



## Proposed Boundary Expansion for Upper Dry Gulch NAP

Protecting the entire known population of the rare Whited's milkvetch plant species

The Natural Areas Program of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposes to expand the Upper Dry Gulch Natural Area Preserve (NAP) in Chelan County. The site is about 10 miles southeast of the City of Wenatchee in the hills south of the Rock Island Dam on the Columbia River.



DNR is gathering and evaluating public comments about the expansion proposal. This information will assist the Commissioner of Public Lands with the decision to either approve or disapprove an expansion of the NAP boundary. If approved, the preserve boundary would potentially expand from 320 acres to include roughly 4,900 acres. The proposal includes approximately 1,120 acres of DNR trust lands, 160 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and up to 3,300 acres of privately owned property. The boundary represents lands eligible for inclusion within the preserve. However lands do not become part of the preserve unless they are purchased from willing sellers at market value as determined by an independent appraisal.

### The ecological importance of Upper Dry Gulch NAP

Expansion of Upper Dry Gulch Natural Area Preserve will include the entire known distribution of Whited's milkvetch (*Astragalus sinuatus*), a plant species endemic to Washington State. Whited's milkvetch is designated as "endangered" by the Washington State Natural Heritage Program and classified as a "species of concern" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This species only occurs in a narrow area extending three miles to the north of the Colockum Creek drainage. Recent research identifies several potential threats to the species. The goal of the proposed boundary expansion is to prioritize conservation of the plant's habitat, which DNR hopes to do through purchases from willing sellers and a transfer of currently state trust property within the proposed boundary.

The current boundary of Upper Dry Gulch NAP was established in 1985. Since then a much clearer understanding of the biology of this milkvetch species has emerged—including its distribution, abundance, and threats. Seed predation and competition by non-native species have been shown to limit seedling establishment. Current and potential land uses within the area limit its ability to flourish. In addition, a changing environment has reinforced the need for a species, such as the Whited's milkvetch, to have adequate habitat to adapt over time.

### Potential impacts to current landowners

A proposed natural area boundary imposes no change in land-use zoning, development code requirements, or any other restrictions on current or future landowners. A proposed natural area boundary is a designation of lands eligible for inclusion within a state-owned natural area. The boundary is an administrative tool to indicate where DNR will work with willing property owners to expand the state-owned natural area. Privately owned lands within the boundary only become part of the natural area if

DNR purchase them from a willing private seller at market value, which is determined by an independent, third-party appraisal.

The proposed boundary expansion for the Upper Dry Gulch NAP includes about 820 acres of Common School trust lands, which are managed by DNR to provide funds for school construction statewide. These lands would be purchased from the trust via the state's Trust Land Transfer Program. In addition to enhancing the NAP, this transfer would provide money for replacement trust lands with a higher income potential. The lands in the current 320-acre Upper Dry Gulch NAP were purchased for conservation from the Common School trust at fair market value.

### Public participation in establishing the site

DNR welcomes information and ideas from the public about establishing a natural area and its boundary. Public comments will be taken at a boundary hearing. Written comments also will be accepted throughout the public review process. All public comments become part of the record in the department's development of a recommendation for boundary designation of the natural area preserve. The Commissioner of Public Lands takes these comments into consideration when evaluating whether to move forward with establishing or expanding a natural area.

## DNR's Natural Areas Program

**“Conserving Washington’s native species and ecosystems, today and for future generations”**

DNR manages 55 Natural Area Preserves (NAPs) and 35 Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCAs) on more than 150,000 acres statewide. NAPs protect high-quality examples of native ecosystems and rare plant and animal species. NAPs serve as genetic reserves for Washington's native species and as reference sites for comparing natural and altered environments.

NRCAs protect lands having high conservation values for ecological systems, scenic qualities, wildlife habitat, and low-impact recreational opportunities. Environmental education and approved research projects occur on both NAPs and NRCAs.

