



King County

K.C. Date Received _____

**CONSERVATION FUTURES (CFT) 2017 ANNUAL COLLECTIONS
APPLICATION FOR FUNDS**

PROJECT NAME: Lower Soos Creek Acquisition

Applicant Jurisdiction(s): King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Open Space System: KC Natural Areas: Lower Newaukum Creek
(Name of larger connected system, if any, such as Cedar River Greenway, Mountains to Sound, a Regional Trail, etc.)

Acquisition Project Size: 41 acres CFT Application Amount: \$160,000
(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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201 S. Jackson, Suite 600, Seattle, WA 98104 Date: March 18, 2016

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The lower three miles of Soos Creek is a core spawning and rearing area for Green River fall Chinook salmon and steelhead, both threatened species per the Endangered Species Act (WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan 2005). Four other salmonid species also use this reach for spawning and rearing. Soos Creek is, along with Newaukum Creek, the largest tributary in the Green/Duwamish River Watershed. The lower mile of Soos Creek is extremely important as an over-wintering and resting area for Green River salmonids; they find refuge in the slower moving water during high flow periods of the river. The lower mile of Soos Creek is also a large palustrine wetland exceeding 30 acres with a large beaver colony. Soosette Creek enters Soos Creek in this reach and contains remarkably intact ravine in an area with significant development pressure.

This application requests funding to help protect 41 acres in this valuable natural resource area; 28 acres are located adjacent to lower Soos Creek; the landowner is interested in selling a conservation easement. The 13 acres next to Soosette Creek are currently being surplus by the Washington State Department of Transportation and would be purchased in fee.

1. OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Review the attached evaluation criteria. For the proposed acquisition parcel(s), please (1) mark those criteria that apply, and (2) describe **in the space below** how the proposed acquisition satisfies each marked criteria.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ A. Wildlife habitat or rare plant reserve | <input type="checkbox"/> E. Historic/cultural resources |
| ■ B. Salmon habitat and aquatic resources | <input type="checkbox"/> F. Urban passive-use natural area/greenbelt |
| ■ C. Scenic resources | ■ G. Park/open space or natural corridor addition |
| ■ D. Community separator | ■ H. Passive recreation opportunity/unmet needs |

Wildlife Habitat/Plants – Lower Soos Creek provides varied and merging habitat types (palustrine wetlands, streams, floodplain, steep slopes, ravines, riparian zones, and forested uplands. This ecosystem diversity of provides a variety of habitat types for many species of fish and wildlife including Chinook and steelhead salmon, bald eagle, great blue heron, pileated woodpecker, big brown bat, fisher, mink, Western toad, and Van Dyke’s salamander. Other wildlife in this area include cougar, black bear, bobcat, and red fox. The North Rainier Elk Herd (White River Unit) with 600-900 individuals is one of 10 documented elk herds in state. Birds species include turkey vulture, wood duck, western screech-owl, barn owl, and goldfinch.

Salmon Habitat/Aquatic Resources – Protection and restoration of refuge habitat such as tributaries is a primary goal of the *WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan* (2005) for the MGR sub-basin. The Plan states: “Refugia are areas within a watershed that provide persistent habitat conditions that support the population during environmental perturbations.” The Soos Creek parcel protects refuge habitat. Another Plan goal is to protect and restore spawning and rearing habitat in Lower Soos Creek, one of the few areas in the watershed that would assist in maintaining spatial structure in salmonid populations because of the diversity of landscapes.

Scenic Resources - These parcels provide excellent scenic opportunities associated. Visitors can observe extensive forests, steep slopes, a beautiful ravine, streams, and wetlands. Developing these parcels would compromise the scenic value of the existing natural areas.

Community Separator - The project area is within five miles of Auburn, Black Diamond, Kent, Covington, and the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation. If acquired, these parcels would increase the community separator function currently being provided by the natural areas. Preserving these lands would help protect these communities from residential sprawl by increasing the linkage of public land along lower Soos Creek and the Green River.

Park/Open Space or Natural Corridor Addition - Preserving this reach would complement the protection efforts along Lower Soos Creek (Hatchery Natural Area) Natural Area and the Green River natural areas (Auburn Narrows, Porter). These public lands provide ecological connectivity important for fish and wildlife migration. Uplands in these protected areas will likely become low-elevation old-growth forests over time.

Passive Recreation Opportunity - Preserving these parcels would enhance the opportunity south-county residents have to hike, fish, and bird-watch in a natural setting. Residents in the fast-growing communities of Auburn, Kent, Covington, and Black Diamond would benefit from additional permanently protected passive recreational opportunities in south King County.

2. ADDITIONAL FACTORS

For the **proposed acquisition parcel(s)**, please (1) mark all criteria that apply, and (2) thoroughly, yet succinctly describe **in the space below** how the proposed acquisition satisfies each marked criteria.

- A. Educational/interpretive opportunity
- B. Threat of loss of open space resources
- C. Ownership complexity/willing seller(s)/ownership interest proposed
- D. Partnerships - Describe any public or private partnerships that will enhance this project:
- E. Is the property identified in an adopted park, open space, comprehensive, or community plan?
- F. Transferable Development Credits (TDC) participation

Educational/interpretive opportunity - Preserving these parcels would provide educational and interpretive opportunities. The properties contain upland, steep slope, and riparian habitat, the benefits of which could be described in educational signage along trails. Reasons why this area is important to fish, wildlife, and water quality could be highlighted with signage. Visitors could also learn about the fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects planned for the three natural areas.

Threat of loss of open space resources - Residential development is permitted in this area. The parcels are accessible by maintained county roads, and water and electricity can be easily accessed. The properties provide beautiful settings for homes (adjacent to natural area, views, etc.). Protection would prevent undesirable management issues associated with residential development (tree clearing, livestock grazing, pets, noise, light, off-road vehicle use, etc.).

Ownership complexity/willing seller/ownership interest - King County DNRP has contacted all of the prioritized parcel owners. All are willing to negotiate an acquisition.

Partnerships - This acquisition effort is supported by the Green River Coalition and Friends of Soos Creek.

Is property identified in adopted park, open space, comprehensive, or community plan? - Support for acquiring land in the areas where the parcels are found is expressed in the *WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Plan* (2006). Both lower Soos Creek and the Middle Green River are designated Wildlife Corridors in the *King County Comprehensive Plan*.

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?

Agency Participation - The maintenance and stewardship of these parcels will be the responsibility of KC DNRP. Stewardship of these sites will be a partnership between KC staff and community stewardship groups and volunteers. The three natural areas are currently managed exclusively for natural resource protection; the addition of these parcels to the KC natural area system would not change the management objectives of the natural areas or of the acquired parcel. However, the site management plan would be amended to include acquired parcels.

Monitoring and Maintenance - Baseline monitoring will be conducted immediately after property acquisition and include a site inventory. This information will provide a foundation for a site management plan, which will guide long-term monitoring, maintenance, restoration, and overall management. Monitoring and maintenance will be accomplished through volunteer work parties, paid staff, and contract crews. Adaptive management will be implemented to respond to other challenges observed through monitoring.

Signage, Inspection and Enforcement - Like all public land, these parcels have the potential to become illegal dumping areas and may draw partygoers or transients. However, these particular parcels have a fairly low risk of this happening because of distance from urban areas and lack of access. Signage would be placed at the site and

regular park inspections would be conducted to discourage misuse. KC staff works closely with the KC Sheriff's Department to ensure enforcement of County Park System Codes.

Volunteers – Friends of Soos Creek have focused on the protection and restoration of this waterbody for over 15 years.

Trails – KC DNRP will develop a trails plan if one is considered appropriate on-site. Any trails that are constructed would be “soft” and consistent with the primary use of the site as an undeveloped natural area. Trail maintenance would be accomplished by KC staff and volunteers.

4. PROJECT BUDGET

TOTAL CFT APPLICATION AMOUNT*	\$160,000
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**Allowable acquisition costs (Ordinance 13717): 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.*

Estimation of property value:

Briefly describe how land values have been estimated, i.e. appraisal, property tax assessment, asking price, letter of value or other means.

Budget estimates were correlated through market value comparison in KC appraisal files of comparable properties with similar site influences, and would be confirmed by appraisal prior to acquisition.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS (dollars)	
Total property interest value	\$290,000
Title and appraisal work	\$6,000
Closing, fees, taxes	\$8,000
Relocation	NA
Hazardous waste reports	\$0
Directly related staff, administration and legal costs	\$16,000
Total Project Costs (CFT and other funds)	\$320,000

MATCHING FUNDS SOURCES	Date Expended or Committed	Match Funds Expended or Committed
2017 Parks Levy – Regional Open Space Acquisition funds	Requested via this CFT Application	\$160,000
Total Matching Funds (Based on 2-year requirement)		\$160,000
<i>Unidentified Remaining Match Need:</i>		NA

Unidentified remaining match need

Please discuss briefly how the unidentified remaining match need above will be met:

No additional matching funds are needed if 2017 Parks Levy funds are available.

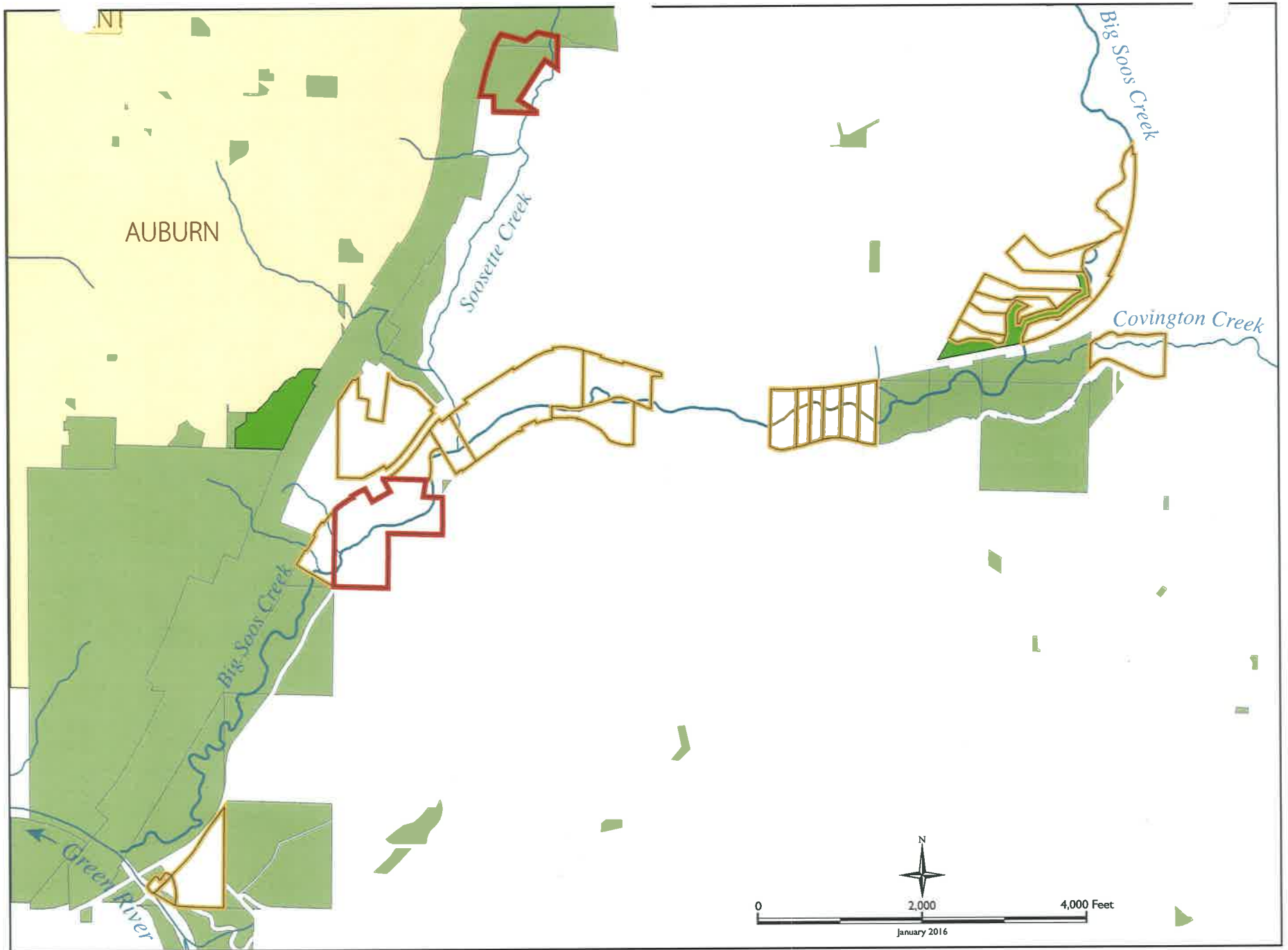
5. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTNERSHIPS

Brief Activity Description	Dollar Value of In-kind Contribution	Status (Completed, or Proposed in future?)	Activity Date Range (When was activity completed? Or, date proposed in future)
TOTAL			

6. ATTACHED MAP

Please attach a **one-page, 8 1/2'x 11" 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 public (local, state or federal) park or open spaces, labeled and shown in dark green or distinct shading;
- 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: The map should show approximately a one-mile radius around the proposed acquisition(s).*



Lower Soos Creek Aquisition Strategy

- Parcels Targeted for Protection
- Potential Future Acquisition
- Public Land
- Native Growth Protection Easement