



11/30/2018

# COULTER CREEK HERITAGE PARK

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

DRAFT



Steven Starlund, Park Planner  
KITSAP COUNTY



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN

**Overall Plan Purpose:** Develop resource management directions and public recreation guidelines to encompass the 1200-acre forested park landscape for open space, wildlife habitat, public access and diverse recreational opportunities.

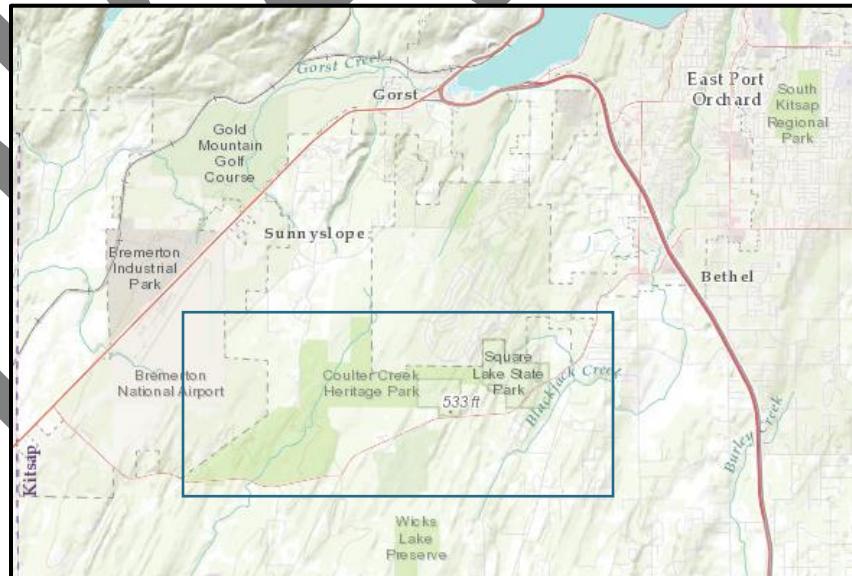
The Plan will:

1. Assess the qualities and importance of landscape characteristics, streams, wetlands, watershed qualities, and sensitive and superlative natural resources;
2. Recommend management directions to restore the multi-age, monoculture tree farm;
3. Determine best management practices and “set-aside” areas for protection and enhancement of the natural features;
4. Determine areas where public access and recreational activities are compatible with the protection of Park resources and suitable for various levels of activities and facilities.

Note: This landscape management and recreation development plan will include the Calvinwood Retreat Center property, currently leased by WA State Parks and the adjacent Square Lake State Park.



Coulter Creek Heritage Park and Vicinity Park Properties





# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### Overall Park Planning Process:

1. Coordinate a Coulter Creek Heritage Park (CCHP) Resource Technical Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from State and local resource agencies, conservation organizations and Tribes who will:
  - a. Assess natural resource health, sensitivity, protection and restoration needs for forest, watershed and wildlife.
  - b. Develop a Resource Management Plan based on the Kitsap County Parks' Landscape Classification System and Mapping.
2. Coordinate a Public Access & Recreational Steering Committee [tbd. 2018], who will:
  - a. Assess the needs and interests for outdoor recreation opportunities which are compatible with resource stewardship goals and the landscape classification system directions.
  - b. Develop public access and recreation concept plans including parking, trails, signage, passive and active use areas.
3. Invite Public Review, Comments and Plan Input.
4. Review and Approval by Kitsap County Parks and Kitsap Board of County Commissioners.



### Resource Technical Advisory Committee:

Brittany Gordon, (WDFW)

Aileen Nichols, Richard Wood (DNR)

Alison O'Sullivan, Debbie Kay, (Suquamish Tribe)

Kinnan Murray (State Parks Area Manager)

Jonathan Decker, (Conservation Director, Great Peninsula Conservancy)

John Grinter, (Kitsap County Parks Advisory Board Liaison)

### Kitsap County Staff Support/Advisors:

Steven Starlund, Parks Planner,

Arno Bergstrom, Parks Forester

Kathleen Peters, DCD Natural Resources

David Nash, DCD County Cartographer

Ric Catron, Parks Project Coordinator

Travis Buell, Assistant Parks Director

**Note:** The following Resource Assessment and Management Recommendations are the result of six-months of research, and on-site evaluation by the Technical Resource Advisory Committee.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### Phase 1 Draft – Resource Stewardship Plan

#### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES:

Emphasis is placed on balancing resource protection and restoration of the forest and aquatic environments, with appropriate integration of public access, recreational use, and facilitating understanding and enjoyment of this superlative ecosystem.

#### INTRODUCTION:

Coulter Creek Heritage Park (CCHP) is an ecologically complex, diverse, and healthy forest that provides optimum fish & wildlife habitat for a wide range of animal species.

This 1200-acre forested parkland currently has a range of forest types from simple monoculture, Christmas tree and tree farm plantations, to more complex natural second growth forests. There are older, mature, individual legacy trees scattered throughout. The natural resource management approach will use forest ecosystem restoration, a process that considers the environment as a complex system, functioning as a whole.

CCHP is the headwaters of the Coulter Creek watershed with numerous wetlands and ponds which serves a variety of habitat types and many ecosystem functions, associated with this undulating topography. There are wetlands associated with stream channels, groundwater seeps, and enclosed landscape depressions within CCHP. Many are shrub-dominated wetlands. There is at least one large open-water wetland created by a series of beaver dams, associated with the main stem of Coulter Creek. The forests surrounding these wetlands are dominated by large diameter Douglas fir, western red cedar and red alder. Most riparian and wetland areas are dominated by the largest of the conifers, primarily Douglas fir and western red cedar.

Because this park will see increased use by the surrounding community, restoration must also consider the social values and interactions with that community. Ecosystem protection and forest restoration will rely heavily on partnership with park stewards and community members as well as private, tribal, local, state, and federal government stakeholders.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. **Protect the various stream headwaters**, riparian corridors and aquifer recharge function of this landscape, with special attention to the importance of small streams and wild buffers. **Protect the water quality** of wetlands, ponds, and streams (both intermittent and perennial flows) through management of the upland forests and directed public recreational use. Manage the watershed function for the **optimum protection of habitat for salmon and cutthroat trout**.
2. **Protect wildlife habitat** through responsible vegetative and watershed management with special attention to restricting public access into sensitive habitat areas and important habitat connectivity corridors. Allow for natural migration and expansion of fish and wildlife habitats including respect for smaller mammals and amphibians; e.g., frogs, salamanders. Work to **eradicate and control** the spread of invasive species and encourage native plant communities.
3. **Work toward a forest restoration regime** for optimum forest health using most current ecological forestry principles including; creating a diverse ecological forest stand; tree species, various stages of forest development, and areas for “pre-forest” environments; including:
  - o Non-conventional (restorative) thinning for over-stocked conifer stands.
  - o Planting shade tolerant tree species to improve forest habitat diversity.
  - o Monitoring and managing areas with diseased and danger trees.
  - o Upgrading culverts to larger sizes or removing culverts entirely to restore hydrologic connectivity.
  - o Abandonment and “decommissioning” (removal) of unnecessary forest roads and trails.
4. **Adaptive Forest Management and Public Use**; Plan for a level of forest management and public use which takes into consideration the changing surrounding landscape alterations and anticipated rural/suburban growth and density. **Develop entry and service road access for resource management and emergency response needs**; e.g., fire control, forestry actions, and rescue access.
5. **Develop a respectful public access and recreational use plan** which closely aligns with the resource protection goals. Set harvest limits and monitoring for approved commercial and recreational foraging. **Create areas for quiet and solitude** as part of the resource management tool, and enhancement of recreational experience.
6. Work to develop **environmental education opportunities** centered at the “retreat lodge” and develop an overall park visitor orientation and interpretive master plan.
7. **Foster the formation of a well-informed stewardship group, and partnerships** with neighbors, and aligned conservation organizations.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Forest Vision:** Coulter Creek Heritage Park is an ecologically complex, diverse, and healthy forest that can be managed to provide optimum fish & wildlife habitat for a wide range of animal species, and a diverse forest environment to compliment public use and recreation.

Coulter Creek Heritage Park currently has a range of forest types from simple monoculture (remnant Christmas tree plantations, and commercial tree stands), to more complex natural second-growth forests. There are few older, mature, individual legacy trees scattered throughout this 1200-acre park.



To effectively revive a more natural forest stand and community, the management approach will be to use forest ecosystem restoration, a process that considers the environment as a complex system functioning as a whole. The ecosystem restoration approach will be to:

1. **Work with nature:** Work with native plant species that have evolved and adapted to our temperate climate and are competitive and resistant to disease and insects. Allow for natural succession, migration and expansion of habitat, particularly aquatic/wetland habitats.
2. **Enhance fish and wildlife habitat:** Structurally diverse forests provide the best habitat for the greatest number of wildlife species. A diverse forest habitat also includes dead and dying trees for snags and large woody debris.
3. **Diversify plant species:** Forests comprised of mixed native tree species improve habitat, aesthetics, and the value of both timber and non-timber assets and better support diverse wildlife populations.
4. **Recognize the connection between all plants, fungi and animals:** all creatures contribute to a healthy and dynamic forest ecosystem.
5. **Protect water as a vital resource:** Healthy, vibrant forest ecosystems are the best and least costly option for maintaining high water quality and for the management of surface and storm water runoff.
6. **Consider that human park users are part of the system** and critical to the decision making about the future of the park.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### Woodland Restoration Goals:

A successfully implemented forest restoration program for the Coulter Creek Heritage Park will need to meet four basic goals, established in the 2012 Kitsap County Resolution #169 – Integrated Forest Stewardship Plan, and which are closely related and not mutually exclusive. These program goals are:

1. Enhance natural forest ecosystem complexity and health
2. Protect and enhance soil, forest hydrology, and fish and wildlife habitat
3. Be biologically, socially and economically self-sustaining
4. Provide safe, reasonable and appropriate public access to County forestlands

### Forest Ecosystem Restoration Strategy:

Eighty percent of the forest stands in Coulter Creek Heritage Park established by the previous commercial forest landowner lack the vegetative diversity of a naturally developed forest in Western Washington. These are dense stands with a significant absence of understory vegetation needed for wildlife. The restoration strategy is to increase the amount of light reaching the forest floor, enhance wildlife habitat and forest health by mitigating these past management practices. This will be accomplished by:

- Non-conventional (restorative) thinning the over-stocked conifer stands.
- Planting a variety of shade tolerant tree species to improve forest habitat diversity.
- Controlling invasive species and noxious weeds.
- Monitoring and managing areas with diseased and dangerous trees.
- Upgrading culverts to larger sizes to restore hydrologic connectivity.
- Abandonment and/or decommissioning of existing forest trails/roads that are not needed.

These parklands contain a high percentage of Douglas fir trees in the early development stage (30-70 years). This is a critical growth period where these trees are under extreme stress and are vulnerable to root rot, insect infestations and catastrophic fire. Restoration thinning operations will preserve the largest trees, reduce stand density, and improve habitat diversity, tree health, resilience, longevity, and reduce wildfire risk.

The Kitsap County Parks Forest Stewardship program is conducting restoration thinning in County parks within 200 feet of streams and wetlands; for that reason, it is important to implement protection and restoration of riparian and wetland management areas. Non-commercial thinning in overstocked stands is a recommended forest restoration practice within riparian and wetland management zones in Western Washington. The Kitsap County Forest Stewardship program exclusively uses non-conventional thinning. Operationally called variable density thinning, this type of ecological restoration thinning is specifically recommended for young dense Douglas fir plantations and advances the forest health and habitat goals of the Kitsap County Forest Stewardship program.



## Kitsap County Parks

### Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

Existing logging road culverts: Any discussions regarding culvert replacements and/or designs need to be coordinated with Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the affected Tribes. Culverts on fish habitat waters must meet or exceed WDFW stream simulation criteria.

#### SPECIAL FOREST PRODUCTS

Existing resource condition: Brush harvesting of salal and evergreen huckleberry are currently allowed within the parklands which provides a source of supplemental revenue for Kitsap County Parks, specifically for Heritage Park management projects. Kitsap County maintains a contract with a brush harvesting company, which is up for bid every three years. Following County Policy, citizens can also harvest mushrooms in the park for personal use.

Resources protection measures: Activities of illegal, non-permitted brush pickers have occasionally caused problems in the park. Litter and debris from brush pickers will be managed through the enforcement of guidelines and rules by lease holder and Kitsap County Forester.

Stewardship recommendations: One of the best safeguards against illegal brush picking is to have an active contract with a legitimate brush harvesting company. Contractor activities will continue to be monitored for impact on the park environment.

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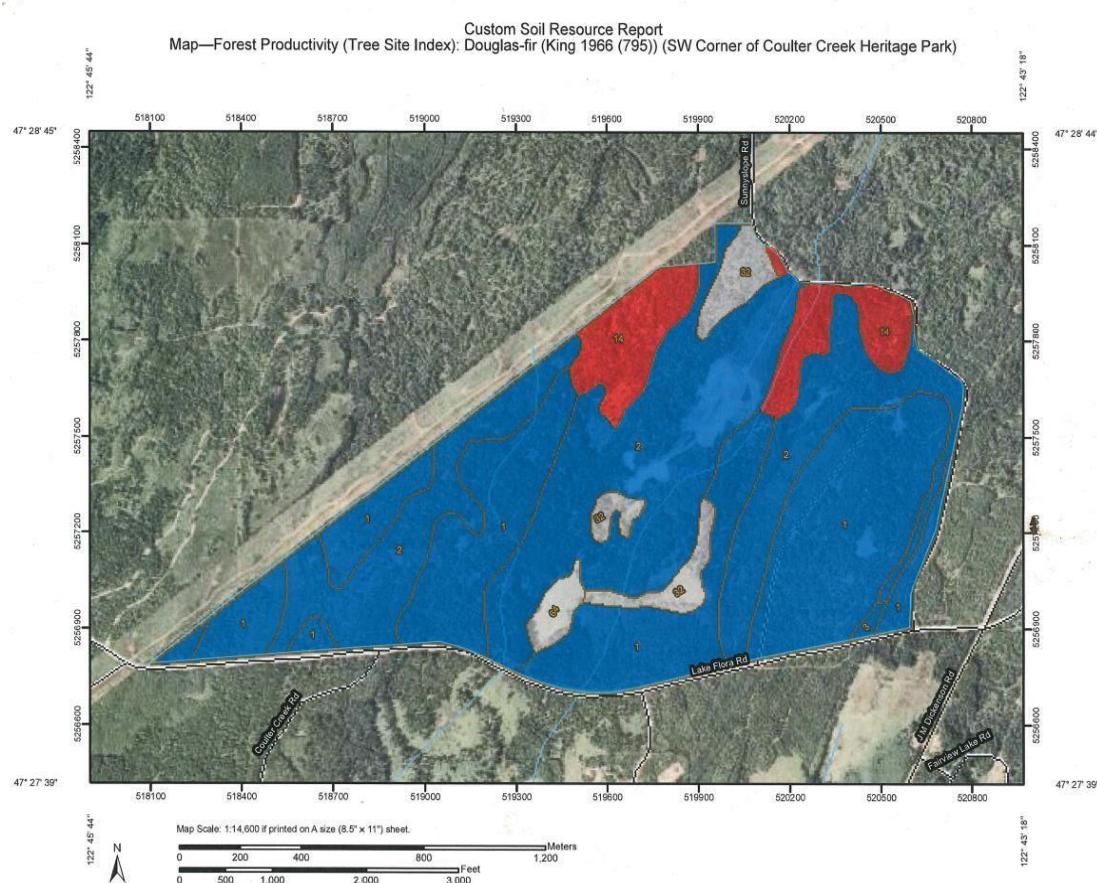


# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### SOIL RESOURCES:

Existing resource condition: Soils vary greatly throughout the park. Soils map inventory: This inventory shows that most of the park has average soil site quality.



### Coulter Creek Heritage Park – USDA Soil Map Unit Symbols \*\*

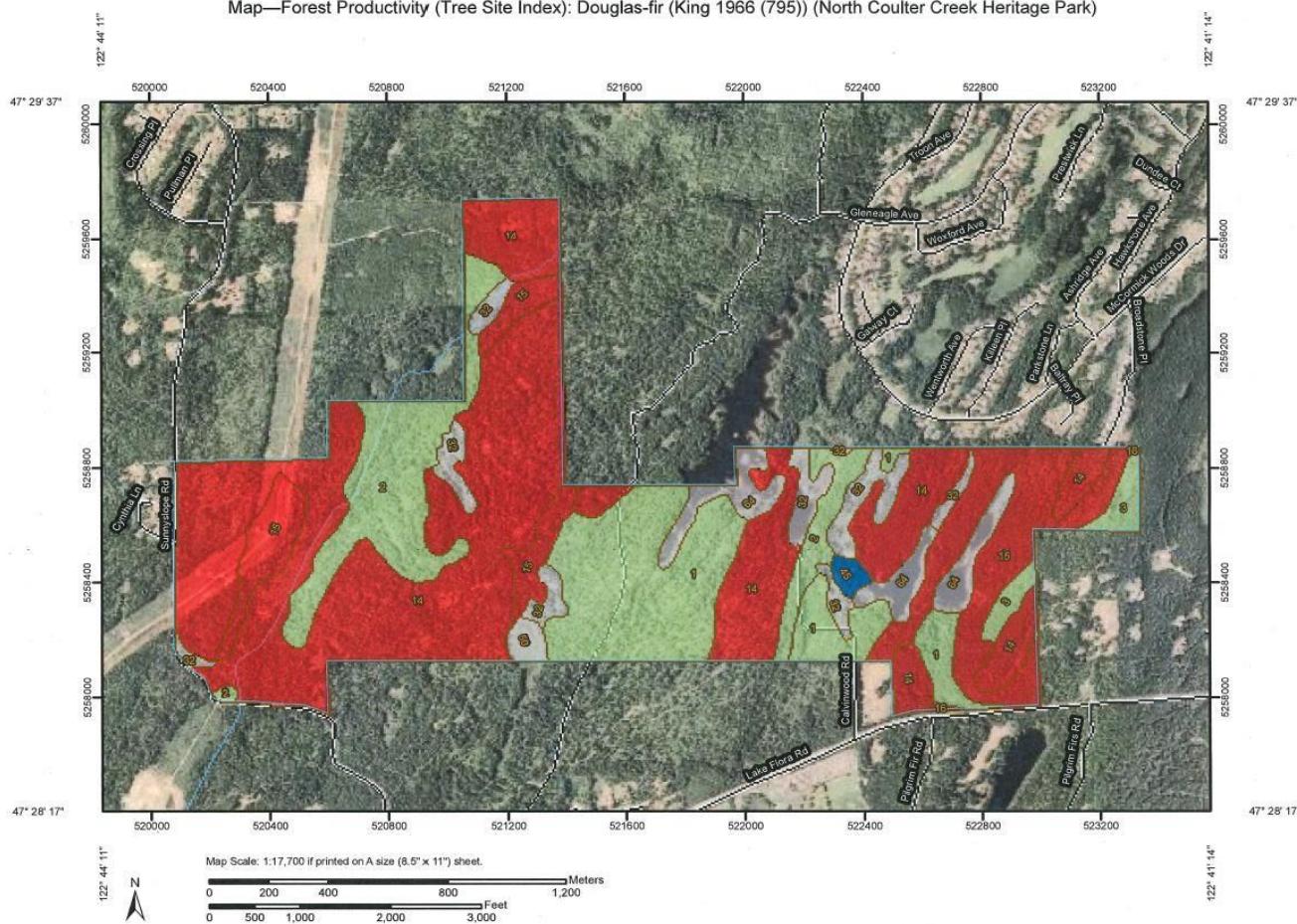
- 1 **Alderwood very gravelly sandy loam:** 0 to 6 percent slopes.
- 2 **Alderwood very gravelly sandy loam:** 6 to 15 percent slopes.
- 14 **Alderwood very gravelly sandy loam:** 15 to 30 percent slopes.
- 15 **Harstine gravelly sandy loam:** 0 to 6 percent slopes.
- 16 **Harstine gravelly sandy loam:** 6 to 15 percent slopes.
- 17 **Harstine gravelly sandy loam:** 15 to 30 percent slopes.
- 32 **McKenna gravelly loam:** 0 to 6 percent slopes
- 45 **Ragnar fine sandy loam:** 6 to 15 percent slope respectively.
- 50 **Shalcar muck**



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

Custom Soil Resource Report  
Map—Forest Productivity (Tree Site Index): Douglas-fir (King 1966 (795)) (North Coulter Creek Heritage Park)



**Soil Resources Protection Measures:** Stewardship practice recommendations: Disturbance of the forest floor and surrounding trees is inevitable during restoration thinning. All care will be taken to minimize these occurrences by utilizing pre-existing forest roads and skid trails. Harvest contractors will be required to use low impact felling and forwarding methods to minimize damage to forest soils.

Monitor and maintain roads, ditches and culverts to protect against erosion. Restoration thinning will be done using low ground pressure harvesting equipment to minimize site disturbance and soil compaction. Roads, ditches and culverts will be monitored and maintained to guard against erosion. Park management operations will employ the existing forest road infrastructure. Un-needed former road beds will be allowed to revegetate or be abandoned and removed.



## Kitsap County Parks

### Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

#### **WATER QUALITY, STREAMS, RIPARIAN AND WETLANDS:**

Throughout the Kitsap Peninsula there is an ongoing demand to protect surface water quality and aquifer recharge landscapes. With Coulter Creek Heritage Park being located at the headwaters of the Coulter Creek watershed, the park also provides critical habitat for fish and wildlife while providing an essential hydrological function. The park forests and wetlands absorb rain water, thereby reducing run off, and slowly release this water into Coulter Creek and ultimately the Puget Sound.



The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified Coulter Creek as the highest priority stream in Kitsap County. The Coulter Creek watershed contains some of the most diverse and abundant salmonid populations in the west sound. Of the streams surveyed in the West Sound watershed, Coulter has the highest numbers of Chinook and the highest salmonid diversity.

Coulter Creek Heritage Park provides the headwaters of the Coulter Creek watershed and is also located within a Category II Critical Aquifer Recharge Area. Headwater wetlands, including those frequently created and maintained by beavers, help recharge groundwater, and that surface-groundwater connection maintains water quality. Additionally, these wetlands serve as reservoirs, storing water during high rains and metering its release during lower flow months. They also provide a source of large wood to the stream, which creates habitat complexity, slows flows, and traps sediment. In these ways, headwater wetlands and aquifer recharge areas are crucial for maintaining the resilience of streams to higher temperatures and lower summer flows associated with climate change and the higher winter flows and sedimentation associated with urbanization and development. By storing and slowing water, headwater wetlands also reduce flooding impacts to downstream communities. Furthermore, headwater wetlands provide important low energy, sheltered rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and trout to forage, grow, and overwinter, and they also provide habitat for a number of bird, mammal, amphibian, and rare plant species.

Note: In general future park management activities should meet or exceed Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance buffers.

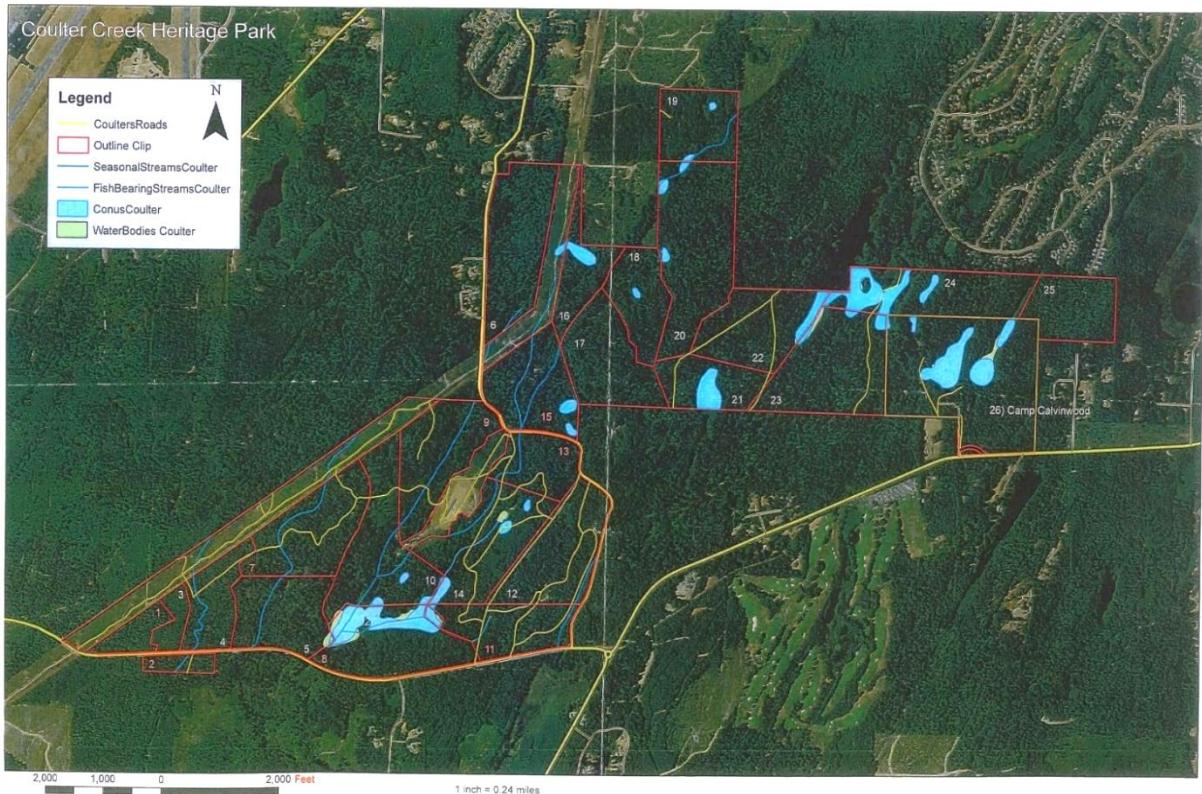


# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### Streams

Existing resource condition: Coulter Heritage Park has 6 miles of streams. Map of stream and open-water features:



Note: The Washington Forest Practices Act (FPA) requires riparian buffers, called Riparian Management Zones (RMZs), to protect riparian functions and resources along Type F (fish habitat), Type Np (non-fish-habitat, perennial) and Type Ns (non-fish habitat, seasonal) streams.

### Wetlands

Existing resource condition: There are wetlands associated with stream channels, groundwater seeps, and enclosed landscape depressions within CCHP. Many are shrub-dominated wetlands, and there is at least one large open-water wetland created by a series of beaver dams, associated with the main stem of Coulter Creek. The forests surrounding these wetlands are dominated by large diameter Douglas fir, western red cedar and red alder.



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Resource protection measures: The Washington Forest Practices Act (FPA) requires wetland buffers, called Wetland Management Zones (WMZs), to protect wetlands greater than one-half acre with open water (Type A wetlands), and non-forested wetlands greater than one-half acre that are vegetated with water-tolerant plants (Type B wetlands). The FPA does not require a WMZ for forested wetlands. Additional resources protection will be provided to all wetlands in the park while encompassing the minimum requirements under Washington FPA rules. Wetlands can also be classified as “Type F” if they have seasonal or perennial surface connection to fish habitat waters. In this case, the wetlands are prescribed a Type F buffer, similar to streams.

### FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Existing resource condition: Much of the well-established forest stands within the Park boundary have large diameter conifers (>20 inches), considered priority habitats by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, most being located next to streams and wetlands in the park. Other smaller areas are dominated by young, dense, Douglas fir stands. Most riparian and wetland areas are dominated by with the largest of the conifers, primarily Douglas fir and western red cedar.



Resources protection measures: These priority habitats will be left undisturbed. RMZ and WMZ buffers will exclude log extraction operations. Restoration thinning (non-conventional) will be used exclusively outside of the RMZ and WMZ buffers. Nonconforming culverts will be replaced or removed during road/trail abandonment; new trails will be sited outside buffers.

### Stewardship practice recommendations:

- The science behind the State’s and County’s protection of sensitive areas is adequate in most locations; however, we have the benefit of exceeding minimum requirements in the park. It is recommended to use the new 2018 WDFW PHS Riparian guidance <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01988/>.
- Conduct bird surveys after restoration thinning and on regular intervals to determine population diversity and changes over time.
- Generally, protect the pond and wetland development promoted by beaver activity which creates headwater wetlands and improve habitat complexity. Beaver dams located high in the watershed are particularly beneficial to salmon and trout populations. Beaver activity will be incorporated into planning and adaptive management options. Beaver-created habitat should be allowed to expand and migrate, improving the water quality, hydrological, and habitat functions of the headwater wetlands.
- WDFW will monitor the park for state priority habitats and species and maintain documented occurrences in the state Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database.



## Kitsap County Parks

### Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

#### THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Existing resource condition: No threatened or endangered species have been observed in the park at this time. However, there are small areas that have been designated by the state as potential marbled murrelet habitat. Puget Sound steelhead are federally threatened and potentially present in the park, which provides excellent over-wintering habitat for juvenile steelhead; spawning is documented within the Coulter Creek watershed. Coulter Creek is designated critical habitat for listed steelhead. Puget Sound Chinook are present lower in the watershed and are also federally listed as threatened. The headwater wetland functions of the park are critical for maintaining the quality of downstream habitat for listed steelhead and Chinook as well.

Resources protection measures: Restoring the health of the park forests may provide scarce habitat for endangered or threatened species. Culvert removal or replacement will restore fish access and provide viable, healthy salmon and trout habitat within the park.

Stewardship practice recommendations: As per Kitsap County policy, forest thinning, based on ecological restoration principles, is recommended along with the management of diseased trees, under-planting with native tree species and removal of invasive species to improve forest health and to create habitat for endangered or threatened species. Some existing forest roads in the park will be abandoned with culverts removed to restore natural stream flows.

#### HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Existing resource condition: The first humans to enjoy the beauty and natural resources of the Coulter Creek Heritage Park were Native Americans, who arrived sometime between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago. While no evidence of Native American habitation has been found in the park, it is likely that local tribes used the park for subsistence hunting and gathering.

Certainly, the watersheds would have been crucial to salmonid rearing thousands of years ago. Streams that are crossed by Sunnyslope and Lake Flora Roads have inadequate culverts and other obstructions that currently block fish access. Ancient tribal members were grateful for the abundance of fish that used these streams.

The next groups of humans to use the park were early loggers and pioneers of the 1850's who took advantage of Homesteading Acts to create farmsteads in Kitsap County (formerly Slaughter County). Hunters, trappers, and local outdoors enthusiasts have taken advantage of the service forest roads to access what is now a public park. Residents in the area recount using these lands for various recreational purposes for multiple generations.

Resources protection measures: No evidence of sensitive historical or cultural use has been found in the park. Local Tribes have expressed interest in the management and harvesting of traditional plants and cedar bark.



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### Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

Stewardship practice recommendations: Metal debris has been found in disturbed land harkening back to the early days of logging in the park. If the debris is innocuous, it is usually left in place as a reminder to visitors of the historical working forest. Other debris including garbage and abandoned vehicles, tires and parts have been removed. A few remnant old-growth logging stumps exist in the park. Park of the Park's orientation for visitors should include interpretation of the historic natural forest structure, and description of earlier logging and forest management practices.

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# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### Landscape Classification Management System

Kitsap County Parks' landscape classification system is designed to designate resource protection "zones" in order to protect superlative or sensitive natural, cultural or historic resource values in a Heritage Park, while also indicating parkland areas suitable for varying levels of public access, recreational use and support facilities.

### Landscape Classification Map Categories:

#### **NA = Natural Area [Natural | Historic | Cultural, Significance]**

Purpose: To protect, restore, and enhance inherent natural, cultural and historic attributes. Acceptable Land Management: Let natural processes prevail. Allowable Activities: Generally, "off-limits" to public. No developed recreational access or use.

#### **C = Conservation Area**

Purpose: To conserve key resource elements including historic and cultural features. Minimal, limited, and resource-compatible public access.

#### **PR = Passive Recreation**

Purpose: To allow moderate and dispersed public use with minimal impact or degradation to the significant features or ecosystem.

#### **AR = Active Recreation**

Purpose: To encourage and provide for moderate to high intensity public use and recreation activities, where the resource base is of already modified, or of lower overall value to the greater park area.

#### **DR = Developed Recreation.**

Purpose: Developable land-base for moderate to high levels of recreation use and facilities. Acceptable Land use: High capacity urban-style recreation with developed facilities for access and visitor comfort.

#### **SP = Specialized Recreation**

Purpose: To provide for a specialized recreational use with some public amenities and management controls. Example: mountain bike recreation areas, amphitheaters, model airplane fly fields, non-motorized organized events.

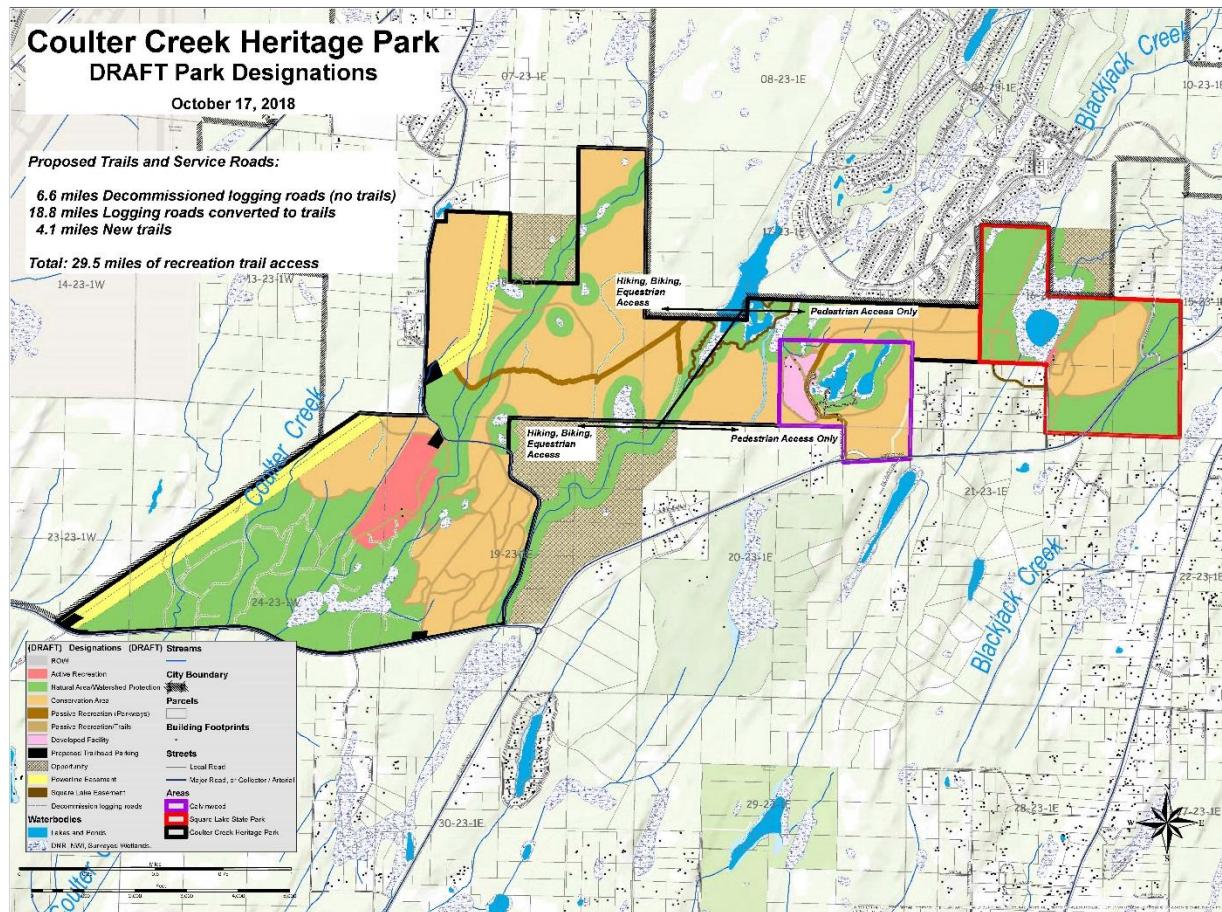
[Note: See Kitsap County Parks Landscape Classification Planning Manual for detailed descriptions.]



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION AREAS:



1. NA = Natural Area [Natural / Historic / Cultural Significance]
2. C = Conservation Area
3. PR = Passive Recreation
4. AR = Active Recreation
5. DR = Developed Recreation Facilities
6. SP = Specialized Recreation

Note: shaded map areas are private property noted as “opportunity” for a long-term park boundary.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### PUBLIC ACCESS & RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

To protect these natural resources as the Heritage Park becomes available for public use and recreational activities, it is essential to manage access, use and impacts, and set guidelines for recreational development.

#### Integration of Recreation Opportunities with Resource Protection:

- Determine the most suitable recreation activities which best fit the Parks' characteristics; topography, vegetation quality, water views and sensitive water features, previously impacted landscape areas and former forest management roads.
- Recommended that passive (hiking, nature watching) and active types of recreation (bike, horse, disc golf, model air field, etc.) have separate designated regions of the Park to better design for quality recreation experiences for both.
- Wherever possible use existing, former forest roads for trail routes and decommission those that either don't serve the activity needs or impact sensitive protected areas.
- Provide adequate signage for protected resource areas and interpretive materials and sign-displays to inform park users.



#### Partner Agency/Landowner Coordination:

- Develop a management relationship with State Parks to incorporate Square Lake State Park day-use area and trail system into Coulter Creek Heritage Park's system.
- Utilize the Calvinwood Retreat Center property (currently leased by State Parks, but not operational), as integral to the passive use area of the Park, with emphasis on environmental education, nature interpretation and low impact retreat/conference facility.
- Consider updating and expanding the existing retreat center facilities (lodge, cabins, trails, camp host utility) as a conference/meeting facility with an emphasis on promoting the environmental qualities and nature discovery elements of that area.
- Recommend utilizing the family style house, near the entrance to the Calvinwood Retreat Center facility, for a resident employee of the County to serve as on-site management oversight for the area.
- Consider use of trail connectivity throughout the park, and reasonable trail connection to large-scale residential developments adjoining the Park. Work with adjoining landowners to develop trails and appropriate management signage to protect both ownerships.
- Acknowledge legal trail/road easements throughout the Parks and neighboring community which serve the greater development of linked trails and park service access.
- Consider the use of the major utility corridor (power/gas) adjoining the park's forested areas for more active types of recreation, such as; mountain biking and equestrian use.



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## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

- Coordinate with the Departments of Community Development in Kitsap County and the City of Port Orchard to evaluate impacts of residential development on park assets and resources and ensure such impacts are mitigated appropriately through the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process.

### Potential Opportunity Areas Beyond Existing Park Plan Boundary:

- With the intent to better manage the natural resource base and provide for optimum recreation opportunities, private lands adjoining CCHP are noted as “opportunity areas”, which may be researched for possible land transactions such as; conservation/trail easements, acquisitions, donations or potential property trade opportunities.

### Recreation and Resources Protection Measures:

- Park resource protection and recreational experience** can be best served by designating areas of the park suitable for low-impact, more passive use types of recreation; such as hiking and wildlife observation. While other park areas may be suited, in topography and acceptable disturbance to very active recreation such as; mountain biking, equestrian, disc golf and other nature-directed sports.
- Public access and support facilities** such as; trailhead parking, restrooms, spur road access and amenities as viewing platforms, and nature trails should be planned to minimize areas of egress into the park for better management control and directed use.
- Park entrance signs**, informational signboards and trail map signage will serve to orient the park visitor and should be installed at appropriate parking locations and trail access points.
- Trails** constructed should generally be “soft trails” consisting of minimum widths and pervious surfaces which have fewer impacts and still provide educational and recreational opportunities for the public. Trail facilities such as; boardwalks, pedestrian bridges and other trail structures should be designed to serve the intended type of recreational use and levels of use. Trails and trail structures will be designed to USDA Forest Service design and construction standards.
- Trails** should not be located within wetland or riparian (freshwater or marine) habitat areas for most of their length. Instead, locate trails well away from streams, wetlands, shorelines, and their associated buffers. An occasional bend or perpendicular side trail for viewing or access to streams and wetlands is generally acceptable. Although trails and viewing platforms are acceptable and we understand that some intrusion may be needed, the majority of the paths should try to avoid intrusion whenever possible.



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### Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

6. **Loop trails** are perceived as "more interesting" however, there must be some compromise when it significantly increases the natural resource impacts. Vegetation in removal in sensitive areas should be minimized.
7. **Any new trails** will be subject to the same standard of resource protection, built and maintained to trail standards per the Kitsap County Parks Department.
8. **All forest service roads** will be maintained or abandoned according to state standards including culvert replacement or removal for abandoned sections. Since many of the existing forest roads may well serve as recreational trail corridors, maintaining the integrity of the forest will be needed to ensure culverts, water bars and ditches are functioning properly.
9. **Service Roads:** Some of these old forest roads will be maintained for use during forest restoration thinning projects, for emergency access, and fire safety. Some portions of the forest roads may be abandoned for use by vehicles and maintained as park trails. As recreation access and trail plans evolve, old road beds will either converted to trails or abandoned and decommissioned as a permanent park structure.
10. **Efforts to control invasive and noxious weeds** along park roads and trails are a priority. The Parks Department will work with the Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Program to create an invasive species management plan.



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### PHASE 2 – OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

#### Public Access and Recreation Planning Needs:

- Understand local and County-wide recreational needs and interests, current public access and use patterns.
- Understand public use and recreational compatibility/impacts with resource protection and stewardship goals.
- Development of concept plans for types of recreation activities, prime use areas within the Park, and determination of appropriate passive and active recreational uses.



**Action:** Form CCHP Public Access and Recreation Steering Committee.

- Committee will be representative of recreation and conservation interests, local community members, neighboring property managers and members of the CCHP Technical Advisory Committee.
- CCHP Steering Committee will guide the direction and integration of public access and recreational use into the Coulter Creek Heritage Park's Resource Management and Recreation Master Plan.

#### Recommended CCHP Recreation and Public Access Steering Committee:

Committee is intended to represent recreation and conservation interests, local community members, neighboring property managers and members of the CCHP Resource Management Technical Advisory Committee.

1. Recreation Interests: Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, West Sound Disc Golf Association, ARCS (radio control airfield flyers)
2. Neighboring Communities/Land Managers: McCormick Woods, Alpine Enterprises, Overton Associates
3. Local Citizen Interests: Roger Gay, Bob Landry, John Austin, Meg Nelson, Kenneth C. Vogel, Doug Benoit
4. Conservation Community: WSU Kitsap County Extension Stream Stewards, Great Peninsula Conservancy, Kitsap Audubon
5. County Representatives/Advisors: Natural Resources, Parks Superintendent, Parks Forester, Parks Planner, Parks Advisory Board
6. Other Governmental Interests: Washington State Parks, Suquamish Tribe, WDFW, WA DNR



# Kitsap County Parks

## Coulter Creek Heritage Park Management Plan – Phase 1

### **Steering Committee Planning Process:**

1. Conduct Steering Committee familiarization presentations and on-site tours to best understand natural resources and management recommendations.
2. Conduct workshop discussions for potential types of recreation activities, access and facility needs, and potential areas of compatible activities.
3. Develop a park map including preferred specific activity areas, shared-use areas, and required support facilities; parking and restrooms needs, access routes and signage.
4. Recommend trail routes, construction standards, and a maintained internal service road.
5. Recommend guidelines for public use management and staffing needs.
6. Recommended recreation facility developments, priorities and funding opportunities.

### **Public Outreach and Review Process Outline**

1. In conjunction with Steering Committee planning, conduct public on-site park site tours and introduction of Draft Plan Concepts.
2. Coordinate community meetings to review and comment on Draft CCHP Plan.
3. Publish Draft Plan on County website and invite comments and input.
4. CCHP Draft Management Plan Review by Parks Advisory Board.
5. Publish Final Draft Resource Stewardship and Recreation Plan.
6. Final review and adoption by Parks Management, Advisory Board, and Board of County Commissioners.
7. Invite membership for a formal Coulter Creek Heritage Park Volunteer Stewardship Committee.

