b>Project #</b>	<b>Project title/description</b>

***Other dependent or critically-related projects***

<b>Project #</b>	<b>Project title/description</b>	<b>Nature of relationship</b>

## Section 4. Objectives, tasks and schedules

***Past accomplishments***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>	<b>Met biological objectives?</b>

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**Objectives and tasks**

Obj 1,2,3	Objective	Task a,b,c	Task
1	Acquire Eagle Lakes Ranch	a	Obtain funding (3,650 acres fee and 3,850 acres easement)
		b	purchase land and easements
2	Evaluate conditions	a	Conduct inventories: engineering, riparian, wetland, upland vegetation, noxious weeds
		b	Complete evaluation reports
3	Develop restoration plans	a	Work with NRCS, DU, WDFW, and other appropriate local, State, and Federal entities
		b	Wetland Restoration Plan
		c	Riparian Restoration Plan
		d	Upland restoration Plan
4	Implement Restoration Projects	a	Implement above restoration plans
		b	Manage as part of Columbia NWR
5	Monitor restored areas	a	Evaluate restoration success

**Objective schedules and costs**

Obj #	Start date mm/yyyy	End date mm/yyyy	Measureable biological objective(s)	Milestone	FY2000 Cost %
1	8/1998	12/1999		xxxxx	75.00%
2	4/1999	6/2000		xxxxx	10.00%
3	3/1999	12/2000			10.00%
4	6/2000	6/2004			5.00%
				<b>Total</b>	100.00%

**Schedule constraints**

Conservation Fund purchases fee acquisitions; NRCS funds WRP easements; USFWS purchases perpetual easements. Results of evaluation and partnership agreements may delay start-up. Weather conditions could affect the schedule/success of upland restoration.

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**Completion date**

Restoration is scheduled for completion by June 2004. Monitoring and O&M for the restored habitat areas would continue through the life of the project.

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## Section 5. Budget

**FY99 project budget (BPA obligated):**

### ***FY2000 budget by line item***

<b>Item</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>FY2000</b>
Personnel	Biologist, manager, realty, engineer	%7	60,000
Fringe benefits	calculated at 30%	%2	18,000
Supplies, materials, non-expendable property	herbicide, fencing supplies, seed, truck, computer, netting supplies	%10	85,000
Operations & maintenance	equipment maintenance	%0	
Capital acquisitions or improvements (e.g. land, buildings, major equip.)	partial payment to purchase portions of 3650 acres in fee and 3,850 acres in perpetual easement	%81	690,500
NEPA costs	EA for acquisition, cultural resources clearance	%0	
Construction-related support		%0	
PIT tags	# of tags:	%0	
Travel	Regional Office personnel	%0	
Indirect costs		%0	
Subcontractor	fence contract, engineering, survey	%0	
Other		%0	
<b>TOTAL BPA FY2000 BUDGET REQUEST</b>			<b>\$853,500</b>

### ***Cost sharing***

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Item or service provided</b>	<b>% total project cost (incl. BPA)</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>
USFWS	acquisition, inventory, restoration planning and implementation	%8	150,000
Ducks Unlimited	engineering and contract support	%3	50,000
NRCS	WRP easement, restoration	%28	520,000
WDFW	restoration, monitoring	%2	40,000
NAWCA	restoration	%13	250,000
<b>Total project cost (including BPA portion)</b>			<b>\$1,863,500</b>

### ***Outyear costs***

	<b>FY2001</b>	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>
<b>Total budget</b>	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$400,000	\$300,000

## Section 6. References

Watershed?	Reference
<input type="checkbox"/>	Columbia NWR. 1990. Preliminary Project Proposal, Eagle Lakes NWR. USFWS. Othello, WA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andelman, S.J. and A. Stock. 1994. Management, Research and Monitoring Priorities for the Conservation of Neotropical Migratory Landbirds that Breed in WA State. WA Nat. Heritage Program. Washington DNR. Olympia, WA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LaTourrette, J. 1998. Intermountain West Joint Venture, North Columbia Basin Focus Area Implementation Plan. Washington State Steering Committee. Olympia, WA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cassidy, K.M., M.R. Smith, C.E. Grue, K.M.Dvornich, J.E. Cassady, K.R. McAllister, and R.E. Johnson. 1997. Gap Analysis of Washington State: An evaluation of the protection of biodiversity. Volume 5. WA Cooperative F&W Research Unit, U of WA, Seattle
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dobler, F.C., J. Eby, C. Perry, S. Richardson, and M. Vander Haegen. 1996. Status of Washington's Shrub-Steppe Ecosystem: Extent, ownership, and wildlife/vegetation relationships. Research report. WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia

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## PART II - NARRATIVE

### Section 7. Abstract

This project would fund the acquisition and/or easement purchase of a 7500 acre shrub steppe, basalt cliff, and wetland complex as wildlife mitigation lands in northern Franklin County, Washington. The area is known to have several sensitive shrub steppe species, and due to its location is a prime wintering area for waterfowl. Fee and easement purchases would allow the continued use of part of the ranch as a hunting and fishing club, protect the land from development, preserve nearly half as National Wildlife Refuge lands, and restore wetland and upland habitats to native vegetation. In conjunction with habitat programs offered through NRCS, WDFW, DU, and NAWCA funding, the USFWS would eliminate grazing on fee lands, restrict grazing on easements, use IPM principles to eliminate or control noxious weeds (including Russian olive and saltcedar), and replant desirable native species. FY2000 funds would be directed primarily to reimburse The Conservation Fund for fee and easement purchase and to develop habitat management plans. Out-year funding would complete reimbursement installments, but is directed mainly at restoration and concurrent monitoring, with most restoration implementation expected by 2004. Monitoring and evaluation would be described in the individual habitat management plans consistent with methods currently in place at Columbia NWR. Communication and coordination of the easements would be reflected in the management authority of Columbia NWR.

## **Section 8. Project description**

### **a. Technical and/or scientific background**

The Eagle Lakes Ranch lies in northern Franklin County, Washington, approximately eight miles south of Othello and 13 miles east of the Columbia River. It is surrounded on three sides by lands included in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, and includes several lakes designated as having CBIP origin. US Bureau of Reclamation originally owned much of the property, but it was exchanged during the 1950s and 1960s for other irrigable land. All of the proposed acquisition lies within the scenic Channelled Scabland complex of basin-and-butte topography carved by a series of ice-age floods. The resulting network of cliffs, canyons, and mesas is covered with thin soils generally unsuitable for agriculture and has retained its sagebrush-grassland habitat. More than 1000 acres of lakes and wetlands occupy depressions and glacial flood wash areas.

A 1965 report by the US Fish and Wildlife Service identified the Eagle Lakes area as important for fish and wildlife within the Columbia Basin, and efforts preceded through the 1970s to reacquire the lands for establishment of an 18,600-acre refuge. Much planning and preparation was completed, but in 1980 the five million dollars set aside by the Bureau of Reclamation for purchase was slashed in a budget cutting exercise by Congress. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Eagle Lakes Ranch area was managed as an exclusive hunting and fishing club. The ranch later went into bankruptcy, and various parcels were sold. The primary areas of wildlife value were again offered for sale to the USFWS in 1990 as a 9560 acre refuge, and a Preliminary Planning Proposal (PPP) was prepared for that acquisition. That plan identifies some of the major values of the property. Regionally, acquisition funding at that time was shifted to vulnerable high value (for development) habitats for endangered species.

The majority of the ranch again went into bankruptcy in 1998, resulting in forfeiture to the original landowner. With support from The Conservation Fund, dialogue with the new owner and potential partners resumed. In the eight years since the PPP was written, there has been increased concern with shrub steppe habitat loss and fragmentation, including a 69% loss in Franklin County. While waterfowl values are well documented for the Eagle Lakes area, reports through GAP Analysis, The Nature Conservancy, WDFW, Partners in Flight, and other groups have identified the need to protect shrub steppe areas where contiguous habitat remains. Declines in sagebrush obligate species over the last 30 years have continued, and this is one of the few areas in Franklin County where significant shrub cover remains.

The current landowner has given Mike Franklin, a hunt club operator, a short time frame to put together a plan to leave the ranch intact. There are currently offers to purchase portions of the ranch for apple orchard, a golf course, and as a destination resort. USFWS was approached to purchase a portion of the ranch for refuge designation if enough compensation could be realized from the sale to maintain the remainder as a limited use hunting and fishing club. Through a combination of funding sources that

include NRCS's Wetland Reserve Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act partnerships, front money (reimbursement required) through the Conservation Fund, and reimbursement from BPA mitigation funds for purchase and restoration of mostly upland acres, fee and easement purchases could reach the amount required to keep the ranch intact and without the moderate to heavy grazing that currently is used to supplement income. While upland purchase and restoration are targeted with BPA funds, mitigation credits for wetland and riparian benefits would also be achieved.

**b. Rationale and significance to Regional Programs**

The Eagle Lakes Ranch acquisition and restoration project would be an excellent match for meeting goals and objectives of the 1994 Fish and Wildlife Program. It lies within the Upper Columbia Subbasin Wildlife Mitigation area within 30 miles of McNary Pool and 80 miles south of Grand Coulee Dam, and 90 miles south of Chief Joseph Dam. All three high priority habitats (riparian, shrub-steppe, and wetlands) are present and restorable. For purposes of mitigation credit, the following habitats and species noted for the three dams mentioned above would benefit: Mourning Dove, mule deer, riparian forest, riparian shrub, Canada Goose nest sites, Mallard (nesting), Western Meadowlark, Canada Goose, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, mink, California Quail, bobcat, and Ring-necked Pheasant.

In addition to the 1994 Fish and Wildlife Program's stated goals and objectives, several other regional and national efforts have identified habitats and species in decline, with objectives that target wetland, riparian, and shrub steppe dependant species. The Intermountain West Joint Venture specifically mentions the Eagle Lakes area as a priority acquisition for wintering waterfowl in its North Columbia Basin Focus Area Implementation Plan, and partners have come forward to fund purchase and restoration for the majority of the wetland acres proposed. Partners in Flight, recognized as the lead organization for recovery of declining bird populations, has identified species in all three habitats that would benefit from this habitat protection and restoration project. Species such as Ferruginous Hawk, Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Burrowing Owl, and Loggerhead Shrike all are priority species that would benefit from shrub-steppe restoration. Co-dependant mammals such as Washington ground squirrel and badger also are a high priority. The Nature Conservancy and USGS's GAP Analysis Project identify contiguous blocks of habitat as a high priority for protection to avoid the habitat fragmentation that has eliminated some species from otherwise suitable habitat.

This acquisition and restoration effort is just one link in a broader protection effort planned for the area around the Eagle Lakes Ranch. With programs started such as Russian olive control and saltcedar eradication, neighboring landholders would have more incentive to attack the same problems on their lands. Cooperative programs already are in place for some adjacent landowners, and this acquisition coupled with other easements on bordering lands has the potential to protect the entire area from the west boundary to SR 17 on the east, and from the Adams County line on the north to Basin City, nearly 50 square miles.

**c. Relationships to other projects**

Several state and federal wildlife areas are located nearby. Columbia NWR includes 23,000+ acres 12 miles to the north. Saddle Mountain NWR, now part of the Hanford NWR complex, is 31,000 acres 15 miles to the east. McNary NWR is 30 miles south. Bureau of Reclamation's Scootenev Reservoir is three miles east. WDFW also manages land nearby, including the 55,000 acre Wahluke Slope Wildlife Recreation Area eight miles east and the Windmill Ranch two miles SE. Both the Windmill Ranch and the Bailie Ranch, for which WDFW has a perpetual hunting easement, were acquired with COE mitigation funds tied to flooding of the Lower Snake River reservoirs. Other WDFW wildlife areas in the Potholes area are 10-20 miles to the north.

Additional protection through WRP easements are already in place to the SE around Camp Lakes, and are planned for properties to the north (Bernsen) and SW (Bailie). An easement through Ducks Unlimited for habitat protection of the entire 6,000+ acre Sugar Ranch to the south is in the negotiation stage. The combination of all of these lands would create a large mostly contiguous block of wetland and shrub-steppe habitat with permanent protection from development. Easements also can offset the need to graze many areas that are in fair to poor condition. Other programs available through NRCS could restore upland habitat to native species where non-natives have taken over, curtailing the rapid spread of noxious weeds. And partnerships such as the NAWCA grant proposal that will be used as partial restoration funding on this project can leverage more funds for activities such as noxious weed control.

**d. Project history (for ongoing projects)**

N/A

**e. Proposal objectives**

Objectives of the Eagle Lakes Acquisition and Restoration project are as follows:

- 1) Reimbursement to the Conservation Fund for purchase of 3650 acres of wetland and upland habitats for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge system by FY 2002;
- 2) Reimbursement to the Conservation Fund for purchase of conservation easements to protect 3850 acres of wetland and upland habitats by FY2002;
- 3) Evaluate existing vegetation, water management and distribution, engineering needs, and wildlife use on the acquisition property and complete status reports during FY2000;
- 4) Write restoration plans for wetland, riparian and upland habitats by the end of CY2000;

- 5) Implement restoration plans during FY2000, with a target of 1500 acres per year, and completion expected during FY2004;
- 6) Evaluate restoration success through monitoring of vegetation and wildlife use, and implement changes as needed.

Protection from development, elimination of grazing, and restoration of existing habitats would maintain and improve nesting cover for a number of declining wildlife species. Mitigation for habitat unit losses due to hydropower construction at McNary, Grand Coulee, and Chief Joseph dams would receive credit for 11 species. Additional goals and objectives listed in documents produced by PIF, WDFW and IWJV would be covered in monitoring plans as part of individual habitat restoration plans.

#### **f. Methods**

Initial purchase of the Eagle Lakes Ranch will be handled by the USFWS realty office in Portland. Appraisals and legal documents to set up purchase by The Conservation Fund, easement and MOU preparation, interagency coordination for joint funding, and negotiations for purchase price are all USFWS Region 1 responsibility. Reimbursement to The Conservation Fund using BPA funds might not require more than invoicing.

Initial inventory and collection of baseline vegetation and wildlife use data would begin in 1999 by USFWS personnel. Engineering needs would be a shared responsibility of USFWS, NRCS and Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and would also begin in 1999. All three entities would be responsible for contributing to the needs assessment document, with ultimate responsibility to USFWS. Noxious weed mapping would include USFWS, Franklin Co. Noxious Weed Board, and landowner participation.

Restoration plans are the responsibility of USFWS, although NRCS, DU, BLM, WDFW, and USDOE Hanford contractors will lend their expertise in habitat restoration techniques. The general progression for riparian and upland restoration will be noxious or undesirable weed control followed by either burning or direct planting using seed or shrub/tree plantings. The entire refuge boundary would be fenced, and cattle grazing eliminated or used only as a management tool for vegetation control. Easement language also would restrict grazing to meet restoration and management objectives. Vehicle access routes would be designated to prevent the establishment or spread of noxious weeds. Wetland and possibly some riparian restoration would likely involve physical and structural changes requiring earth moving and heavy equipment, provided by Columbia NWR or Ducks Unlimited, Inc. contracts. Cultural resource clearance is handled through Region 1 USFWS.

Restoration implementation would be contracted mostly through DU or by force account USFWS personnel. USFWS has extensive experience with wetland and upland restoration projects, including recent sagebrush plantings on the Hanford NWR, and various upland seedings on Columbia NWR. A project currently funded on Columbia NWR involves riparian restoration along Crab Creek, where noxious weed control, native

grass establishment, and either seed germination or willow whip and cottonwood pole planting will establish the woody component, followed by shrub planting. Water holding, spreading, or diversion are dependant on engineering reports and feasibility. The presence or absence of beaver will affect how riparian restoration is dealt with.

Monitoring by USFWS will use standard transects, photo points, and plots to determine vegetative response to restoration activities. Species composition and percent cover, simple presence or absence (as with noxious weeds), and area mapping will be used. Wildlife monitoring will look at representative and key species. Point counts, waterfowl pair and brood counts, and existing fall and winter flight data are examples of data collection methods. A MAPS station would be established in a riparian area to monitor response to restoration efforts. This would be used in conjunction with concurrent MAPS station establishment on one or two other areas of Columbia NWR.

#### **g. Facilities and equipment**

As the managing agency, Columbia NWR would furnish equipment and supplies for all activities from it's office in Othello and maintenance shop five miles NW of Othello. Other habitat restoration projects have used refuge semi tractor/trailer, tractors, dozers, loaders, backhoe, grader, rangeland drill, spray truck, water truck, fire equipment, and various hand tools. Special construction equipment needs for habitat restoration would be contracted through existing or new agreements, and paid for by an account set up through DU as is the case for other partnership restoration on CNWR. Wetland restoration associated with the WRP easement would be the responsibility of NRCS but could be completed using the same equipment and contracts.

New equipment for this project would include: 1) a four wheel drive pickup (either purchase or GSA lease) for project use by inventory, monitoring, and restoration biologist and technicians; 2) a new computer with software for writing restoration plans, storing and analyzing monitoring data, and mapping vegetation/noxious weeds/restoration; and 3) mist nets, scale and poles required for the MAPS station.

#### **h. Budget**

While an exact figure will not be available until appraisals and negotiations are completed, acquisition of fee land and easements for 7500 acres is estimated at \$2,010,500. Of this total, NRCS would provide \$520,000 through WRP easement "purchase," USFWS would provide \$100,000 for conservation easements, and BPA would provide \$1,390,500 for fee and easements. The up-front purchase would be made through The Conservation Fund, with reimbursement by BPA payments of \$690,500 in 2000 and \$350,000 each in 2001 and 2002.

Restoration costs would be shared by NRCS, USFWS, WDFW, DU, BPA, and possibly other partners through leveraged cost-share programs. The BPA portion of restoration is

calculated at an average of \$150 per acre over the four year period of 2001-2004. The majority of this cost is for native grass seed, shrubs and trees, herbicide, and labor crews to deal with annual noxious weed eradication/control and native plant establishment. Shared cost of project coordination, planning, monitoring and O&M use the remainder of BPA funding, with personnel costs related specifically to restoration and monitoring at \$50,000 per year.

## **Section 9. Key personnel**

Detailed accounts of personnel and services provided will be formulated during the restoration plan development. Personnel from USFWS, NRCS, WDFW, and DU will play important roles. Acquisition of fee lands and easements will be the responsibility of the Region 1 USFWS Realty Office, headed by Scott Wise. NRCS Wetland Reserve Program coordinator Andrea Mann-Lower and Ducks Unlimited WRP coordinator Ivan Lines, a 30-year NRCS employee, will administer the WRP easement.

The project manager will be Columbia NWR Refuge Manager Robert Flores, the new Project Leader at that office. Flores, a 15-year veteran of the USFWS refuge system, recently transferred to Othello from Stillwater NWR in Fallon, NV, where as Deputy Project Leader he managed a number of restoration projects in the Lahontan Valley. Bob graduated from Humboldt State University in 1982 with a B.S. in Wildlife Management. His previous assignments as a refuge manager include Loxahatchee, Wheeler, Charles M. Russell, San Luis, and Kern NWRs.

Flores will be assisted by Refuge Biologist Randy Hill, a 20-year vetera of federal wildlife programs including USFS, BLM, USBR, and the last 8+ years at Columbia NWR. Hill's recent restoration projects include grassland projects in three units of CNWR, wetland restoration in three units, circle corner restoration at three refuge farm units, and a shrub steppe restoration project at Saddle Mountain NWR. He is the IPM coordinator for the refuge complex, and is responsible for monitoring vegetation, noxious weeds, and wildlife populations.

## **Section 10. Information/technology transfer**

Monitoring information will be shared with all interested public and private parties upon request. Noxious weed mapping is submitted to county weed boards. MAPS station data are automatically sent to the Bird Banding Lab's data management contractor at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Restoration techniques and success would be presented as papers at professional meetings which could include TWS and Washington State Weed Association. The information could easily be incorporated into workshop material aimed at private lands restoration for NRCS and other programs.

## **Congratulations!**