CONSERVATION FUTURES (CFT) 2015 ANNUAL COLLECTIONS APPLICATION FOR FUNDS

PROJECT NAME: Soos Creek Park and Trail Additions

Applicant Jurisdiction(s): King County

Open Space System: Soos Creek Park & Trail
(Name of larger connected system, if any, such as Cedar River Greenway, Mountains to Sound, a Regional Trail, etc.)

Acquisition Project Size: 28 acres CFT Application Amount: $400,000
(Size in acres and proposed number of parcel(s) if a multi-parcel proposal)
(Dollar amount of CFT grant requested)

Type of Acquisition(s): Fee Title Conservation Easement Other:

CONTACT INFORMATION
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Title: Natural Lands Planner Fax: 206-263-6217
Address: 201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 700 Email: Ingrid.Lundin@kingcounty.gov
Seattle, WA 98104 Date: March 2014

PROJECT SUMMARY:
(In the space below, provide a brief but comprehensive description of the project. This should include the overall watershed, reach, trail or open space system if appropriate and specific targeted parcels and how they are significant individually and as part of an overall system.)

The 775-acre Soos Creek Park and Trail lies within a stream, wetland, and floodplain corridor nearly 10 miles long. The park contains a ~7.5 mile-long paved multiuse regional trail that extends from the City of Renton to the Cities of Kent/Covington. There are two aspects of this proposal.

(1) Southward Corridor Extension: This request builds on our 2013 acquisition feasibility grant supporting southward extension of the Soos Creek habitat protection corridor between Kent & Covington, and into rural King County. Due to environmental and right-of-way constraints, Soos Creek Trail extension will occur primarily on road right-of-way south of SR 516 at this time; this grant scope focuses primarily on habitat protection.

This two-year phased ask targets 3/5 mile of Soos Creek corridor and associated Category 1 wetland, through the purchase of ~50-60 acres located on southern boundary of Covington. This year’s request is for three parcels ~21 acres called “Berrydale Tree Farm” owned by one family eager to sell. Next year’s target are the undeveloped ~40+ acres immediately north owned by Cascade Water Alliance; broader scope includes a few other parcels along the corridor and the Kent School District property to the south.

(2) Covington Highlands Trail Parcel: There is a 6.13-acre parcel included in past scopes. Seeking fee or trail easement acquisition in support of the Covington Highlands Trail, part of planned east-west trail linking Soos Creek Trail with Green to Cedar Rivers Trail. A 2013 feasibility study recommended acquiring right-of-way on this parcel to prevent wetland impacts on a Puget Sound Energy parcel directly to the north that was originally planned for trail route. Site also could provide a local access route from 156th Ave SE over to the existing trail and/or the trail might be routed through the parcel out the panhandle driveway to 156th Ave SE.

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1. OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Please review the attached evaluation criteria. For the proposed acquisition parcel(s), please mark those criteria that apply and thoroughly, yet succinctly, describe in the space below how the proposed acquisition satisfies each marked criteria. Please clearly describe how these criteria might be met at a landscape level, and how they apply to individual parcels. If restoration is part of the plan, please briefly describe the current condition and the hoped for restored condition that is the goal of the acquisition.

- **A. Wildlife habitat or rare plant reserve**
  - Despite being surrounded by a high degree of development, Soos Creek Park & Trail provides valuable wildlife habitat. The park is located within a Wildlife Habitat Network Corridor as designated in the King County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). Larger mammals known to use this area include black bear, cougar, bobcat, red foxes and coyotes. Approximately 120 bird species have been reported in Soos Creek Park. Even though they are not all seen annually, it is significant that about half of King County’s entire bird assemblage may be found in the park. The park is known to support a number of Species of Local Importance designated in the Comp Plan (Policy E-487), State candidate species, and two sensitive species for which the King County CAO requires protection of breeding sites (the red-tailed hawk and the great blue heron). Ecological survey work indicated that the park contains 113 taxa of vascular plants, though the survey revealed no endangered or rare plants.

- **B. Salmon habitat and aquatic resources:**
  - These southward corridor parcels contain the southernmost large wetland in the Soos Creek Corridor, a 62-acre Category I wetland. The property is located within the documented Chinook spawning reaches (lower 6 miles) of Soos Creek through SR 18 (and presumed use north of there). Coho and chum were historically present in Soos Creek all the way to the headwaters. Soos Creek is known to also support winter steelhead, resident cutthroat trout, western pearlshell mussel, and fresh water eels. This reach of Soos Creek is an isolated pocket that was rated as “high” for ecological process function under the Shoreline Master Program.

- **D. Community separator**
  - The 750-acre Soos Creek Regional Park provides a visual and functional separation between rural King County and urban areas of unincorporated King County and the cities of Renton, Kent, and Covington. This acquisition work would support future acquisitions to add to that separator in Kent/Covington area. The Comp Plan specifically supports establishment of permanent urban separators and links with city greenbelts (Policies U-180, U-182). The 2010 King County Park Plan includes the protection of lands that buffer the urban growth line as a high priority acquisition criterion (App. VII).

- **F. Urban passive-use natural area/greenbelt**
  - Acquisitions stemming from this work would contribute to passive-use urban separator/greenbelt functions, provide a buffer from nearby urban development, facilitate additional protection of natural features and environmentally sensitive areas as well as add land to a regional park.

- **G. Park/open space or natural corridor addition**
  - In addition to the community separator and urban functions noted in “D” & “F,” acquisitions in the southward corridor extension would contribute to the regional functions of the Soos Creek Park and Trail. The King County Comp Plan (Park Chapter) calls for King County to focus on linking natural areas to create regional open space corridors of greenways. The county’s 2010 Park Plan directs a focus on regional trails and passive parks.

  The Covington Highlands trail parcel would contribute to the planned corridor development, which is a long-term proposal anticipated for additional work in the next 10+ years, likely in partnership with Covington.

- **H. Passive recreation opportunity/unmet needs**
  - The southward corridor acquisition would primarily be used for passive recreation such as walking and habitat observation, possibly horseback riding. Covington Highlands acquisition is anticipated to support regional trail.
2. ADDITIONAL FACTORS
For the proposed acquisition parcel(s), please mark all criteria that apply and thoroughly, yet succinctly, describe in the space below how the proposed acquisition satisfies each marked criteria.

A. Educational/interpretive opportunity
The Friends of Soos Creek Park, in coordination with King County and the City of Kent, lead numerous educational and interpretive programs in the Soos Creek Park. These include bird, plant, butterfly, and bats walks. Many students from the Kent School District participate in these educational and interpretive programs. If structures are retained, could provide an opportunity for such use (and/or serve as maintenance facilities).

B. Threat of loss of open space resources
The Soos Creek Corridor through Kent & Covington will only continue to become more developed over time. Soos Creek is a valuable wetland system for both hydrologic and habitat functions. As growth in this area continues and as other patches of habitat in the region are lost, protecting the corridor will become more important for fish and wildlife. The 22 acres along southward corridor could support four houses if built out to zoning.

C. Ownership complexity/willing seller(s)/ownership interest proposed
For southward corridor: we have appraised the target parcel and have issued an offer that is contingent upon receiving funding; as of application due date we are awaiting response. Owners have received competing offers. If we are unable to secure this property, then the target of this year’s request is the Cascade Water Alliance parcel.

For Covington Highlands Trail: the willing seller wants to sell his parcel in the next year or two. If parcel is sold and developed, we risk working with an unwilling landowner in the future.

D. Partnerships - Describe any public or private partnerships that will enhance this project
The Friends of Soos Creek Park (FOSCP) and the South County Chapter of the Sierra Club are strong supporters who have advocated for ongoing acquisitions in this area. Both groups have assisted King County with park planning, stewardship and environmental educational activities through ongoing participation and sponsorship of volunteer activities. FOSCP has over 10 years of history serving as an official Adopt A Park group for Soos Creek Park; several of its members are active Park Ambassadors; and they seek monetary donations, all of which are used to steward the regional park and area resources. Additional site partners supportive of our acquisition and restoration efforts are Middle Green River Coalition, and Rainier Audubon Society.

E. Is the property identified in an adopted park, open space, comprehensive or community plan?
Both the Comp Plan and the Park Plan contain policies that direct acquisition, planning, and stewardship of KC Parks. The acquisition of these parcels is consistent with the following policy direction:

- Be a “regional provider of open spaces with a major focus on systems of open space corridors that conserve natural resources and provide recreation, education and interpretive opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat and scenic beauty.” (Park Plan Policy G-101)
- Emphasize acquisition and development of sites that provide for multiple benefits (Park Plan Policy CIP-120)
- Preserve lands that serve as an urban separator (Comp Plan Policy U-182); lie within a designated Wildlife Habitat Network and contain wetlands and aquatic areas and their buffers, and Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (Comp Plan Policy E-107) and/or provide habitat for species of local importance (Comp Plan Policy E-487)

The 2013 Lower Soos Creek Basin Ecological Assessment identified acquisition/protection between stream miles 5-6 as a high priority to preserve habitat connectivity, a reach which includes the Berrydale Tree Farm and Cascade Water parcels. It strongly recommends preserving the remaining wetlands in the lower Soos Creek basin.
3. STEWARDSHIP AND MAINTENANCE
How will the property be stewarded and maintained? Does the property lend itself to volunteer stewardship opportunities? How will ongoing stewardship and maintenance efforts be funded?

King County Parks' maintenance work would be funded with Parks Levy operating funds (funded 2014-2019 due to recent vote in August 2013).

Typical King County maintenance includes regular site inspections to identify and address any issues arising on site in regard to public health and safety, property encroachments, natural resource damage, infrastructure damage, trail condition, etc. If a parking area is developed on site, then inspections and maintenance are much higher in frequency to ensure appropriate use of the parking area.

We assess forest health at all King County Parks sites. It is possible that this is a site on which forest stewardship activities may occur if recommended by such an assessment.

Depending on opportunity and site plans, there may be capital or operating work on site which is eligible for specific trail or restoration grants, or for recreational amenity development with local stakeholder groups through Parks' Community Grants Program, or for restoration work through the volunteer program.

King County anticipates partnership with local stakeholder groups such as Friends of Soos Creek Park, Rainier Audubon, and South County chapter of the Sierra Club.

4. PROJECT BUDGET

| 1) TOTAL CFT APPLICATION AMOUNT¹ | CFT: $400,000 |
| 2) TOTAL PEL APPLICATION AMOUNT² | PEL: $400,000 |

¹Allowable CFT acquisition costs (Ordinance 14714): The disbursement of funds shall be made only for capital project expenditures that include costs of acquiring real property, including interests in real property, and the following costs: the cost of related relocation of eligible occupants, cost of appraisal, cost of appraisal review, costs of title insurance, closing costs, pro rata real estate taxes, recording fees, compensating tax, hazardous waste substances reports, directly related staff costs and related legal and administrative costs, but shall not include the cost of preparing applications for conservation futures funds.

²King County projects only, if applicable.

Estimation of property value:
Briefly note how land values have been estimated (i.e., appraisal, property tax assessment, asking price, letter of value or other means).

We have appraised the southward corridor property, which is valued at $550,000. The CWA property has had an appraisal performed by that agency, which placed the value of the undeveloped portion of its property at approximately the same amount.

No appraisal on Covington Highlands parcel. Assessed value is under $200,000. Will consider fee or easement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT COSTS</th>
<th>ESTIMATED DOLLAR AMOUNT OR RANGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total property interest value</td>
<td>$550,000 (southward corridor) + $180,000 (Trail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and appraisal work</td>
<td>$10,000 + $6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing, fees, taxes</td>
<td>$28,000 + $10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td>$2,000 + $2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hazardous waste reports</td>
<td>$10,000 + $5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directly related staff, administration and legal costs</td>
<td>$600,000 + $200,000 = $800,000</td>
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MATCHING FUNDS: Existing Sources
(CFT can only provide a maximum of 50% of anticipated project costs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DOLLAR AMOUNT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013 Acquisition Feasibility – Parks Levy (along with equal amount CFT for acquisition feasibility)</td>
<td>Jan 2013</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total CFT Funds Previously Received This Project</td>
<td>Jan 2013</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Matching Funds and Past CFT Funds Currently Identified</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40,000 (some of which has been spent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unidentified Remaining Match Need</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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Unidentified remaining match need: What funds are anticipated and what is the time frame? Please briefly discuss how the unidentified remaining match need above will be met.

We are seeking $400,000 in 2015 Parks Levy funds as match for the CFT funding.

5. IN–KIND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTNERSHIPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief Activity Description</th>
<th>Dollar Value of In-kind Contribution</th>
<th>Status (Completed or Proposed)</th>
<th>Activity Date Range (Completion Date or Proposed Completion Date)</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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6. ATTACHED MAPS (Two maps are now required: 1) site map and 2) general location map; you may also include one additional map, aerial photo or site photo)  
8 ½ x 11” maps are preferred, but 11 x 17” is acceptable if folded and hole-punched for insertion into a three-ring binder.

Site Map that shows the following:
- Each parcel proposed for acquisition in yellow or distinct shading and an indication of any parcel proposed for less than fee simple acquisition, such as a conservation easement;
- Location of any proposed development to the site such as parking, trails or other facilities;
- Location of any proposed site restoration;
- Existing adjacent public (local, state or federal) parks or open spaces labeled and shown in dark green or distinct shading.

Location Map that shows the following:
- Other permanently protected open spaces (private, non profit, institutional, etc.) shown in light green or distinct shading;
- Major water courses such as creeks, rivers, lakes or wetlands;
- Major roads, arterial roads or regional trails.
- Map scale: This map should show approximately a ten-mile radius around the proposed acquisition(s).
Soos Creek Park Additions
Southern Site Map

- Initial Targets
- In Scope
- King County Parks
- Publicly Owned Lands
- Streams and Rivers

All Wetlands in King County
All Wetlands in King County

0 285 570 1,140 Feet

3/12/2014

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Forest and Estuarine Lands
The maps shown in upper right and directly above are excerpted from King County Parks "Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Feasibility Study" November 2012.