

Long-Range Planning for the Future of McNeil Island

PURPOSE

The Washington State Legislature directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to prepare a report to use to initiate a comprehensive, long-range planning process for the future of McNeil Island during the 2013-15 Biennium (2011-13 Operating Budget [Section 129, Chapter 50, Laws of 2011, 1st Special Session]). OFM expects to release a report to the Governor and Legislature in mid-November 2012.

BACKGROUND

McNeil Island is a state-owned island of approximately 4,400 acres in Puget Sound in Pierce County. The federal government operated a prison on the island from 1875 until 1981. In 1981, the state of Washington began leasing the island and prison from the federal government. Through a series of conveyances starting in 1984, the federal government transferred ownership of all of McNeil Island to the state on the condition that it be used for the designated public benefit purposes. In 1984 via a quitclaim deed, the federal government conveyed over 3,100 acres of McNeil Island along with Gertrude and Pitt Islands to the Washington State Department of Game (now the Department of Fish and Wildlife) for use for wildlife conservation. In 1996 in a separate quitclaim deed, the federal government conveyed over 1,300 acres of McNeil Island to the state through the Washington State Department of General Administration (now the Department of Enterprise Services) on behalf of the Washington State Department of Corrections for use as a correctional facility. In 2001, the parties amended the 1996 deed to allow use of one parcel of approximately 87 acres for a correctional and/or civil commitment facility. That parcel now houses the Special Commitment Center operated by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Both deeds contain conditions and restrictions related to archaeological and cultural resources, wildlife resources, and public access. Both deeds require reversion of ownership to the federal government if the state fails to use the property for the designated public benefit purposes.

The 2009-11 state operating budget directed the closure of the McNeil Island Corrections Center by June 30, 2011, and the Department of Corrections closed the prison on schedule. The Special Commitment Center and a secure community transition facility remain functional on McNeil Island. Infrastructure to support these operations for the Department of Social and Health Services is spread throughout the island on parcels designated for correctional purposes and on property designated for wildlife conservation. The Department of Fish and Wildlife continues with passive management tied to wildlife conservation.

The state desires to use a collaborative approach to engage interested parties before recommending a planning process for the future of McNeil Island. The U.S. General Services Administration wants to work with the state as partners to address the state's needs while protecting the interests of U.S. taxpayers in an effort to find the best solution for all concerned. It also has asked the state to maintain existing historic buildings and island infrastructure to prevent waste pending a final decision. The report is intended to inform decision-makers involved in planning for future use of the island.

PROJECT WORK GROUP

The Office of Financial Management contracted with BERK, an independent and interdisciplinary consulting firm to assist with the report. A project work group with representatives from the following federal and state agencies serves as a resource to the consulting firm and project manager:

U.S. General Services Administration
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WA Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
WA Department of Corrections
WA Department of Ecology
WA Department of Enterprise Services

WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
WA Department of Natural Resources
WA Department of Social and Health Services
WA Office of the Attorney General
WA Recreation and Conservation Office
WA State Parks and Recreation Commission

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PROJECT ELEMENTS

Consultation with Interested Parties

The project involves broad consultation with numerous interested parties including:

- Federal agencies.
- Tribal governments.
- State agencies.
- Local governments and communities in the area.
- Interested private organizations and individuals.

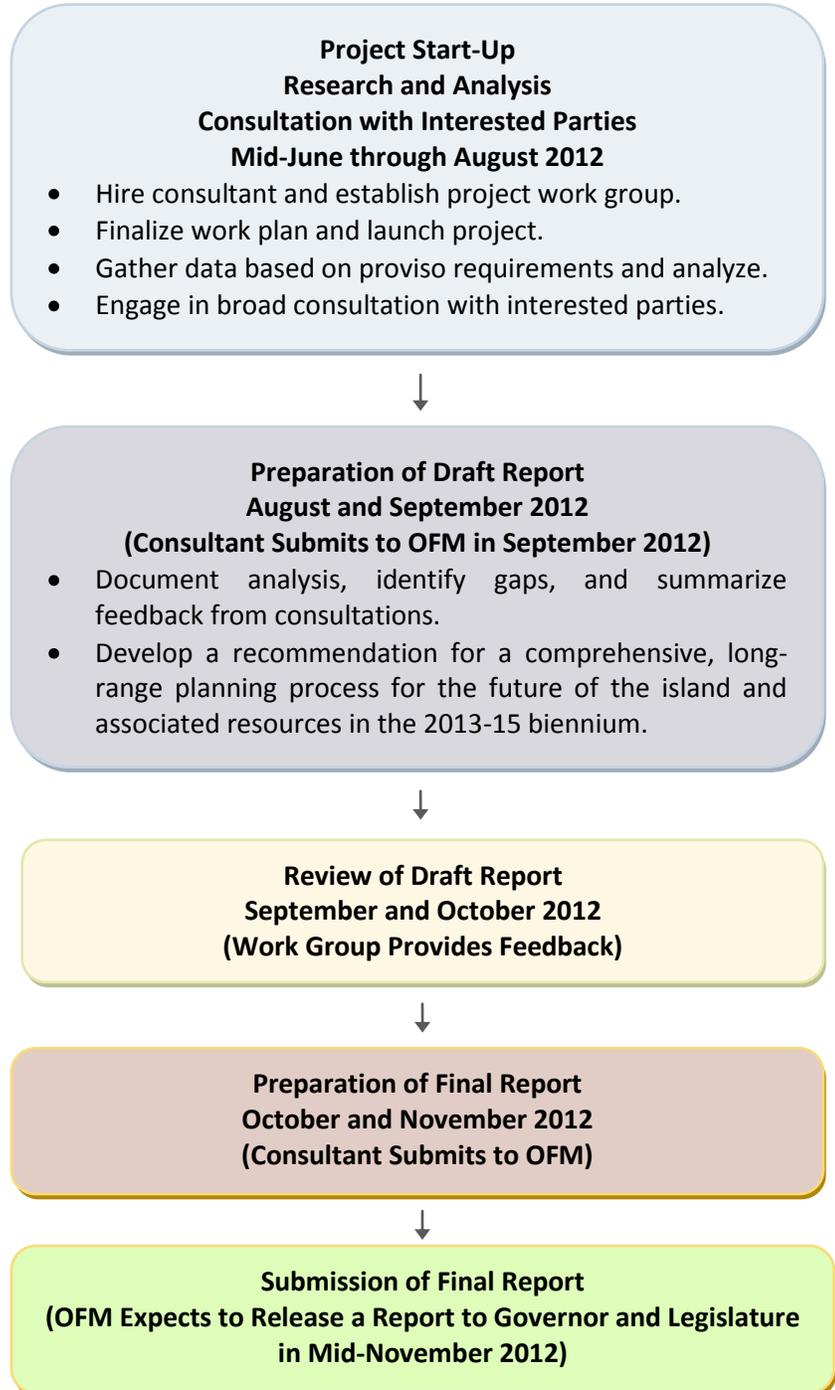
Consultations will be conducted through phone and in-person interviews, as well as public open houses.

Report Requirements

The report will include the following required components:

- Documentation of
 - Ownership issues including consultation with the federal government about its current legal requirements associated with McNeil Island,
 - Federal and state decision-making processes to change use or ownership,
 - Tribal treaty interests,
 - Fish and wildlife species and their habitats,
 - Land use and public safety needs,
 - Recreational opportunities for the general public,
 - Historic and archaeological resources, and
 - Revenue from and necessary to support potential future uses of the island.
- Recommendation of a comprehensive, long-range planning process for the future of the island and associated aquatic resources addressing the items documented above.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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