



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

PORT GAMBLE FOREST HERITAGE PARK

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP & PUBLIC ACCESS

MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION:

As County Parks must assume the responsibility of both guardians of our park resources (natural, cultural, historic) as well as address the demands for recreational use and facilities of our park properties. Striking an informed balance of conservation and use can be reasonably achieved after by assessment of those inherent resources; such as forests, wetlands, fish-bearing streams, shorelands and shellfish.

Our **Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Steering Committee** first addressed this challenge by setting some guiding principles that would serve both conservation and recreation interests, fairly and responsibly.

Our management approach included:

1. A **Landscape Classifications System** developed with much discussion, to recognized outstanding and sensitive resource areas, worthy of conservation and protection, and depict those landscape areas where various recreational activities and levels of intensity were considered compatible with those resource assets. This would provide the best resource stewardship while providing for diverse recreational use and exceptional outdoor experiences. This management approach is depicted on our Stewardship Map.
2. In addition, the Steering Committee, Park staff, technical advisors and Tribal representatives brought to light specific management issues which are currently impacting the Park property, as well as anticipated concerns and new opportunities.

Following are those prominent and prevalent issues, concerns and opportunities, and proposed management objectives and directions to address them:



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

NATURAL | CULTURAL | HISTORIC RESOURCES PROTECTION

Ongoing Resource Stewardship

Issue: To continue stewardship of these parklands and application of the management objectives, and land-use determinations there will need to be a concerted effort by local citizens, interest groups (recreational and conservation), the Tribes to stay involved and develop more prescriptive management agendas, actions and funding possibilities.

Management Objectives:

- Create a Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Stewardship Group which will be coordinated through Kitsap County Parks, Stewardship Program and would enlist local citizens and other recreation and conservation interests, to further the resource management and recreational needs in this area.
- Develop a detailed Park Management and Development Plan.
- To create a cadre of informed Stewards, the County shall develop and offer [dependent on available funds and staff capacity], a series of *Stewardship Certification Courses* to instruct volunteers in the various aspects of resource assessment, monitoring, management, and recreation planning and development. These “education-intensives” may include topics on wetland, streams and wildlife, forest restoration, recreation trails, native vegetation & invasives, cultural and historic preservation, shellfish and tideland management, public education and interpretation (including docent techniques) and other stewardship and recreation management topics.
- Park staff and volunteer stewards will continue to monitor and report resource issues; vandalism, unauthorized park use, and garbage dumping, and develop clean-up events.

Native Vegetation vs. Invasives

Issue: Selective forestry began in 1878. In the 1920’s timber production began in earnest. The majority of the acreage was clear-cut then replanted with a monoculture of Douglas fir trees planted closely together to maximum future timber-harvests. Old growth trees on steep slopes were retained as those areas were not cost-effective for harvest.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Management Objectives:

- Trees are stressed, as they do not have sufficient space for normal growth and development. Forestry tracts are to be mapped and selectively thinned to open up the existing dense tree canopy, allowing light to reach the forest floor. In opening up the forest floor, space for under-planting with native species such as Western red cedar and Western hemlock can occur; approximating the original forest conditions prior to the 1920's clear-cutting.
- Concurrently, invasives such as Scotch Broom are being removed, allowing native shrubs such as salal, huckleberry and salmonberry to naturalize. Identify and control invasive vegetation with the purpose to enhance native plant populations and communities and create natural habitats.

Fish, Wildlife & Habitat

Issue: A dense, dark Douglas fir monoculture forest does not support a healthy eco-system as it does not support a diversity of wildlife. Some stream crossings utilize under-sized culverts that do not allow for salmon to migrate upstream. Existing creosote pilings in Gamble Bay are toxic to wildlife, including important feeder fish that serve as the foundation to the food-chain.

Management Objectives:

- Replace the Douglas fir monoculture by selective thinning and re-planting with compatible native species such as cedar and hemlock.
- Replace, or remove under-sized culverts.
- De-accession un-needed trails and former logging roads as appropriate.
- Designate areas where there is no public access to protect wildlife habitat and sanctuary. Provide interpretive displays regarding wildlife populations and viewing opportunities.
- Provide "bird blinds" and overlooks for controlled access for remote viewing of wildlife areas.
- Remove and dispose of creosote pilings in Gamble Bay.
- Remove and replant shellfish, such as oysters from creosote pilings above the tideline.
- Re-plant eelgrass where desirable to serve as an incubator for feeder fish.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Streams, Wetlands, and Waterbodies

Issue: Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park has wetlands and numerous streams which empty into Gamble Bay. Impacts to the bay start upstream, and are dependent on the water's proximity to trails and area usage. Park visitors such as hikers, mountain bikers, wildlife viewers, dog walkers, and horseback riders contribute to water quality degradation. It is advisable to monitor water quality in wetlands and streams.

Management Objectives:

- Consider all wetlands, streams and springs as integral to the entire watershed ecosystem, aquifer recharge, and in support of fish-bearing streams, and water dependent critters.
- Coordinate with Clean Water Kitsap or Department of Ecology to develop a feasible water sampling program for the park's wetlands and streams.
- Determine trail usage along with proximity to streams and wetlands, and categorize which streams are typed as fish bearing.
- Confer with the county or Department of Ecology regarding existing NPDES permits.
- Define contaminants most likely for a particular stream or wetland such as fecal coliforms, sediment, zinc, copper, oil, etc.
- Apply prescriptive measures such as culvert or trail removal.

Shorelands, Tidelands & Shellfish

Issue: The Port Gamble Heritage Forest Parks includes 1.5 miles of shorelands and tidelands. Nine types of shellfish are harvested along similar shorelines in this area -- Region 8. The shellfish population has been largely un-tapped for recreational harvest while in private land ownership. The pounds of harvestable clam stock and number of oysters is substantial. Currently there are no State harvest surveys, regulations or seasons to govern recreation or commercially approved harvest. Health of the Port Gamble Bay and stewardship of those resources is paramount. If the natural shellfish beds are let alone, without any harvest, there are concerns of snail invasion and over-crowded oyster beds. Health Dept. determines water quality for safe shellfish harvest. Our tidelands are currently certified as healthy.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Management Objectives: (Shorelands, Tidelands & Shellfish)

- Protect the shorelands and tidelands from upland impacts, garbage, and pollutants, and promote the long-term health of the Port Gamble Bay,
- Recommend that Kitsap County enter into a shellfish management agreement and develop shellfish resource management plans with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and affected Tribes, for a period of three years. Management would include population surveys and health assessment of the shellfish resource, determination of recreational harvest seasons and catch limits and patrol and enforcement of recreational harvest activities. Kitsap County Parks would have oversight of this plan and operations.
- Encourage the propagation and protection of native shellfish stock. After the three (3) year program evaluation, consider all management options including potential commercial harvest of all or a portion of the shoreline.
- Limit access to the shoreline in approved and developed trails and parking areas.
- Encourage the development of shoreland passive-use trails.
- Provide for on-site public education and interpretation of the shellfish resources, licenses, harvest seasons and regulations and responsible resource stewardship.

Forest Restoration and Management

Issue: Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park has approximately 800 acres of densely stocked conifer plantations ranging between 23 and 50 years old. This condition is the product of past management practices and doesn't adequately provide for the long term forest health and habitat potential for this new park.

Management Objectives:

- Establish a Forest Stewardship Committee which will help direct forest enhancement plans and operations based on county approved guidelines. (Including buffers for streams, wetlands, seeps and springs.)
- Use non-conventional, or restoration, thinning in these overstocked stands to improve forest health and restore wildlife habitat. Operationally called variable density thinning (VDT), this type of ecological restoration thinning is specifically recommended for young dense Douglas fir plantations.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Commercial Vegetation Harvesting

Issue: The harvesting of timber, brush and other special forest products has long been a part of the traditional and cultural history on the lands that include the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park.

Management Objectives:

- For the heritage park, conventional timber harvesting has ended. Forest thinning for future habitat enhancement and species diversification will be directed by a Forest Stewardship Committee.
- Harvesting of brush and other special forest products is sustainable and may be allowed in certain areas and can provide a source of revenue for the park.
- The harvesting of mushrooms for personal use is allowed, without a permit, and subject to the Kitsap County Parks Mushroom Harvesting Policy.
- Allowing commercial management and harvesting of shellfish in the tidelands will be in a limited area and determination made after extensive evaluation of the shellfish surveys, recreational harvest needs, and a look to bettering the shellfish beds and populations.
- Commercial harvesting will only be allowed under contact or by permit.

Wildfire Protection

Issue: Wildfire is a reality and to minimize that risk during periods of high fire danger, Pope Resources has annually closed the Port Gamble Uplands that surround the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park. This closure includes public access to Pope Resource lands.

Management Objectives:

- Be a responsible neighbor: develop and implement a wildfire prevention plan for the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park that protects both the park and surrounding private property owners.
- County Parks will work with local and regional wildfire management agencies to develop a plan for fire prevention and fire suppression response.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Historical / Cultural Resources

Issue: Port Gamble Park and surrounding OPG property have a rich and varied history. Native inhabitants gathered resources from the shoreline and uplands. In addition, logging operations occurred for approximately 90 years in the uplands. Historical information to the public focuses mainly on the shoreline and mill site. Interior upland modification and historical information is lacking. The visitor's experience in the park can be enhanced by sharing the information gathered for this project.

Management Objectives:

- Determine area of historical interest.
- Highlight areas of past historical activities by working with the Tribes and Port Gamble Museum to present information to the public.
- Reference researched articles and books on the county website and QR codes access for more in-depth interpretation.
- Develop signage and interpretive trails where appropriate.
- Develop signage and/or interpretive trails where appropriate. Provide opportunities for Tribal traditional uses of the resources, including such activities as gathering plant materials and bark for subsistence and/or ceremonial purposes (described by Treaty). Provide interpretation of historic and current subsistence and ceremonial resource use and respect.

PUBLIC ACCESS & RECREATION

Public Access & Events

Issue: Previous land owners, Pope Resources Company have allowed public access of the interior lands for hikers, equestrians and bikes via existing logging roads. Public access to the 1.5-miles of shoreline has been prohibited. Over the years the mountain bike community has organized numerous events with permission from Pope Resources on the logging roads and trails, attracting hundreds of participants at a time. Recreational trail-use of the interior trails will continue, but hikers and equestrians will increase in addition to the ongoing bicycle events.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Management Objectives:

- Events will require a Parks Permit along with a required parks fee. Fees to be determined based on impacts to: the resources, other recreational access and uses, and degree of site monitoring, mitigation, oversight, and clean-up required for each event. Trails have a carrying capacity and costs associated with events must be paid for by the applicant for staff time, porta-potties, traffic & safety control, trash removal and as necessary for trail repairs. Park staff and volunteer stewards will monitor impacts of these potentially large group activities on the protection of inherent resources and recreational experiences for all Park users. Management will consider the nature of large social gatherings and their needs, as well as respect for recreationists desiring areas of nature-solitude. Event impacts on the resource will be remedied or mitigated.
- The Shoreline will be opened for non-motorized use at selected locations where trailhead parking can be provided and safe passage to the tidelands can occur. More planning is needed for designation of official watertrail launch areas, day-use and water access accommodations for non-powered vessels.
- Public access will be limited to designated trailheads and developed parking areas, compared with hazardous roadside pullouts, and signed appropriately. Parks will work with WA Department of Transportation to warn travelers along SR 104 as to parking/trailhead pullouts and any trail crossings, and opportunities for visual vegetation “pruning” to provide pocket view of Port Gamble Bay.
- Accommodations will be made for infrequent “fly-overs” by the radio controlled model aircraft which have a take-off and landing field adjacent to the north of the parklands. This use will be monitored for impacts and future resource modification needs, such as vegetation pruning, for safe model-aircraft field-approach and event operations.
- Other motorized aircraft, including “drones” are not permitted over the parklands at this time without authorization and permit.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

Recreational Trail Development and Management

Issue: Upon acquiring this property as a Park, there were no designed trailheads, parking, County Park signage, trail signage, or approved recreational routes. Over 40 miles of forested trails and roadway trails currently exist in the park and many of which are connected to Pope Resource's forestland properties to the north, south and east of the Park's Shoreline Block. Most have former road numbers or user-applied names. Existing user-developed trail maps are mostly accurate to layout and access. New trails and trail technical structures, designed for trailbikes are currently being constructed without safe standards or permission by County Parks. For events and trail emergencies, there needs to be consistent names and locations for trail and roads. The general public will need orientation and rules.

Management Objectives:

- Work to provide recreational access and activity areas for all non-motorized recreationists which are compatible with the land management objectives.
- County Parks will give preference for a future trail connection and continued trail route through the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park for the **Sound to Olympics Trail** [STO) for a shared-use, active-recreation use corridor.
- Accurately map all roads and designated trails with GPS technology.
- Display maps and current names/numbers on informational kiosks at County trailhead parking. Post maps on County website.
- Parks will research and work to apply web-based trail maps for ease of access by recreationalists and emergency response staff.
- Work with trail users to develop a consistent naming procedure and approval for existing and new approved trails. Identify trails by levels of challenge, construction and use, as part of the displays and maps, [ex. "parkway, destination loop, spur, challenge, interpretive"] and which correlate with the County Park's trail categories.
- Enforce new trail application and approval process for any new trails. Remove any trail structures or routes which are unsafe, not built to standards, or impact wildlife habitat, or sensitive vegetation.



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

- The two approved trailhead parking areas along SR 104 will be named; Shoreline Trailhead (on the eastside of the roadway near MP 18) and G-1000 Trailhead (named after the forest road access name and which lies adjacent to SR 104 on the west side).

Recreational Safety/Behavior/Rules

Issue: On the privately owned forest land, there was virtually unlimited public access, except during forest restoration thinning operations and recreation activities were largely unregulated. As a County Park, there are standards for public use and non-motorized recreation activities. An expected increase and diversity of recreational use will increase impacts to these public lands and will require rules enforcement.

Management Objectives:

- Work to educate and inform visitors about the property's resources and the need for protection, through signage, tours, interpretive media and publicity.
- Develop orientation and way-finding signage throughout the property.
- Develop park rules for this Heritage Parks that take into account the special needs of all park users; the casual hiker, the mountain biker, the equestrian, the nature-lover, the classroom, the visitor, the recreational clam-digger, the kayaker, the business community, the environmentalist and others.
- The park is a "Land of Many Uses", as such serves the entire community and will require monitoring, enforcement, and management by Parks staff and Park Stewards volunteers. Work with local law enforcement agencies and emergency response organizations to best protect the natural resources and the recreation public.

Economic Interests

Issue: Much of the existing and future recreational events have a significant positive contribution to the local Port Gamble economy and surrounding area businesses.

Management Objectives:



KITSAP COUNTY PARKS

- Continue to support and look for opportunities to encourage recreation events, trainings and educational events which help to promote business health in related services, e.g. rentals, eateries, lodging, tours, etc.

Future Property Acquisition

Issue: Much of the area under study with this Stewardship Plan, and of importance to resource stewardship and recreation opportunities, has yet to be acquired for County Park management.

Management Objectives:

- The County will continue to pursue funding and other opportunities to acquire significant portions of the Port Gamble forested landscape, currently owned by Pope Resources Company, which will contribute to the goals and objectives of this plan.