

Background

The West Plains Airport Area is one of the fastest growing areas in Washington State. Additionally, the West Plains Airport Area has over 300 acres of small wetlands. Most of the West Plains Airport Area wetlands are seasonal and considered low quality. Typically, the wetlands are caused by the ponding of water runoff in the spring due to low permeability of bedrock. To accommodate the growth and lessen impacts to these wetlands, S3R3 Solutions is developing a draft prospectus, or an informational plan, for the creation of a wetland mitigation bank. The wetland mitigation bank will be located at least five miles from the Spokane International Airport and Fairchild Airforce Base to prevent wildlife that are attracted to wetlands from posing hazards to aircraft operations. The wetland mitigation bank will be used as compensatory mitigation to offset wetland impacts from the growth in the West Plains Airport Area.

What is a wetland mitigation bank? *A wetland mitigation bank is a site where wetlands are restored, created, enhanced or in exceptional circumstances preserved for the express purpose of providing compensatory mitigation in advance of unavoidable impacts to wetlands or other aquatic resources. Banks provide the option of purchasing credits to offset the unavoidable impacts of a project.*

Several unique challenges and opportunities in creating a wetland mitigation bank for the West Plains Airport Area include:

- **Predict Wetland Mitigation Demand:** It is the responsibility of the project team and regulating agencies, in this case the Army Corp of Engineers and Washington State Department of Ecology (Agencies), to predict a reasonable number of credits which should be created in advance of unavoidable impacts. The credits can be based on current and future demand. The anticipated unavoidable impacts to the 300+ acres of wetlands will be used to determine credit needs in the West Plains Airport Area. In addition, there are other areas in the Spokane region which may have similar unavoidable impacts and can be used as anticipated future credit demand.
- **Identify a Mitigation Bank Site:** The project team is searching for sites where wetlands can be restored, created, enhanced, and/or preserved. This site must be outside the five-mile radius of Spokane International Airport and Fairchild Airforce Base. The site must also have an owner willing to partner with S3R3 Solutions to create a wetland mitigation bank on the property with a conservation easement or deed restriction preserving it in perpetuity.
- **Regulating Agency Support:** The wetland mitigation bank site must have the support of the regulating Agencies. The Agencies must work with the project team to identify the site's opportunities for wetland and habitat uplift, or opportunities for restoration success, and determine how many mitigation credits will be available to offset unavoidable impacts.

Location

The West Plains Airport Area is generally defined as I-90 to the southeast, Fairchild Airforce Base to the west, and the City of Airway Heights to the north. The boundary is shown below.



Goals & Approach of the Project

The goal of this project is to develop a draft prospectus for creating a wetland mitigation bank. The vision is to create high functioning and valued wetlands and habitat in an area outside airport operations. The ideal location will be adjacent to a larger wildlife and wetland area; is currently low value (e.g. grazed, logged, or disturbed); and/or has the potential of creating similar types of habitat predicted to be impacted.

The study will be accomplished through the following general actions and intended outcomes:

- **Collect Data:** Data collection will include site visits, wetland delineations and classifications, and satellite imagery and GIS mapping.
- **Predict Mitigation Demand:** Use predicted land use to identify the need for future mitigation within the West Plains Airport Area and Spokane region. This will set the goal for the number of credits to be created.
- **Identify Mitigation Bank Sites & Agency Site Visits:** Quantify the value of wetland and habitat uplift, or opportunities for restoration success, on the site to determine the number of credits available.
- **Create a Draft Prospectus:** The draft prospectus is essentially a business plan for the wetland mitigation bank. It will identify the mitigation demand, bank site characteristics, uplift potential, restrictive covenants, and terms of the wetland mitigation bank.

Timeline

- January to March 2020 – Collect Data & Predict Mitigation Demand
- January to July 2020 – Identify Mitigation Bank Sites
- October 2020 – Site Visits by the Agencies
- October to December 2020 – Draft Prospectus

Study Team

- S3R3 Solutions
- TO Engineers

S3R3 SOLUTIONS

Wetland Mitigation Bank

- Ecological Land Services