

# Shrubsteppe

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- Grant County
- Mitigation Banking Program





# ECOSYSTEMS

A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

**Both Water and Shrubsteppe**

What is  
Shrubsteppe



A non-forested vegetation type consisting of one or more layers of perennial bunchgrasses and a conspicuous but discontinuous layer of shrubs.

Spanning over ten million acres, the shrubsteppe landscape is vital for a variety of wildlife and plant species, some endemic to the region, such as the Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbit.

It is a critical area for habitat protection and conservation for species of the greatest conservation need amid increasing threats from invasive species, wildfires, land use conversion, and other impacts.

**Sounds Similar to our Water Challenges in Eastern, WA**

# WSRRI – WDFW Initiative

## Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative 30-year Strategy

### Five Key Elements

- Community Engagement
- Habitat Protection
- Habitat Restoration
- Species Management
- Fire Management

### The “Core” Principle

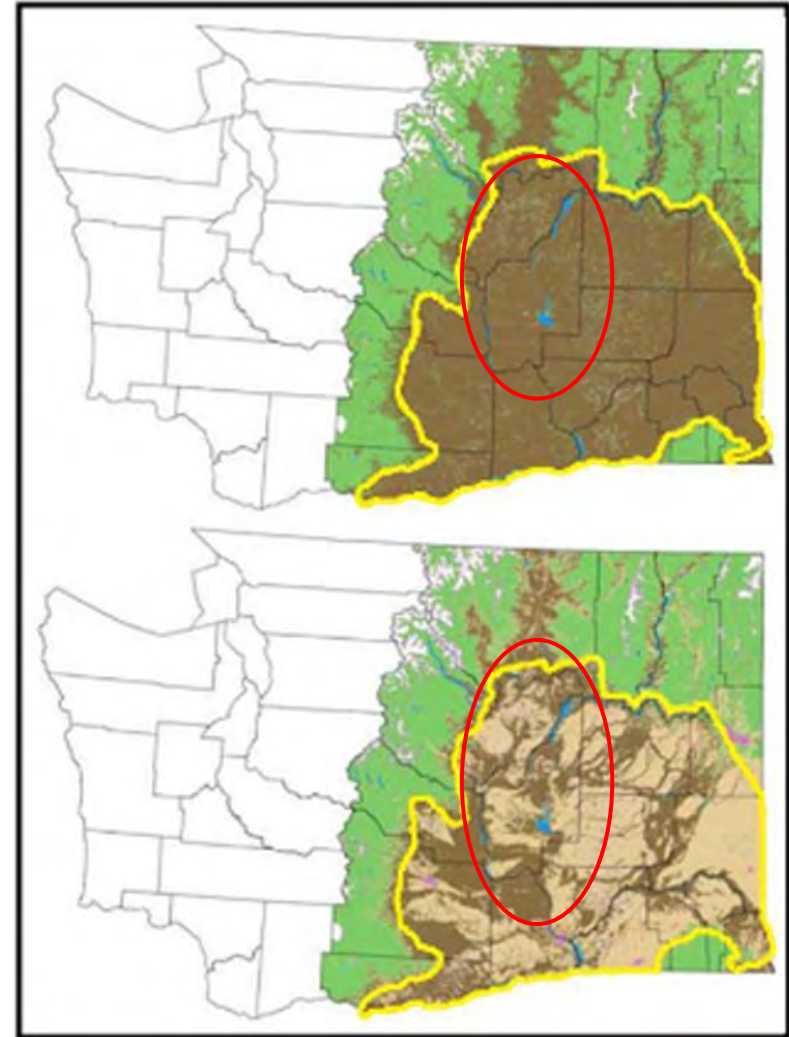
- Defend the Core
- Grow the Core
- Connect the Core



# STATISTICS

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It is estimated that less than 50% of the State of Washington's historic Shrubsteppe remains and according to some, as little as 12% to 15% remains.





# CRITICAL AREAS - GMA

**WAC 365-196-830** Protection of critical areas. (1) The act requires the designation of critical areas and the adoption of regulations for the protection of such areas by all counties and cities, including those that do not plan under RCW 36.70A.040.

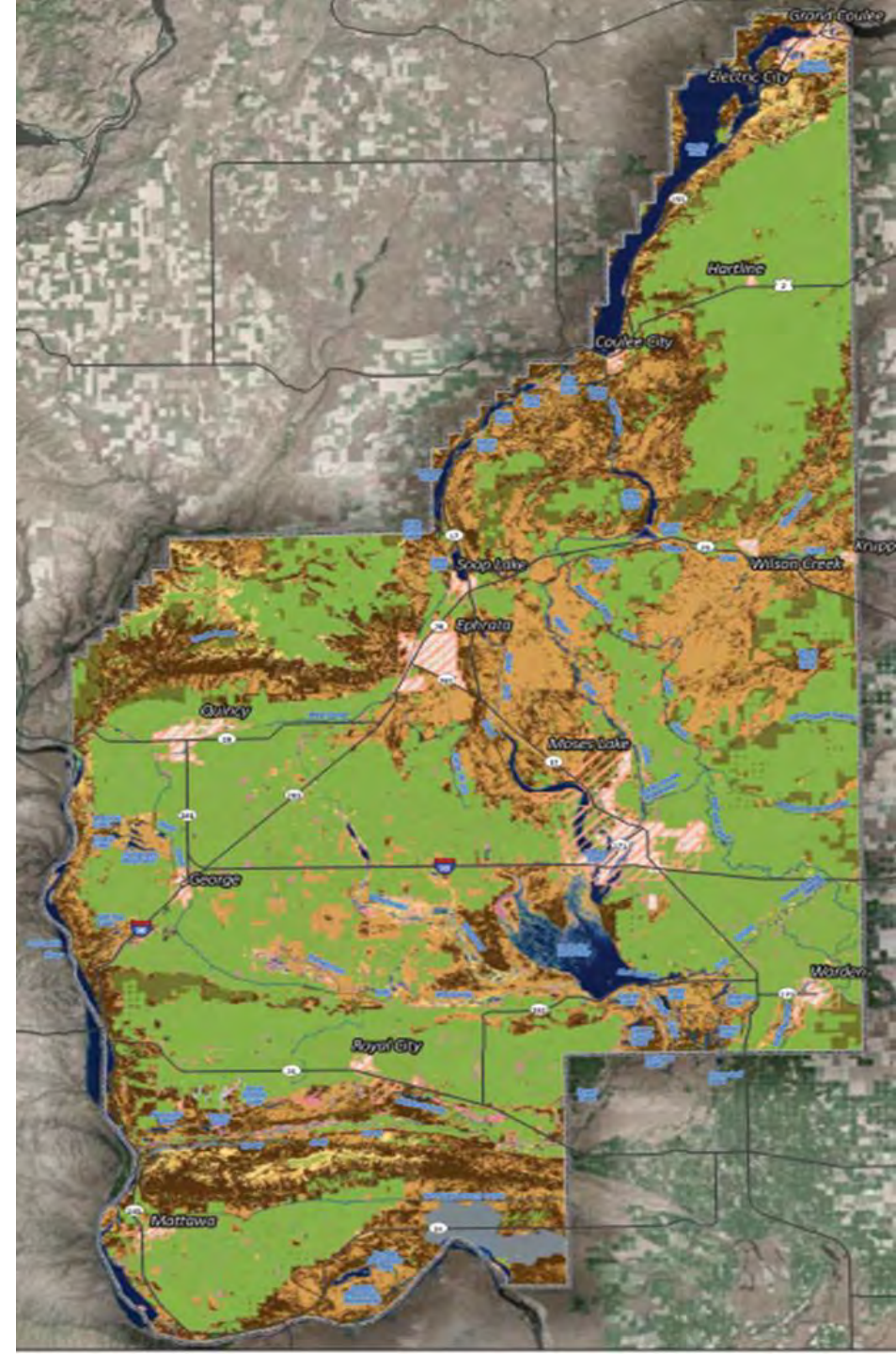
**RCW 36.70A.172** Critical areas—Designation and protection—Best available science to be used. (1) In designating and protecting critical areas under this chapter, counties and cities shall include the best available science in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas.

Agricultural Uses are not exempt, however, Grant County and the Columbia Basin Conservation District participates in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) – Work Plan and Monitoring Plan.

# GRANT COUNTY

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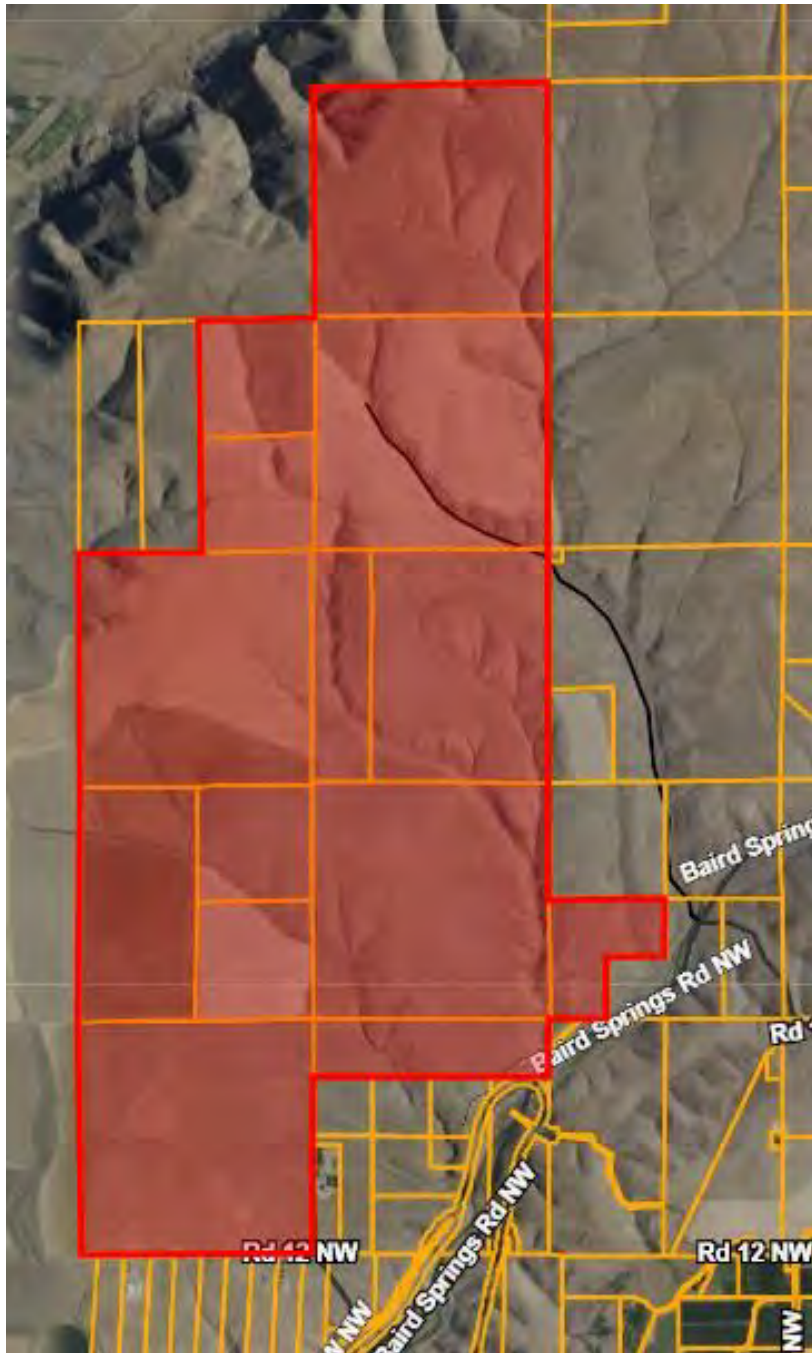
Critical area review, pursuant to this Chapter, shall be conducted as part of the underlying permit or approval. For any activity altering or disturbing any critical areas and not subject to or requiring an underlying development permit or approval, such activity shall not proceed in the absence of approval of a critical areas alteration permit issued pursuant to this Chapter.





# PROCESS

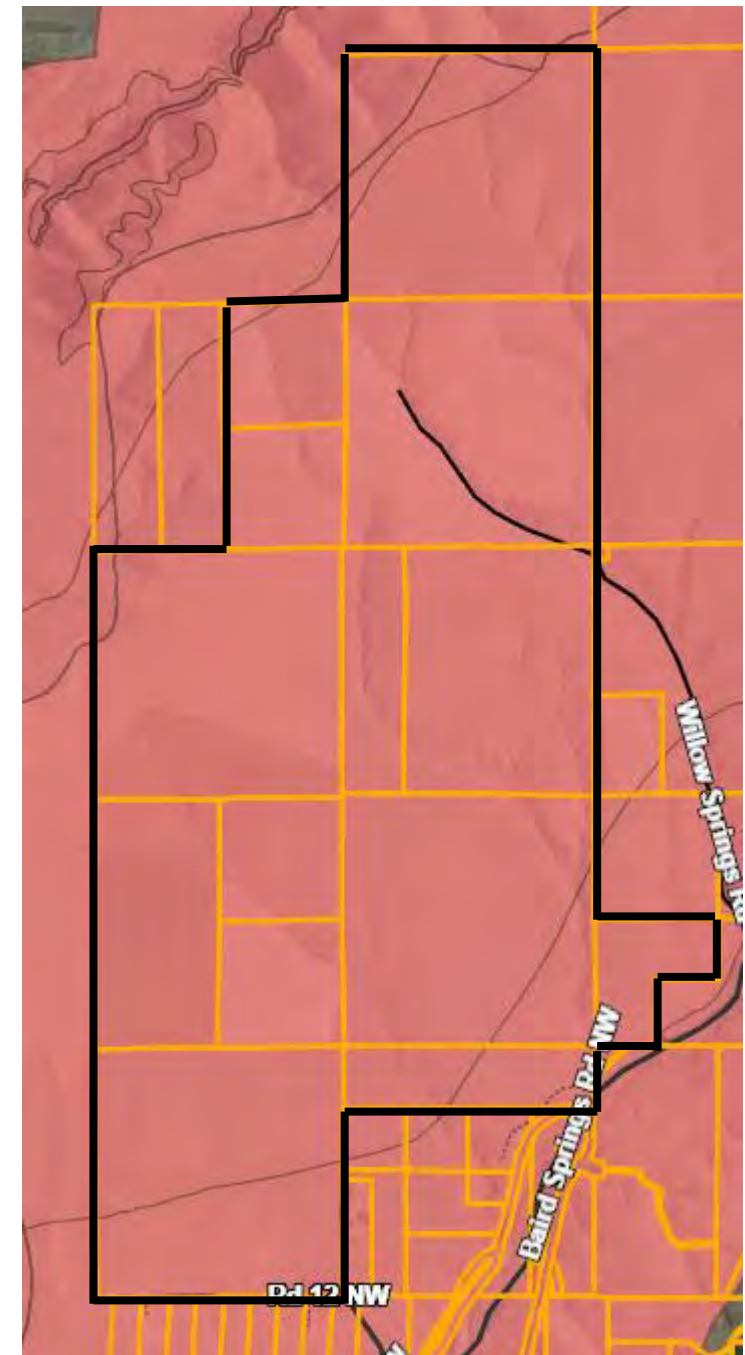
- The County reviews all proposed development for critical areas determination.
- The Priority Habitat & Species (PHS) is an overlay on our COA Maps and if there is any shrubsteppe habitat on the proposed site or within 300 feet of the parcel, an assessment is warranted.
- Smaller parcels and/or smaller projects consult with WDFW who can assist with this assessment (WDFW or qualified professional)
- Larger projects or complicated sites need a habitat assessment which is conducted typically by a qualified biological professional and typically will include a habitat management plan (HMP).



← 5,000 ACRE PROPOSED  
LARGE-SCALE SOLAR PROJECT

PINK LAYER REPRESENTS THE  
PHS MAP AND A HIT FOR  
SHRUBSTEPPE AND SPECIES →

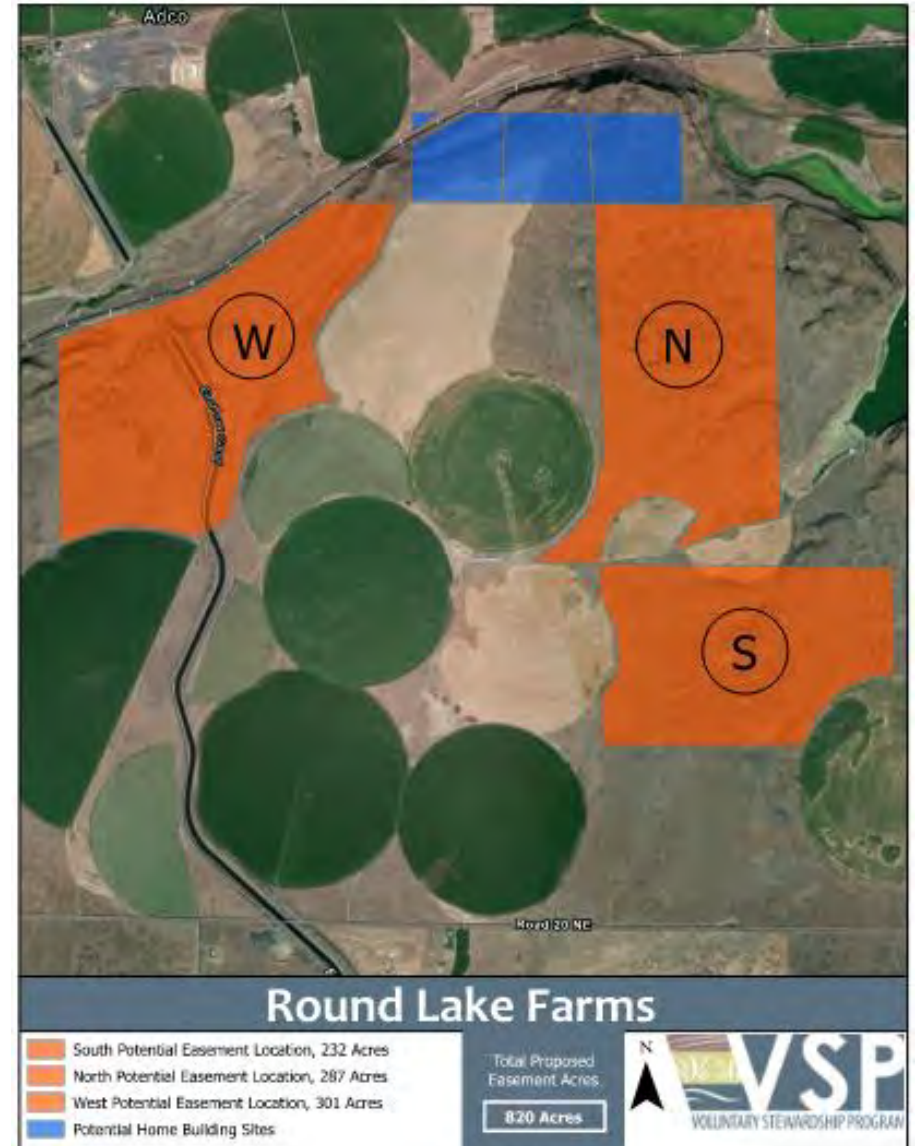
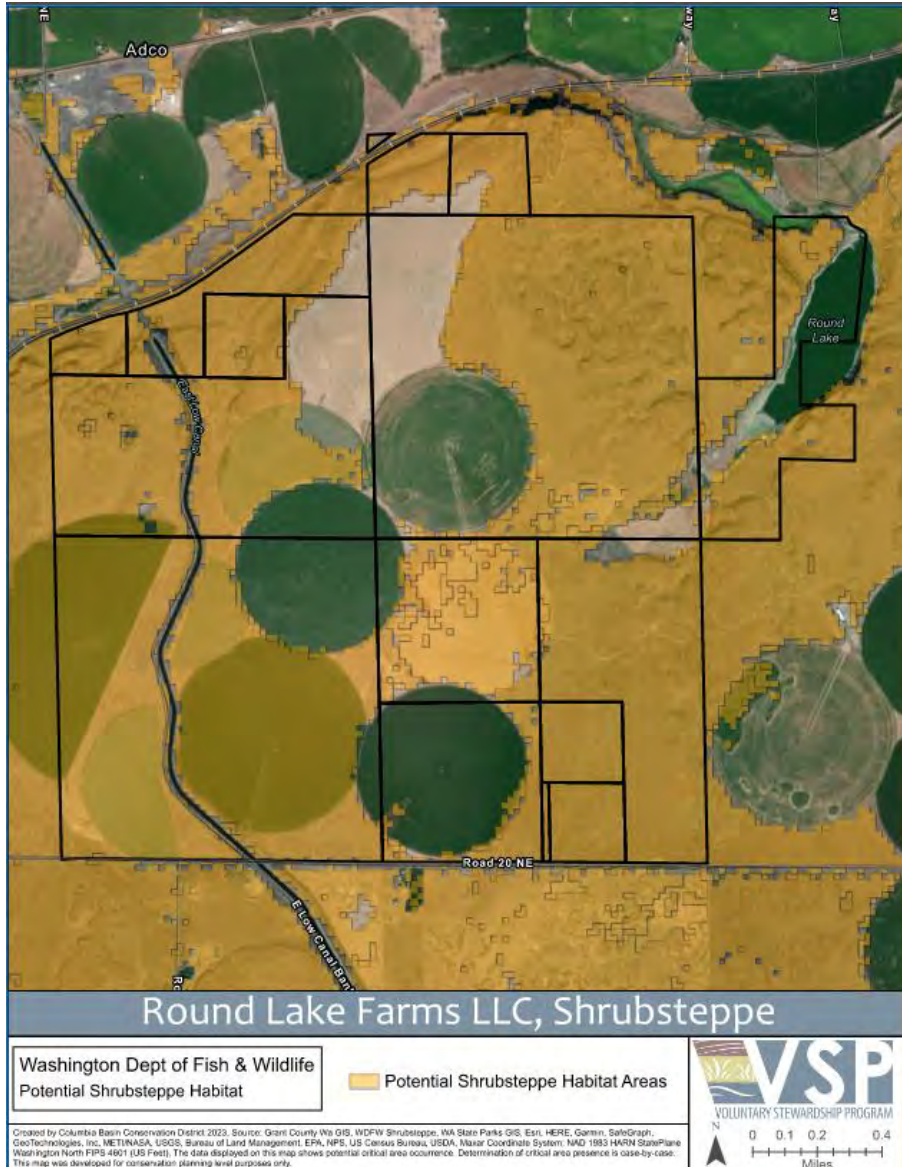
QUALITY OF HABITAT AND SPECIES  
1:1, 2:1, 3:1, ETC.





# AG & SS

820 Acres of Conservation Easement & Monitoring Plan





5 ACRE PARCELS IN THE COUNTY. AREA OF DISTURBANCE MUST EQUAL AREA TO BE PRESERVED ON SITE (1:1). DEED RESTRICTION IS THE STANDARD



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
EXAMPLE OF FRAGMENTATION

# DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS

As development continues, so do the impacts!

- Species can exist up to densities of 4/1
- Species may exist between 4/1-7/1 if Conservation measures are put in place
- Species not expected to occur are in red

**EDUCATION IS KEY!**

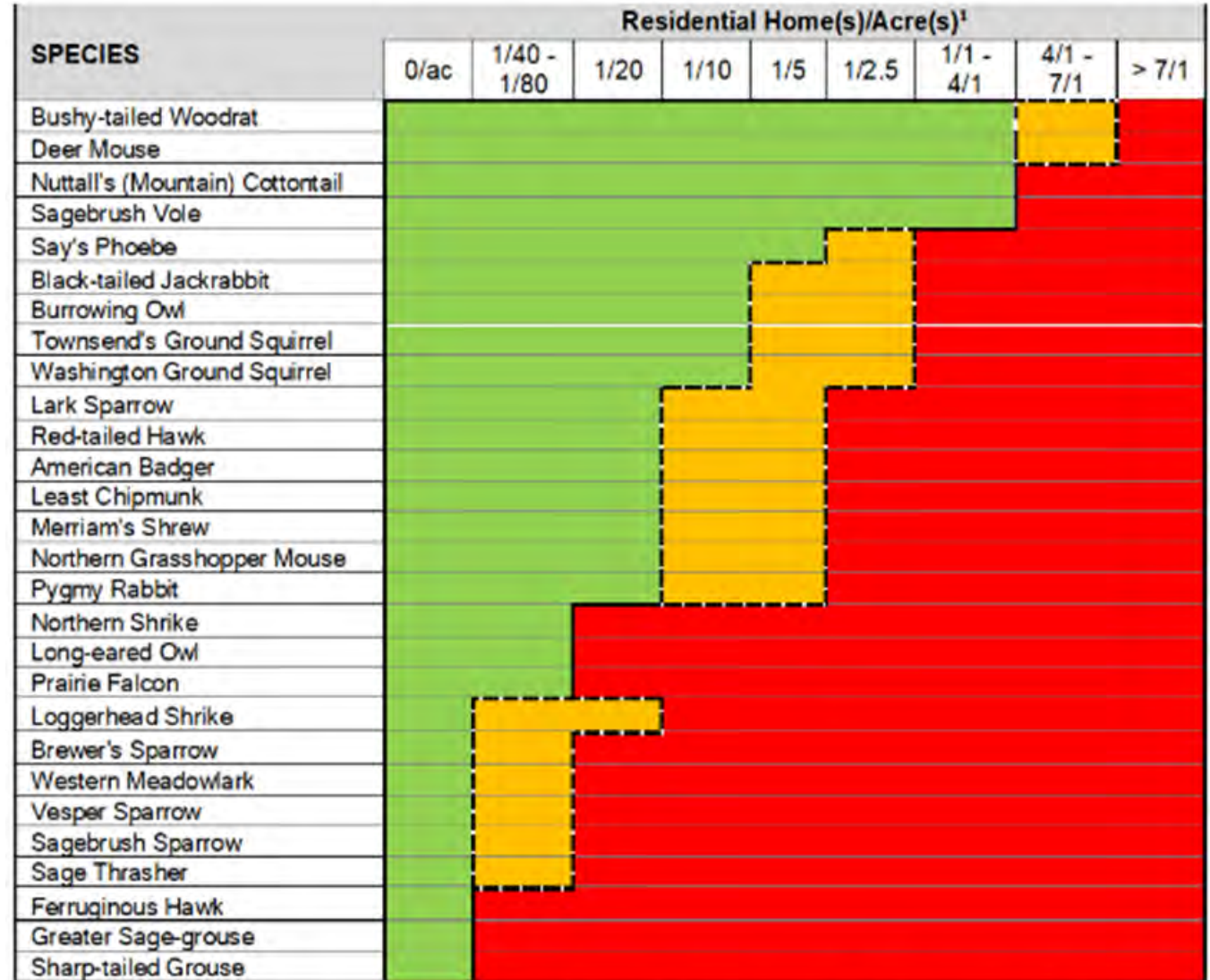


Figure 13. Predicted response to development for shrubsteppe species<sup>2</sup>. In green are densities where species are expected to persist; in orange species could occur if conservation measures are put in place; and in red are densities where species are not expected to occur.

# MITIGATION

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The process of or measures prescribed and implemented for avoiding, reducing, or compensating for the environmental impact(s) of a proposed activity or use, including, but not limited to, restoration, creation, or enhancement.

## Sequencing

- AVOID
- MINIMIZE IMPACTS
- RESTORE
- REDUCE BY PRESERVATION
- COMPENSATE
- MONITOR

## Current Practices

- MINIMIZE IMPACTS ON SITE 1:1 RATIOS
- PRESERVE THE RESERVE
- MONITOR?



# WHAT MAKES SENSE

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Shrubsteppe fragmentation – since most shrubsteppe patches are small, the degree to which they are fragmented is important to consider. Shrubsteppe archipelagos (clusters of nearby patches) are likely more important than small patches.





Shrubsteppe Connectivity – extensive development can segregate key areas of habitat, leading to isolation of shrubsteppe species. Large-scale Development can cutoff connectivity when located in areas that are key to wildlife movement.

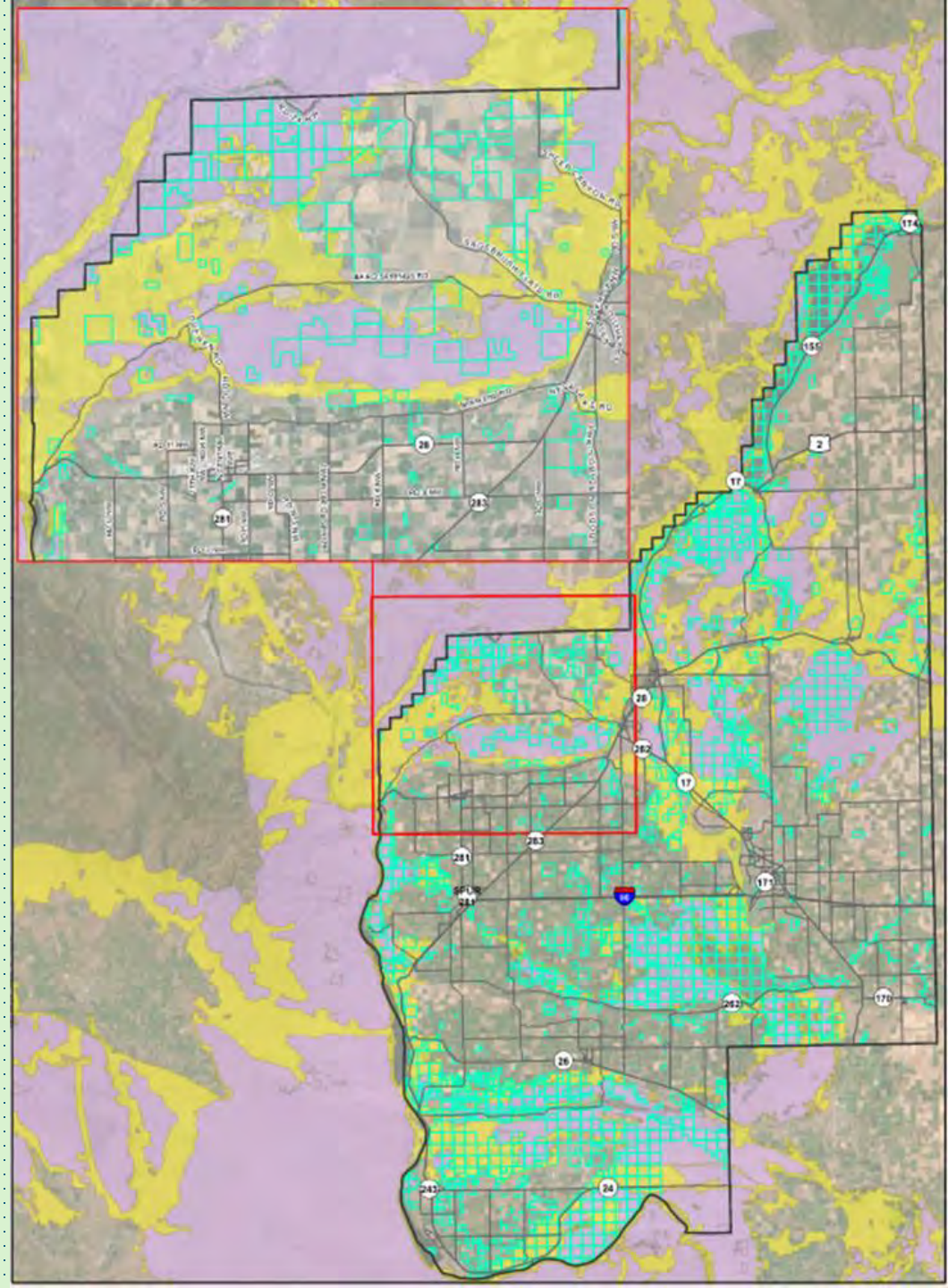


# GRANT COUNTY BIODIVERSITY AREAS/CORRIDORS AND LAND OWNERSHIP.



## LEGEND

-  STATE & FEDERAL LAND
-  COLUMBIA PLATEAU REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY AREAS
-  COLUMBIA PLATEAU REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS
-  COUNTY BOUNDARY



# MITIGATION BANK & ILF

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A state-approved program including the creation, restoration, or enhancement of wetland or other aquatic habitats and their functional values together with a program of administrative functions expressly for the purpose of providing compensatory mitigation in advance of proposed discharges into water of the United States, including wetlands, where mitigation cannot be achieved at the site of the impact.

## **A CODIFIED PROCESS FOR WATER AND WETLANDS BUT NOTHING FOR HABITAT CRITICAL AREAS (HCAS)**

IN-LIEU FEE PROGRAM (ILF) is a type of mitigation that can be used to off-set unavoidable impacts. In this approach, a permittee pays a fee to a third party instead of conducting project-specific mitigation or buying credits from a mitigation bank.



# OPEN SPACE – CONSERVATION FUTURES

## RCW 84.34.020

(1) "Open space land" means (a) any land area so designated by an official comprehensive land use plan adopted by any city or county and zoned accordingly, or (b) any land area, the preservation of which in its present use would (i) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources, or (ii) protect streams or water supply, or (iii) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, or (iv) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open space.....

**THANK  
YOU!**

**Christopher Young**

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