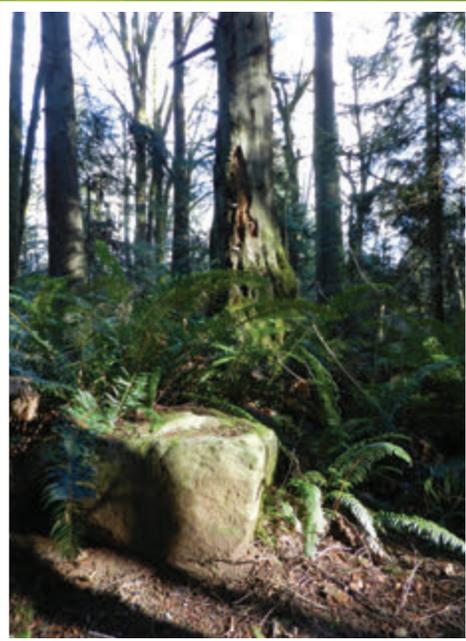




KITSAP COUNTY PARKS PORT GAMBLE FOREST HERITAGE PARK

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP & RECREATIONAL ACCESS PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*We are the stewards of the Forest and the Shore!
Our goal is to protect and enhance these forested
uplands, shorelands and tidelands, where native
plants and wildlife can flourish for generations.
Our goal is to provide for public enjoyment and
recreation opportunities, in a manner that respects
those inherent resources and values.*

STEWARDSHIP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PROTECT, RESTORE AND ENHANCE NATURAL RESOURCES:

1. Protect, restore and enhance Natural Resources; sensitive natural areas, plant species and wildlife habitat
2. Work toward a forest restoration regime for forest health and habitat diversity; create a forest with varied tree age and species, and suitable for diverse wildlife habitat
3. Protect the aquifer recharge function
4. Protect and enhance shoreline habitat; including shellfish and forage fish
5. Protect the water quality of Port Gamble Bay through management of shoreline and uplands
6. Understand the importance of the Pacific flyway (avian "highway") and this landscape's key role
7. Plan for stewardship and public use as part of the large-scale surrounding landscape

RESPECT HISTORICAL AND FUTURE CULTURAL INTEGRITY:

1. Preserve cultural and historical aspects of the lands and shore, inclusive of all Tribes; recognize and protect populations of medicinal plants and other culturally significant flora
2. Preserve and enhance the State Scenic Highway 104 viewshed along the Heritage Forest alignment

PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE RECREATION AND PUBLIC USE OF THE PARK:

1. Meet recreational needs of the Region
2. Develop a cohesive trail system; create trail loops, trails close-in, and extensive travel trails
3. Develop safe public access points and trailhead parking
4. Plan for connecting corridors for recreation trails (Sound to Olympics) and wildlife travel
5. Recognize and planning for "water trails" as part of Kitsap Peninsula Water trail system
6. Explore land adjacent to the Shoreline Block which is intended for a mountain bike ride center, and work to integrate this activity area with park's natural resources protection
7. Engage all users/activities to get them excited about nature-education and conservation through recreation

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATIONS

This plan includes a Landscape Classifications Map that recognizes outstanding and sensitive resource areas, and outlines areas where recreational activities are considered compatible.

NA = NATURAL AREA

Acceptable Land use: Let natural processes prevail. Observe and monitor health. Ecosystem restoration activities only.
 Allowable Activities: Authorized access by permit. Management activities to promote health and longevity; ex. invasive species control.
 No developed recreational access or use.

C = CONSERVATION AREA

Acceptable Land use: Prescriptive habitat restoration. Monitor ecosystem health, invasive species management and control.
 Allowable Activities: Prohibited organized large group activities. NO pets, livestock, bicycles. Educational and interpretive activities which have minimal resource intrusion and impact. Limited recreational harvest activities and those which sustain and complement resource health and diversity; ex. shellfish, berries, brush picking.

PR = PASSIVE RECREATION

Acceptable Land use: Manage landscape for recreational safety and limited impact use. Determine a carrying-capacity for trail access and use.
 Allowable Activities: Some recreational harvest of traditional vegetation, low impact trails, manage "hazard trees" in concentrated areas, some conditional commercial harvest for stand maintenance. NO large recreational events. View points. Public amenities; ex. restrooms, interpretive and educational activities. Conditional use: Leashed dog walking may be permitted, depending on resource protection requirements.

AR = ACTIVE RECREATION

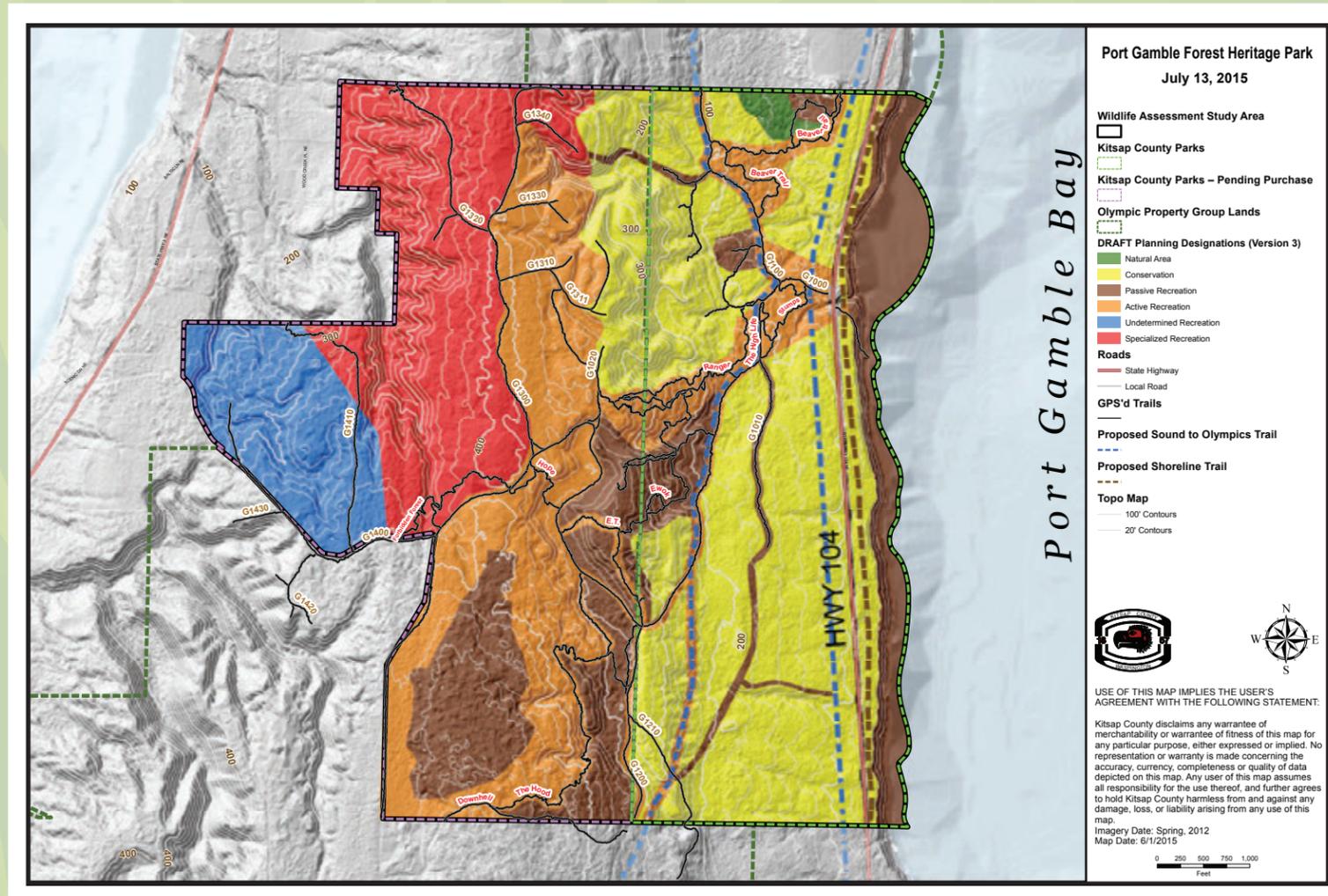
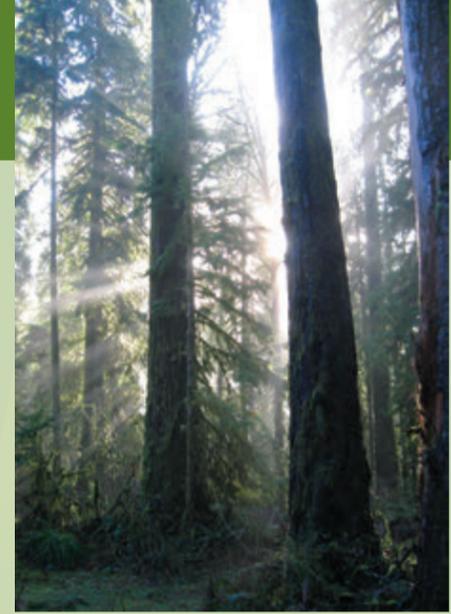
Acceptable Land use: An area of high level of recreational activities and facilities. Modification of landscape is allowable with the protection of sensitive and critical resource areas.
 Allowable Activities: Nature-based recreation activities and facilities. Events are allowable with permit and scheduling. Large event impacts need to be mitigated. Provide for visitor comfort amenities. High capacity designed trails, parking. Dog walking, on-leash -- Ok. Dog walking with equestrian use is allowable with voice control.

SP = SPECIALIZED RECREATION

Acceptable Land Use: Dependent on recreational experience and activity demands.
 Allowable Activities: Dependent on recreational needs. ex.; bike recreation areas, amphitheaters, model airplane fly fields, non-motorized organized events such as runs, walks, bike rallies, watertrail activities.

Conditional Uses: Allowances are made for resource use for recreation and public access that are not identified in the land classifications and may be determined an acceptable "conditional use", on a case-by-case basis, through a Kitsap County Parks planning process. These will be noted in a Park Management Plan.

Forest Restoration Activities: As a result of historic silvicultural practices on this property directed to commercial timber harvest; the current forest structure and composition has limited diversity, age class and understory complexity. Restoration activities will enhance forest health and habitats and may include; restorative thinning, inter-planting of native tree species, and introduction of other native plants.



RESOURCE & PUBLIC USE ISSUES | MANAGEMENT APPROACH



PROTECTION OF NATURAL, CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

ONGOING RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

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

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Create a Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Stewardship Group to further the resource management and recreational needs in this area. Create a cadre of informed Stewards in developing a series of Stewardship Certification Courses to instruct volunteers in the various aspects of resource assessment, monitoring, management, and recreation planning and development. Park staff and volunteer stewards will continue to monitor and report resource issues; vandalism, unauthorized park use, 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. Thereby, the propagation of many native trees species and understory vegetation has been restricted.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Identify and control invasive vegetation with the purpose to enhance native plant communities and create more natural wildlife habitats. In many of the earlier tree plantations the 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-plantings with native evergreen and deciduous species such as cedar, hemlock cascara, alder, big leaf maple and large shrubs including osoberry, elderberry, rhododendron, alder, big-leaf maple, can occur; approximating the original forest conditions prior to the 1920's clear-cutting.

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.

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-construct unwarranted and habitat degrading trails and obsolete 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.

STREAMS, WETLANDS, AND WATERBODIES

ISSUE: Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park has wetlands and numerous streams that empty into Gamble Bay. Impacts to the bay begin upstream and are often impacted by the proximity to trails and public use. Park visitors such as hikers, mountain bikers, wildlife viewers, dog walkers, and horseback riders contribute to water quality degradation.

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. Map all fish-bearing streams. Monitor water quality in wetlands and streams. Determine trail usage along with proximity to streams and wetlands, and categorize which streams are typed as fish bearing. Apply prescriptive measures such as culvert or trail removal.

SHORELANDS, TIDELANDS & SHELLFISH

ISSUE: The Port Gamble Heritage Forest Park includes 1.5 miles of shorelands and tidelands. Nine types of shellfish are harvested along similar shorelines in this area -- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Region 8. The shellfish population has been largely untapped for recreational harvest while in private land ownership. Currently there are no State harvest surveys, regulations or seasons to govern recreation or commercially approved harvest.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

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 WDFW and affected Tribes.



Encourage the propagation and protection of native shellfish stock and habitat for forage fish. Provide access to the shoreline in approved and developed trails and parking areas. 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 that will help direct forest enhancement plans and operations based on county approved guidelines. Use restoration thinning in these overstocked stands to improve forest health and restore wildlife habitat.

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:

Within the boundary of the Heritage Park, the practice of 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 that are sustainable may be allowed in certain areas, and can provide a source of revenue to support further stewardship activities. Permits will be required.

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.

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.

HISTORICAL / CULTURAL RESOURCES

ISSUE: Port Gamble Forest and the surrounding private timberlands have a rich and varied history of commercial use. Native inhabitants used the properties for thousands of years for subsistence gathering of natural resources from the shoreline and uplands.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Highlight areas of past historical activities through interpretive media and signage. Include reference to Tribal subsistence use, railroads and pier construction, logging and mill operations and timberland management. Heighten awareness of the past land-use and impacts, and compare with current resource management.

Work with the Port Gamble Museum to present information to the public. Develop signage and interpretive trails where appropriate.

PUBLIC ACCESS & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLIC ACCESS & EVENTS

ISSUE: The previous land owners, Pope Resources Company 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 the previous land owners that attracted hundreds of participants at a time.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Park staff and volunteer stewards will monitor impacts of large group activities on the protection of inherent resources and recreational experiences for all park users. Kitsap County 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. Special Events may require a County Parks Department Permit, per County Policy. User fees may be charged per County Park Policy and Kitsap County Park Fees & Charges Schedule as approved by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners.



RESOURCE & PUBLIC USE ISSUES | MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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 and approved day-use activity areas.

Public access will be limited to designated trailheads and developed parking areas, and signed appropriately. Parks will work with the WA State Department of Transportation to warn travelers along SR 104 as to parking and trail crossings and potential vegetation pruning to provide roadway vistas of Port Gamble Bay. Accommodations will be made for infrequent “fly-overs” by the radio controlled model aircraft that have a take-off and landing field adjacent to the north of the parklands. This use will be monitored for resource impacts and any future vegetation modification needs. Other motorized aircraft, including “drones” are not permitted over the parklands at this time without authorization and permit.

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 that are connected to Pope Resource’s forestland properties to the north, south and east of the Park’s Shoreline Block. 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 regional Sound to Olympics Trail (STO) for a shared-use, active-recreation use corridor. Display maps with current names and numbers on informational kiosks at County trailhead parking. Post maps on County website.

Any proposed new trail requires a written and mapped trail application and approval process. Remove any trail structures or routes which are unsafe, not built to standards, or impact wildlife habitat, or sensitive vegetation.

RECREATIONAL SAFETY/BEHAVIOR/RULES

ISSUE: The former forestland owner allowed for public access on logging roads and multiple trails and public use throughout. These activities were minimally regulated and public access only controlled during timber management and logging operations, and high-fire danger. An expected increase and diversity of recreational use will increase impacts to these public lands and County Parks will require new rules and enforcement.



MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Develop orientation and way-finding signage throughout the property. Develop park rules to discourage unapproved use (firearms, hunting, un-authorized vehicle access, camping, etc.) and direct responsible use by all users. Work with local law enforcement agencies and emergency response organizations to establish emergency response communications, directions, and protocol for such instances as; wildland fires, injuries, vandalism, etc.

ECONOMIC INTERESTS

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

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

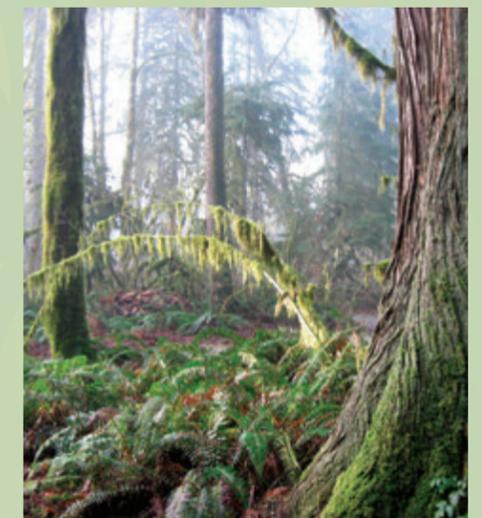
Continue to support and look for opportunities to encourage recreation events, trainings and educational events that help to promote businesses in related services.

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 Forest landscape, contiguous to the Heritage Park and which will contribute to the goals and objectives of this plan.



“Our County Parks staff shares the community’s appreciation of the concerted efforts of the Forest and Bay Coalition and aligned organizations in their pursuit of lands acquisitions to create the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park. This public area offers a foundation for sustainable forest conservation, wildlife habitat, and a wide range of recreation opportunities. The continued stewardship efforts and support by those groups and individuals will enhance our park and open space goals, into the future. Thanks to all.”

— JIM DUNWIDDIE, KITSAP COUNTY PARKS DIRECTOR

“I appreciate the community’s work in creating this stewardship plan. It was a pleasure watching the cooperative support from the various stakeholders and interest groups. This process can be expanded and/or replicated for other park properties that may come to fruition as part of the overall conservation effort.”

— ROBERT GELDER, COMMISSIONER, KITSAP COUNTY DISTRICT 1

STEWARDSHIP PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

TRIBES: Port Gamble Tribe, Laura Price | Suquamish Tribe, Jay Zischke

PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS: Olympic Property Group, Julie McAfee | Neighbor, Mark Schorn

CONSERVATION COMMUNITY: Kitsap Audubon, Judy Willott | Great Peninsula Conservancy, Debbie Engel, Kate Kuhlman

RECREATION INTERESTS: Kitsap County Parks and Recreation Board, Alvin Andrus, Chair | Olympic Outdoor Center, John Kuntz | North Kitsap Trail Association, Linda Berry Maraist, | Evan Stoll | Radio Controlled Airplanes, Ron Bruhn | Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Brian Kilpatrick | Backcountry Horseman, Elaine & Jim Davis

PARK STAFF & TECHNICAL ADVISORS: Steven Starlund, Parks and Open Space Planner | Arno Bergstrom, Parks Forester | Dori Leckner, Parks Superintendent | Ric Catron, Parks Projects Coordinator | Lucretia Winkler, Mapping Consultant | David Nash, Kitsap County GIS Analyst | T.J. Nedrow, WADOT | Stephen Padua, Kitsap County Regional Trail Planner | Phil Struck, Mike Hall, Parametrix Consultants

KITSAP COUNTY: Parks Director, Jim Dunwiddie

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: Robert Gelder, Charlotte Garrido, Edward E. Wolfe

Plan adopted by Resolution: July 13, 2015

REPORT PHOTO CREDITS: Don Willott | Steven Starlund | M. Weiss | Mike Hall

