

The Kitsap County Forest Stewardship Program

Forests owned by Kitsap County have not been managed for ecosystem complexity, diversity, health, and fish and wildlife habitat. With the help of county park stewards and others, the Forest Stewardship Program will restore complex and diverse forest ecosystems; creating a more natural condition similar to those that existed prior to settlement in the 1860's.



Kitsap County Forest Stewardship Program

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Kitsap County Forest Stewardship Program



Restoring Forests for Fish & Wildlife and You



Kitsap County Parks Department

Forest Restoration for Fish & Wildlife Habitat and Future Generations



Mission: The Kitsap County Forest Stewardship Program engages citizens to advance a stewardship ethic that protects and restores county forest land to healthy, diverse forest ecosystems.

Vision: Forest lands owned by Kitsap County have complex structure and composition; providing high carrying capacity for diverse animals; high productivity for plants; the natural regulation of nutrients and water cycling; are healthy resilient forests; and provide a wide-range of human benefits.

Program Goals

The Kitsap County Forest Stewardship Program has four goals:

1. Enhance natural ecosystem complexity and health;
2. Protect and enhance soil, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat;
3. Is biologically, socially and economically self-sustaining; and;
4. Provides safe, appropriate public access to County forest lands.

Forest Ecosystem Management

Ecosystem management is a science-based approach used to transform 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation Douglas fir forests into more complex forests that support a greater diversity of fish and wildlife species. Third and 4th generation Douglas fir forests are very dense, single species, plantations that provide very little food and shelter for wildlife. Under ecosystem management, even-aged Douglas fir stands will be thinned using variable density thinning to mimic natural disturbances historically provided by wind, fire, and disease and insects. The largest healthiest trees will be retained to become old growth legacies. Shade tolerant conifers and hardwoods will be released or planted creating multiple forest canopies.

Why Restoration Thinning in Parks?

Of the 7,500 acres of forested county park lands, there are over 5,000 acres that have Douglas fir plantations with high stem densities. These plantations resulted from commercial harvesting operations over the past 150



years. They include 560 acres between 10 and 30 years of age; 2,600 acres 30 to 60 years old; and 2,000 acres older than 60. All of these plantations have suppressed tree growth and a simple structure that doesn't provide highest quality fish and wildlife habitat. The remaining park forests, approximately 2,000 acres, have complex forest structures with multiple canopies, and in some cases significant mature and old growth legacy trees providing diverse, high quality habitat.

The Forest Stewardship Program is required to be a self-sustaining program. Revenue generated from restoration thinning covers program costs and natural resources management related park improvements and maintenance.

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