

**PLANNING COMMISSION
 COMMISSIONER’S HEARING ROOM, COUPEVILLE, WA
 TUESDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2011**

	<i>Members Present</i>	<i>Members Absent</i>
<i>District 1</i>	<i>Val Hillers</i>	
	<i>Dean Enell – Chair</i>	
	<i>Mike Joselyn</i>	
<i>District 2</i>	<i>Mitchell Howard</i>	
	<i>Anna-Marie Sibon</i>	
	<i>Mahmoud Abdel-Monem</i>	
<i>District 3</i>	<i>Wayne Havens</i>	
	<i>William Lippens</i>	
		<i>Scott Yonkman – Vice Chair</i>

Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chair Enell

ROLL CALL

Wayne Havens, Mike Joselyn, Mitchell Howard, Dean Enell, Anna-Marie Sibon, Val Hillers, Mahmoud Abdel-Monem, William Lippens

Planning staff present: Robert Pederson – Director, Andrew Hicks – Long Range Planner, Karen Stewart – Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Coordinator

Public Works staff present: Bill Oakes – Director, Joantha Guthrie – Project Manager

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 25, 2011

Commissioner Hillers moved for approval of the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Sibon, the minutes were approved unanimously.

ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

OLD BUSINESS – continued from October 25, 2011

248/11 CPA – An amendment to the Island County Comprehensive Plan updating the Parks and Recreation Element.

Joantha Guthrie – Public Works provided an overview of the topic and walked the Planning Commission through the documents presented at today’s meeting.

Discussed public comments received by e-mail and the responses to those from staff.
 Public Works Department Responses in [BLUE](#)

From: Terri Arnold [dirswprd@whidbey.com]

Management Team-

The following comments are submitted by South Whidbey Parks & Recreation District for the DRAFT Island County Comprehensive Plan 7. Parks and Recreation Element

Page 7

Terminology & Definitions

Conservation Areas

Need to add examples of 'conservation areas' at the end of the paragraph

Ms. Guthrie stated that staff disagrees with this suggestion; as the footnote on 7-10 suggests, these classifications are discussed in Chapter 3. This section is the introduction, providing definitions. There are detailed explanations later in the document where it is appropriate.

Natural Recreation Areas:

Example: Rhododendron Park?

Ms. Guthrie again explained staff disagrees with this suggestion; as the footnote on 7-10 suggests, these classifications are discussed in Chapter 3. This section is providing definitions.

Outdoor Recreation:

Biking should also be listed

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-17

Park Districts

Trustland Trails - ***not Trust Land Trails***

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-19

Table 2: Conservation Easements in Island County

Need to edit the Total # of Easements (correct number is 61)

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-20

After Clover Valley Off-leash area, it should be noted that **it is owned by the North Whidbey Parks & Recreation District, similar to other examples**

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-21

First paragraph...."**The Parks Department is responsible FOR the maintenance of...**

This change was made in the previous revision.

Page 7-37

The last paragraph..."The County's niche....add space between and/habitat

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-40

...The County is most likely, not mostly likely

This change was made in the previous revision.

Page 7-45

Bayview Area: This area OF South Whidbey contains important....

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-49

Trail Access and Needs

There is no mention of the need for ADA or Universally Accessible trails any place in this plan, but this section should certainly make mention of this fact - this is an important element in being eligible for trail development grants. The only universally accessible trail built on South Whidbey is located at Trustland Trails. There is a demonstrated need for development of trails that will accommodate all mobility types.

Public Works staff disagrees this is the place to incorporate this language. Staff has included language with the bullet point "*Amenities and Facilities to Consider*" on page 7-37.

Page 7-51

Bayview Area: **Trustland Trails NOT Trust Land Trails**

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-52

South Whidbey Community Park has ample opportunity for nature-based one-mile trails, including ADA accessible trails

Corrections have been incorporated into Map 3 to reflect the trails at Community Park.

Page 7-63

Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)

Second paragraph

...currently, opportunities for horseback trail riding are provided at.....

Trustland Trails needs to be added to this list of properties with equestrian trail heads, room for horse trailer parking, a staging area, hitching rails, and other amenities

This change was incorporated.

Last paragraph - Ideally,

Trustland Trails does not allow hunting and is open year around for hikers, bike riders, and equestrian activity.

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-65 Table 11

Trails

Need to add Trustland Trails to this list of properties with Trails/Trailheads for Equestrian Use and Mountain Biking

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-86

Criterion 4.

...can be measured by (separate words)

This change was made in the previous revision.

Criterion 7.

Additional Recreation Need:

...another low-impact outdoor recreation need...dog park, equestrian and mountain biking trail and trailhead.

(These are NOT a low impact activities) Dog parks, horse facilities, and mountain biking are not considered passive recreation, therefore, not low-impact!)

The use of low-impact in this context is consistent with how the term is used throughout the plan. Ms. Guthrie further stated they consider low impact to be biking, equestrian use of the trails, hiking, and dog walking. That is how this term is being used and therefore no change was made to the document.

Commissioner Lippens recommended adding the definition of what is considered low impact.

Discussion of the low impact definition; it is a defined term.

Trail degradation was also discussed; the plan has language that addresses that. Equestrian use is regulated; horses may only be walked on a County owned trail system.

Ms. Guthrie stated it will be defined in terms and definitions.

Criterion 13

The County does not want to be in the business of supporting active recreational uses - really? The above criterion say just the opposite!

Public Works staff disagreed that this statement was inconsistent with the other criterion listed.

Commissioner Hillers stated there is confusion regarding what is active and what is passive.

Page 7-91

Consider Trade or Divestment

...Site divestment may involve selling properties, trading them for different parcels, ASSIGNING, or giving them to another agency.

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-95

Project Priorities

...implemented within the next two, six or even ten years (not two, six years, or even ten)

This change was incorporated.

Page 7-97

Setting County Priorities

...It is time for the county to focus on expanding its operations and services to provide the same high operational level of service that it does for land ownership..

What????? The county DOES NOT offer any high operational level of service at parks currently....

Public Work's response: The statement is not referring to the County having a high level of service at parks; in fact, the entire paragraph is pointing out that the County needs to step up its operations and services to be more in line with its efforts to own land.

Commissioner Hillers had a question of what was meant by the comment regarding land ownership. Is the problem the word of ownership or acquisition?

Discussion of deletion of the sentence of ownership...Commissioner Lippens suggested making the statement clearer instead of striking the sentence.

Page 7-100

Next Steps

Consider eliminating the use of 'hunt' as a verb and use endeavor instead?

The word "hunt" was replaced with the word "search".

Page A-5

Last bullet - ...WCLT web site AND LINK WITH OTHER PARK DISTRICTS, PORT DISTRICTS AND STATE PARKS

This was a summation of questionnaire respondents, so the list was limited to that information.

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Comments submitted via email 11/3/2011. Public Works Department Responses in **BLUE**

From: Whidbey Environmental Action Network, Whidbey Audubon Society, and Whidbey Camano Land Trust

Due to the tight timelines that must be followed for the Board of Island County Commissioners to begin its adoption process of Element 7 of the Comprehensive Plan before the end of December 2011, several conservation organization worked together to present joint comments that we all agree are the most critical to revise. We believe it is imperative the Plan be adopted before March 1st to allow the County to be eligible to submit for state park, recreation and habitat grants and to provide guidance for Island County's management of its park lands.

We have summarized our critical items below and, on the following two pages, provide a brief discussion of each item. We have sent our recommendations for specific language changes to implement the critical items listed below to the Planning, Public Works and Parks departments to make it easier for them to make the changes.

Public Works: The "...recommendations for specific language changes..." was sent on November 6, 2011 and received by Staff the morning of November 7, 2011.

Critical Items:

1. Key terms and definitions should be consistent and clear with regard to the County's park land habitat and classification system.

Public Works agreed in general. Some of the suggested changes were incorporated.

2. Allow acquisition of important habitat lands not suitable for recreation and do not prohibit the use of conservation easements to acquire appropriate lands.

Public Works agreed in general. Some of the suggested changes were incorporated.

3. If lands with significant conservation values are transferred out of County ownership, they should go to an appropriate resource entity and the legal deed transferring the property should include appropriate language assuring the long-term protection of the conservation values.

Public Works staff has incorporated some changes based on this statement. However, "should" language has been revised to "should consider".

4. Add a policy that states that recreation will not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

Public Works agreed in general. Some of the suggested changes were incorporated.

5. Add the need for wildlife corridors to key urbanizing and narrow areas of Whidbey Island.

Public Works agreed in general. Some of the suggested changes were incorporated.

6. County roads that end on the water should be formally signed to indicate public access, unless health, safety, or environmental concerns exist.

Shoreline access is presently being evaluated under the Shoreline Master Program. Priorities for access improvements should be identified there. Public Works staff incorporated some of the suggested language changes provided in the November 6, 2011 emailed document.

7. Table 12 (Habitat and Recreation Evaluation by Site) should be eliminated because it is confusing and incomplete and, because of this, will cause great controversy.

Public Works: This request was rescinded in the November 6, 2011 emailed document, Staff incorporated some of the suggested language changes.

8. The Capital Facilities Plan (Table 14) should be revised to ensure that likely future acquisition or development proposals will receive credit in Washington State's grant programs.

Public Works agreed in general. Some of the suggested changes were incorporated.

Table 14 was not updated prior to the November 8th meeting.

9. Certain properties should be reclassified on Maps C 1-4 from "Natural Recreation Area" to "Conservation Area."

Public Works: Of the properties listed on page 4 Staff agreed that Deer Lagoon should be reclassified from "Natural Recreation Area" to "Conservation Area" and will work on incorporating these changes throughout the document.



Proposed Changes to

“October 2011 – DRAFT of the Island County Comprehensive Plan 7. Parks and Recreation Element”

per discussion at the Island County Planning Commission’s Public
Hearing from October 25, 2011 and Public Comments submitted by
November 4, 2011.

This section proposes changes based on Public Comments made during the hearing and submitted in writing by November 4, 2011:

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In spring 2010, Island County and the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (Land Trust) formed a collaborative partnership to update the Parks and Recreation Plan for Island County. In a context where many different jurisdictions are involved in protecting habitat, natural areas, and providing recreation opportunities, the plan identifies Island County’s “niche” in managing parks and natural areas for recreation and conservation. It includes policies and strategies for making the best use of existing County resources, including partnering with other providers to ensure that parks and natural areas remain vital assets for the community. It addresses declining funding, which has made it difficult for the County to adequately care for its resources and sets up a vision for the next 10 to 20 years.

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1.3 Terminology & Definitions

~~Open space can take on many forms, shapes, purposes, and functions. The Parks and Recreation Plan uses various terms to refer to the open space discussed in this plan. For clarification, several of these terms are defined below~~ the following definitions throughout this element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- ~~Park Lands: “Park lands” is used to discuss a collection of properties~~ All the lands managed by ***Island County Parks Department which are formally used for or dedicated to outdoor recreation and/or conservation. There are three ~~distinct~~ types of properties that make up ~~the~~ Island County Park Lands: 1) Community Parks; 2) Conservation Areas; and 3) Natural Recreation Areas.
- ~~Community Parks: A Park refers to a tract of land set aside for public enjoyment and use. In this plan, a park is any~~ Any area that has been set aside or is managed for outdoor recreation purposes, has associated built elements (e.g. boat ramps, picnic tables, playground equipment, or ballfields) and is consistent with the Capital Facilities element definition 1.1.3 “Community parks” (owned and operated by the County).

- *Conservation Areas:* ~~In this plan, a Conservation Area is a type of pPark lands where acreage has been set aside primarily for ecological conservation or environmental protection.~~ Conservation Areas may include fish or wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge areas, significant ecosystems, ecologically critical areas, or agricultural or forest resource lands. These areas may also support outdoor recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts.¹
- *Natural Recreation Areas:* ~~Natural Recreation Areas describe Island County pPark lands that offers recreational opportunities in a natural setting but does not meet the definition of a Community Park or Conservation Area.~~ Examples of these are beach access sites without built elements, off-leash dog parks and forest areas with high a greater focus on outdoor recreational use.
- *Outdoor Recreation:* Outdoor Recreation refers to a leisure activity (or the act of engaging in a leisure activity) that is typically associated with outdoor, natural or semi-natural settings, such as a beach, forest, grassland, lake, mountain, wetland, or farmland. Hiking, boating, camping, horseback and bicycle riding, fishing, hunting, and nature interpretation are examples of outdoor recreation activities.

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Table 2: Conservation Easements in Island County

Jurisdiction	# of Easements	Acres
National Park Service	24	2,023
Land Trust	28	1,064.1
Island County	9	191.3
Total	6161	3,278.4

...
Table 3: Island County Park Land by Department

Department	# of Sites	Acres	% of Total
Parks Department	46	1,807.1	53.6%
Public Works	9	934.0	27.7%
Unassigned	44	293.1	8.7%
Special Maintenance Areas	3	6.3	0.2%
School Trust Lands (Leased)	7	331.8	9.8%
Total	109	3,372.3	100%
Other County Sites *	5	46.0	

* This category includes the County Fairgrounds (managed by the General Services Department) and four County buildings where landscaping is maintained by the Parks Department.

¹ A conservation area is one of three types of park land in Island County's park land classification system. Conservation areas, Natural recreation areas, and community parks are discussed in Chapter 3.

- The *Parks Department* is responsible for more than half of the acreage associated with Parks and Habitat Conservation Areas in Island County (1,800 acres). Examples include Rhododendron Park and the Four Springs Lake Preserve.
- Through other divisions, the *Public Works Department* manages more than 930 acres, including Deer Lagoon, North and South Greenbank Farm, the Kettles Trail System and a few beach access sites.
- *Island County* also owns or holds 293 acres (44 parcels) that are not assigned to a particular department or division for management. These unassigned sites include wetlands, beach access, and a number of tax-title lands.²

Island County
Parks and Public
Works manage or
maintain 3,372
acres for habitat
conservation and
recreation.

As special maintenance areas, the *Parks Department* maintains three sites through inter-local agreements. These include the Clover Valley Off-Leash Area (owned by North Whidbey Parks and Recreation District), Oak Harbor Dog Park (owned by the City

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2.3 County Park Land Classification

To better understand Island County's park system, each site was classified based on its physical characteristics, level of recreation, habitat value, level of development, and management needs. The park classification system includes three ~~park land~~ types of properties:

- *Community Parks*: Community Parks typically have high levels of recreation and/or facility development, leaving only remnant habitat areas, such as native tree stands or unbuilt waterfront. Freeland Park, Dave Mackie Park (also known as Maxwellton Beach), and the Maple Grove Boat Ramp are examples of community parks.
- *Natural Recreation Areas*: Natural Recreation Areas protect more extensive habitat areas, in addition to providing ~~developed~~ low-impact recreation facilities, such as trails. They differ from ~~conservation~~ Conservation areas in that these sites typically support relatively higher-use recreational use and habitat space, ~~but the uses are not necessarily integrated~~. Rhododendron Campground and Trails, Dan Porter Park, and West Beach Vista are examples of Natural Recreation Areas.

Chair Enell wanted to discuss the examples that cover both Natural and Conservation areas.

Ms. Guthrie replied an example in the plan is the Rhododendron property, which is split into the Rhododendron ball field, classified as a Community Park; high active recreation baseball etc.

² The County has 18 tax title lands, which are held for repayment of back taxes.

The campground and trails are being carved out as a Natural Recreation Area. By definition it still looks at habitat conservation and conservation in general, but if they classify this area as a conservation land they would not be able to expand the campground in the future.

- *Conservation Areas:* Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation ~~or~~ and protection but may provide low-impact outdoor recreational uses that are secondary to and do not conflict with conservation values. They may include fish or wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge areas, significant ecosystems, ecologically critical areas, or agricultural or forest resource lands. In Island County, Conservation Areas can also support limited recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts. These sites differ from Natural Recreation Areas in that the primary focus is habitat conservation. Examples of conservation areas are the Ethyl Taylor property, Swantown Lake, High Point Trust Land, and Greenbank South.

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Maintenance, Operations, and Funding

Despite strong desires for trails, shoreline access, and habitat conservation areas, stakeholders, focus group participants, and questionnaire respondents all expressed reservations about how to fund and maintain the existing and future park system. Participants acknowledged that the County would have to focus its resources and cut non-core service. For example:

- Recognizing that the County struggles financially to maintain the parks, habitat areas, and resource lands it has, respondents were willing to support the following for land maintenance and management.
 - Volunteer efforts (74%)
 - Non-profits (62%)
 - County tax dollars (49%)
 - User fees (40%)
 - A new park district with its own tax base (35%)
- At stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings, participants recognized that funding is the greatest concern for the Parks Department. They noted that a shortage of funds affects the County's ability to acquire, develop, maintain, and operate Park Lands and Habitat Conservation Areas across the County.

...

3.3 Planning Framework

Community feedback obtained through the public involvement activities was used to identify a vision, mission, and set of core values for the Island County Parks Department. These elements provide a planning framework for the acquisition, disposition, management, and maintenance of County-owned parks and habitat areas. As such, they are a guiding force for the Parks and Recreation Plan.

Vision, Mission, and Values for Parks

The community's vision, mission, and core values for park lands, ~~recreation facilities, habitat areas, and related recreation and conservation services~~ are described below.

A vision describes a broad picture of success:

**We envision an interconnected system
of park lands and ~~habitat areas~~ that provide the best recreation, conservation, and
sustainability in the state.**

...

Five community values support the vision and mission of the plan:

Sustainability: We value efficient and effective management and stewardship of our natural resources and County park lands and ~~recreation assets~~ to sustain them for current and future generations.

Quality of Life: We value the role that park lands, ~~habitat areas, and recreation facilities~~ play in supporting the long-term health, well-being, and safety of our residents, economy, and natural resources.

Recreation: We value healthy opportunities for outdoor play and relaxation, supported through the provision of accessible park lands, trails, shorelines, natural areas, and outdoor recreation facilities.

Habitat Conservation: We value maintaining and protecting the integrity of our islands' significant natural areas.

Long-Term Success: We value vibrant thriving park lands and ~~habitat areas~~ and will strive for excellence in our efforts to create a better future for Island County residents.

...

3.4 Niche

Residents and visitors to Island County have many different needs and desires associated with parks, recreation facilities, trails, and habitat areas. Given its limited resources, Island County cannot meet all of these needs. For this reason, Island County Parks Department has defined a specific niche for itself within the context of other agencies and groups who provide recreation opportunities and habitat conservation areas on one or both islands.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Island County will position itself as a habitat and outdoor recreation provider, reflecting a desire to protect habitat and meet the community's outdoor, low-impact recreation needs. Based on public feedback and direction from the Board of County Commissioners, Island County will begin to take a more balanced approach toward addressing outdoor recreation and habitat conservation priorities. This will require conscientious acquisition, design, development, maintenance, and stewardship of parks to protect critical areas from

development while supporting passive recreation opportunities. As noted in the park classification system, individual sites/areas may be more focused on habitat conservation or recreation, or both. However, most sites will support both priorities to some extent, according to the County's niche.

The change was not made to the right as requested since staff did not agree with the change.

Figure 2: The County's Niche



On a spectrum of services, Island County will focus its resources on providing outdoor recreation opportunities that are compatible with habitat conservation goals. This means Island County Parks will phase out its interest in the following by encouraging other recreation and habitat providers to address these types of needs:

- **Traditional Recreation:** Island County Parks will phase out its investment in traditional recreation opportunities, such as those found at Dan Porter, Dave Mackie, the Rhododendron ball fields, and Camano Parks, by finding other providers to assume responsibility for the properties who will operate them for public use. The County will not build any new facilities that support active, organized, indoor or high-impact recreational opportunities, such as sports fields, basketball or tennis courts, skate parks, community centers, swimming pools, etc. However, the County will maintain the current facilities until other providers—such as towns, cities, and recreation districts—can meet these needs, should the community desire these types of opportunities.
- **Habitat Conservation:** ~~Island County Parks will no longer invest in conservation areas that do not provide public access. These include habitat conservation areas that are not suitable for recreation activities or have limited potential for facility development. This also applies to land protection through conservation easements. Other providers—such as non-profit groups, the National Park Service, the State Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Fish and Wildlife—can meet these types of needs.~~ Conservation Areas with no Recreational Uses: As defined in this Plan, Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation purposes but may provide low-impact recreational uses that are secondary to and do not conflict with conservation values. The Island County Parks Department will only invest in lands that both protect habitat and provide for low-impact recreational opportunities. Other Island County departments may

continue to protect Conservation Area lands (as provided for in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive Plan) that are not appropriate for recreational uses.

Ms. Guthrie stated that the Parks and Recreation Element is not the place to reference conservation only properties.

County’s Role in Park Development

In recreation and habitat conservation areas that are suitable for low-impact recreation, Island County will support facilities that provide self-directed outdoor activities. These include opportunities such as walking, biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, camping, boating, clamming, hunting, swimming and beach activities, and picnicking. The County will avoid high-impact park uses that could damage natural resources. It will limit temporary, high-intensity activities (such as large group gatherings) to appropriate sites.

...

Table 9: Habitat and Outdoor Recreation Provider Niche

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County park lands include habitat areas <u>Community Parks, Natural Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas</u> that have a capacity to meet the community's outdoor, low-impact recreation needs. These sites <u>park lands</u> contain natural resources that are managed for conservation, as well as amenities and facilities that are maintained for recreation.
Site Selection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site size and configuration should be based on habitat and/or recreation needs, with <u>Size and shape being should be determined by the acreage needed to preserve or protect the resource conservation or while allowing space for recreational uses</u> needs. Site location should be based on the location of significant natural resources (e.g., aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, critical shoreline, important ecosystems, wetlands, etc.) or the location of place-based recreation opportunities (suitable shoreline for boat launches, etc.) Sites should be well-distributed on both islands to meet the recreation needs of all County residents. Amenities and facilities should be limited to support the numbers and types of visitors the site can accommodate, while retaining resource value and natural character.

...

Table 10: Management and Operations Habitat/Recreation Provider Niche

Land & Facilities Management	Future Acquisition	Whether acquired through purchase, donation, or transfer, <u>the Island County Parks Department should only acquire new sites that can help meet both low-impact recreation and habitat conservation needs. Other Island County Departments may acquire new sites that provide important habitat and natural resources, as provided for in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive Plan.</u>
	New Facility Development	The County should distribute facilities equitably to provide recreation opportunities in all service areas, while carefully considering habitat needs. Not all sites will <u>be suitable for or have the capacity to support all types of recreation.</u>
	Implication for Existing Land and Facilities	The existing inventory should be evaluated to determine: 1) Which sites and/or facilities do not fit within this niche. The County will need a transition strategy to determine how to address these facilities and properties. 2) Which existing sites are suitable for increased recreational development <u>without significantly degrading site habitat function or quality.</u> The County should increase its capital investment at appropriate sites to meet identified needs.

...

4.1 Habitat Conservation Needs

Many entities in Island County are involved in land and natural resource conservation, each with its own focus and priorities. As defined through this planning process, Island County's niche is protecting significant Conservation Areas and Natural Recreation Areas. Island County Parks will limit its focus on habitat areas that have the capacity to address low impact, outdoor recreation needs. As noted in Chapter 2, Island County already owns and manages lands that already support this niche by protecting wildlife habitat and open space, improving water and environmental quality, supporting aquifer recharge and water filtering, and protecting critical, sensitive, or ecologically important areas, such as shorelines, wetlands, prairies and oak woodlands, upland forests, while providing recreation access.

...

- *Adjacent to Other Conservation Lands:* Larger protected areas provide better habitat than smaller isolated parcels. For this reason, the criterion included any land within 1,000 feet of an Island County ~~habitat conservation area, hybrid park land, or easement~~; Non-Profit habitat and easements; State Parks; and National Park Service sites and easements. These parcels would allow existing conservation lands to expand.

...

- *Oak Harbor:* Oak Harbor's shoreline area and a stretch on the northeast side of the island contains important aquifer recharge areas, old-growth forest, critical shoreline, wildlife habitat, oak woodlands, significant habitat, protected plant communities and prairie soils, areas of critical shoreline, and wetlands. The urban development in Oak Harbor on the northeast side of Whidbey Island forms a barrier to wildlife movement, and a corridor for movement of wildlife around Oak Harbor should be considered.

- *Swantown Lake:* The area near Swantown Lake contains important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, prime farmland, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, mature forests, rare habitat, critical shoreline, prairie soils, unstable slopes, and wetlands. It provides the opportunity for protection of a wildlife corridor around Oak Harbor on the west side of Whidbey Island.

Commissioner Howard wanted to make sure that Swantown Lake was referred to as Swan Lake.

...

- *Greenbank:* The area immediately around Greenbank has important plant communities, and there is an important aquifer recharge area to the northeast of Greenbank. Much of this area is protected by various agencies or owned by the US Navy. Because Whidbey Island is relatively narrow from the area south of Coupeville to the Freeland area, this region is vulnerable to blockage of north-south wildlife movement over the long term. A protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

...

- *Freeland:* The area around Freeland, particularly south of Freeland between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay, includes important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmland, critical shoreline, some unstable slopes, and wetlands. As Freeland develops, protection of a wildlife corridor should be considered.

...

- *Bayview Area:* This area of South Whidbey contains important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands.

...

Trail Access and Needs

As noted in the park and habitat inventory (Appendix B), Island County provides unpaved, soft surfaced trails at 15 sites. While most of these sites are larger parks and habitat conservation areas, sites with trails range in size from 0.3 acres (Hidden Trail Camano View) to nearly 600 acres (Putney Woods). Several sites managed by other agencies also provide trail opportunities, including State Parks, National Parks, and to a lesser extent, habitat areas supported by cities, ports, and recreation districts.

Map 3 illustrates trail access and service areas (following the road network), where residents can engage in a one-mile walk in nature. Given this threshold, shorter trail segments, trails at sites too small to incorporate a one-mile trail, and trails in highly developed parks or transportation corridors were excluded from the analysis. As shown on the map, service areas around Island County sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale orange. However, other jurisdictions also help meet trail needs (for a one-mile walk in nature). Service areas around other provider's sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale yellow. White areas on the map indicate gaps in service, or areas where opportunities for trails should be considered.

~~As noted in Chapter 2, many County sites are undeveloped or have not been developed according to their recreation potential. In fact, Island County has far more opportunities to develop trails than it has existing trails.~~ To see if existing sites could help meet trails needs in unserved areas, GIS data were also used to map service areas around “trail opportunity areas.” These opportunity areas are sites of a sufficient size (more than 10 acres), level of development, and habitat type to perhaps provide a one-mile walk in nature—if a trail was ~~developed~~appropriate. Both County-owned sites and sites owned by other agencies were considered as potential opportunities for trail development.

...

- *Bayview Area:* The area around the Trustland Trails site (owned by the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District) and Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park is mapped as lacking nearby access to nature trails. However, both of these sites have a potential to address this need. The dog park at Marguerite Brons should be maintained, which limits opportunities for a nature trail at that site.

...

Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)

Public involvement findings also suggest a need for more equestrian and mountain bike trails. These trails should be longer than one-mile nature trails, and they need to include trailheads with appropriate support amenities.

Currently, opportunities for horseback trail riding are provided at Trustland Trails, Greenbank Farm, Kettles, Trillium Community Forest, and Putney Woods/Saratoga Woods/Metcalf Trust Trails. These trails are intended to be multi-purpose trails; serving hikers and mountain bikers as well. They lack equestrian trailheads with room for horse trailer parking, a staging area, hitching rails, or other amenities. There are no similar opportunities on Camano.

Based on population trail needs on Whidbey Island are greater than on Camano Island. On Whidbey Island, three geographically dispersed sites (north, central, and south) are needed to support equestrian and mountain bike trail use. These sites should include trailheads to support these uses. There are several sites that could be improved to support this need, including the Kettles (where Cookin’ in the Kettles Mountain Bike Race is held each year), Saratoga Woods, Greenbank Farm, and potentially the Trillium Community Forest (depending on the decisions within a management plan now under development). Another trail is needed on north Whidbey. On Camano, two sites are needed to support mountain biking and horseback riding. Elger Bay and Camano Ridge have the capacity to support trails (if appropriate trailheads and support amenities were added).

Ideally, at least one mountain bike and equestrian trail on each island would be at a site where deer hunting (the discharge of firearms) is not allowed. Otherwise, equestrian and mountain biking needs are not met during hunting season, ~~because hunting sites must be closed to other uses during hunting season~~ (see below). At this time, ~~all-most of Island County’s~~ large sites that support mountain biking and equestrian trails are also open to hunting. However, South Whidbey

Parks and Recreation District’s Trustland Trails (located on the south end of Whidbey) does not allow hunting and is open year around for hikers, bike riders, and equestrian activities.

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Table 11: Summary of Outdoor Recreation Needs

Recreation Activity/ Facility	Areas of Additional Need	Existing Sites to Consider
Trails		
Trails/Trailheads for Equestrian Use and Mountain Biking	2 on Camano Island 3 on Whidbey Island (north, central and south)	Camano Ridge. Greenbank Farm, Kettles, Trillium Community Forest, Putney Woods/Saratoga Woods/Metcalf Trust Trails, <u>Trustland Trails</u>

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5.1 Goals

Goals are broad statements of intent that define the outcomes to be achieved by implementing the Parks and Recreation Plan.

- *Park System:* Provide a quality, diversified, and sustainable system of park land that ~~effectively balances~~addresses low-impact recreation and ~~habitat~~ conservation needs.
- *Land Protection:* Acquire priority lands that conserve habitat and natural resources, preserve open spaces, maintain island character, and improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.
- *Stewardship and Maintenance:* Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, ~~support~~maintain and protect ecological functions and habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.

...

Land Protection

Acquire priority lands that conserve habitat and natural resources, preserve open space, improve beach access, maintain island character, and improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.

- POLICY 4. Protect habitat and working landscapes that can help recharge aquifers, prevent surface and groundwater pollution, filter sediments, limit air and noise pollution, ~~or~~ maintain wildlife habitat and other natural systems, ~~while also~~ or addressing identified recreation needs without causing degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

POLICY 5. Maintain and protect the important ecological functions of parks ~~and habitat conservation areas~~lands, including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.

...

POLICY 8. ~~Further e~~Evaluate unassigned County lands to determine which sites do or do not support the vision and goals of this plan. Consider divestment of public land that ~~contain~~have little value for conservation ~~and~~ or outdoor recreation.

...

Stewardship and Maintenance

Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.

POLICY 10. Maintain the important ecological functions of park lands ~~and habitat conservation areas~~, including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.

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Beach Access

Increase public access to the County's beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.

POLICY 16. Plan, design, and develop beach access areas adhering to the goals and policies set forth in the County's Shoreline Master Program.

POLICY 17. Inform the public of existing Island County public shore accesses where recreational use does not pose a threat to public health, safety, or the environment, and identify sites with signs (including from the water side for kayak and canoe pullouts) where appropriate and consistent with the Non-Motorized Trails Plan (updated in 2009) and the Shoreline Master Program (currently being updated).

Commissioner Havens asked if there will be signs posted by private property.

Ms. Guthrie stated that staff is not recommending that all Public road end or public right of way will be signed. Public Works is working in conjunction with the Planning Department on the Shoreline Master Program to identify where all of these properties are and also looking at other factors that need to be taken into consideration for signing it as a public access point.

Commissioner Enell wanted to know when the public can expect the signs to be up.

Planning Director Bob Pederson advised that he did not envision that the SMP will identify each and every access point that may or may not be signed, that would be a policy decision of the Board and was also a resource issue because there is a cost associated with it and that is not part of an SMP program. It is a policy and a regulatory structure.

Karen Stewart, Coordinator for the Shoreline Master Program update stated that public beach access is a big issue being addressed in the SMP update. Essentially they will be discussing the policy and setting up a process for identifying what should happen at any particular potential or existing access point.

Public Works Director Bill Oakes stated the County already has signs at public access points. Not every access point has a sign. It can be an extensive process, involving title searches, title rights, investment, research, and staff time. As they work through what the public rights are to the beach, letting people use them is the goal. Identifying what those rights are however is a very complicated question.

POLICY 18. Identify opportunities to increase public waterfront access through the recovery of public road ends where public access is being blocked, provision of swimming beaches, coastal and water vistas and accesses, motorized and non-motorized boat launches, public boat moorage, and water viewpoints while being consistent with goals and policies set forth in the County's Shoreline Master Program.

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POLICY 26. Assure recreational uses and development do not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

Commissioner Joselyn stated that the wording in Policy 26 is the same as Policy 4.

Ms. Guthrie stated it was done this way to remain consistent. One policy is under land protection and the other is applicable to a different section.

Commissioner Hillers wanted to know if Policy 26 was a change or an addition.

Ms. Guthrie stated it was an addition.

...

~~POLICY 27.~~ POLICY 29. Reinvest revenue and/or resources obtained from park lands, recreation facilities, and habitat areas back into recreation and habitat conservation services, whether directly or through a dedicated fund for system-wide conservation and recreation services. This includes any proceeds from facility/site rentals, user fees, leases, vendor or concessionaire agreements, and land divestment (sale or trade).

POLICY 30. Foster Island County's economic vitality by protecting productive resources, and park lands that support economic activity in industries such as tourism, agriculture, and forestry.

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POLICY 33. Acquire and manage park lands and habitat areas in ways that complement other public and private recreation and conservation efforts.

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CHAPTER 6 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The Island County park ~~and habitat~~ system is similar to an ecological system in transition. A new management approach is needed to achieve the County's vision and provide services within the

niche identified in this plan. This will require short-term and long-term strategies to address Island County's current inventory and successfully transition to a future system.

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STRATEGY 5. Fund Reinvestment: Ensure that all funds collected at Island County parks are reinvested into the park ~~and habitat~~-system (through capital projects, maintenance, or operations). This applies to all lease agreements, user fees, vendor fees, facility and site rentals, etc.

STRATEGY 6. Public Information Campaign: Prior to instituting boat ramp and trailhead parking fees (see below), create press releases, website information, and Email notifications with messages about "Investing in Our Parks." Create an Email address where residents can send their recommendations regarding specific small-scale improvements that are needed (and fit the County's niche). Also create an online volunteer coordination and recruitment tool where volunteers join a work party to help with identified improvements. The goal of the public information effort is to allow residents to be involved in and see the positive changes that these new funding initiatives will bring.

STRATEGY 7. County Park ~~and Habitat~~-System Identity: Improve the image of County park ~~lands and habitat conservation~~ areas. In the short-term, start with small projects, such as providing attractive uniform identification signs at site entrances.

...

STRATEGY 12. Budgeting for Maintenance: Increase the per-acre maintenance budget, which is needed even though the County is re-focusing the park ~~and habitat~~-system on low-maintenance facilities.

STRATEGY 13. Low Maintenance by Design: Implement low-maintenance landscaping techniques in all existing and new park sites. Remove turf areas that do not support specific recreational uses. Avoid high-maintenance plantings.

STRATEGY 14. Inventory Tracking: Continue to update the County's facility inventory to have an accurate count of facilities within all parks, including the length of trails (in linear feet or miles) that are developed and maintained both inside and outside of parks and habitat areas.

STRATEGY 15. Volunteer Coordination: In the long term, increase volunteer coordination through more specifically defined volunteer programs and opportunities, including written volunteer guidelines for specific tasks, such as habitat restoration, trail building and site maintenance.

STRATEGY 16. County Park System Image: In the long-term, improve the image of County parks through sensitive site design and development that reflects Island County's character. Prior to the development of any new minor feature or facility, consider its

design and placement within the park. Prior to the development of any new major facility or park, create a site design (for smaller sites) or site master plan (for larger sites) to help achieve the County's vision for parks ~~and habitat areas~~lands of being the best in the state.

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6.3 Acquisition and Land Evaluation Criteria

Once the County's transition is underway and a firm foundation is in place for cost-effective park management, maintenance, and operations, the County may consider acquiring land to meet additional recreation and habitat needs. Acquisition may involve the purchase, acceptance, or trade of properties and interests.³ Before acquiring a site, the County should consider several site selection criteria. These criteria can also be used to further evaluate existing County lands for their fit within the refined niche.

Land Evaluation Criteria

The future acquisition of new sites shall involve the careful evaluation of a proposed site's habitat quality, recreation potential, jurisdictional situation, and management and operational considerations. These criteria are described below.

Habitat Quality

When site is proposed for conservation, the County should use best available habitat data to see if the parcel is situated within a conceptual habitat area (as noted on Map 2).⁴ If so, the County should more specifically evaluate the habitat quality of the site. In terms of habitat, the following criteria should be considered:

CRITERION 1. County Adjacency: The site is adjacent to ~~another a~~ County-owned park ~~land, habitat conservation area, or trail corridor~~ so that acquisition would create a larger park land and/or or habitat conservation area the site is adjacent to a trail and will provide a longer trail corridor.

CRITERION 2. Adjacency to Other Protected Sites: The site is located near ~~several other protected parcels~~ park lands owned by other entities.⁵ Unlike County adjacency, the parcel must be large (e.g., five acres or more), or contain important habitat, and meet a specific recreational need or wildlife corridor need to justify the County's role in this area.

³ According to its niche, the County Parks Department should no longer invest in conservation easements that prohibit recreational use, since these efforts will not support both habitat and recreation.

⁴ Keep in mind that the boundaries of these conceptual areas may change as new habitat data becomes available. Using the Illustrative Habitat Conservation Concept Map, the County can overlay new data, such as the new conservancy areas identified in the Shoreline Master Program Update, to see how habitat clusters are affected.

⁵ A site that creates a larger habitat area by combining several sites owned by other agencies is also important. However, without nearby County land, it is likely that another agency or County Department other than the Parks Department is better positioned to acquire and manage the site.

CRITERION 3. Site Size: Larger sites typically have higher habitat value, greater recreation capacity, and a greater maintenance cost efficiency. The County should avoid acquiring small habitat parcels, unless these sites contribute to a larger protected area, contain important habitat, or provide a wildlife corridor between protected areas. Also, the County should avoid acquiring sites just large enough to address recreation needs, without space to protect habitat.

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Recreation Potential

The County should consider the recreational potential of any proposed site to determine if recreational use at a site is appropriate due to habitat sensitivity, what recreational needs could be met, ~~and to ensure that the site could~~ can appropriately support that the type of development and use, and that the use does not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation. Assuming that identified recreational uses do not adversely impact site habitat, the following acquisition criteria should be considered:

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CRITERION 11. Site Adjacency: The site is not adjacent to a site protected by another jurisdiction, ~~unless it is also adjacent to another County-owned site~~. If another jurisdiction is in a better position to manage and protect a site, the County may partner to support the other jurisdiction's acquisition of this land.

CRITERION 12. Funding Position: If another public agency or non-profit is in a better position to leverage funding for site purchase or a conservation easement, the County should allow them to protect this land, particularly if the provider is also able to meet recreation needs.

CRITERION 13. Active-Use Recreation Needs: If the site is in a service area with active recreation needs as well as outdoor recreation needs, the County should consider collaboration with another provider who would acquire the site. The County does not want to be in the business of supporting active recreational uses on its lands.

CRITERION 14. Conservation and Recreation Capacity: To be managed by the Island County Parks Department. ~~The site has a~~ the capacity to address both habitat conservation and outdoor recreation needs. ~~If a site is valuable for its natural lands only or recreation potential only, then another agency is most likely better positioned for site acquisition. For example, this is true in critical areas where no public access is desired. (Note: The County can use other tools, such as zoning and development restrictions, to protect critical areas. Acquisition is not warranted.)~~

CRITERION 15. Conservation ~~and/or~~ Recreation Needs: The site should be in an area of habitat conservation and recreation needs. If a site is in an area where recreation and recreation needs are already met by ~~an existing park land or habitat conservation area~~, the County should direct its resources to other priority areas where ~~both~~ recreation and/or conservation efforts are needed. Another jurisdiction may be better positioned to meet needs in this area.

Management and Operational Considerations

In evaluating potential acquisition opportunities, a variety of operations factors should first be considered. The following acquisition criteria should be considered:

CRITERION 16. Acquisition Costs: A site can be acquired with minimal cost by the County, such as through donation or grants.

CRITERION 17. Operations Funding: The County or other provider ~~are~~is able to pay the annual operating and maintenance costs for the site. The County should avoid providing or accepting from others new park ~~lands or habitat conservation areas~~ where the County is unable to fund site stewardship.⁶ If a site is transferred to the County with an operational endowment, this stipend should be on-going or sufficient to cover site land and facility maintenance costs for a minimum of 5-6 years.⁷ That will give Island County time to put a different funding strategy in place.

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7.1 Capital Facilities Plan

To achieve the vision, goals and objectives of this plan, improvements are needed throughout the park ~~and habitat~~ system. These improvements range from renovating existing sites to acquiring, planning and developing new sites. It also may include divesting of sites that do not fit the County's niche or support its vision for the future. However, sites with important ecological value, the County should consider an accompanying legal instrument that assures long-term protection and management of the site.

Commissioner Hillers stated there needs to be a transition word to make more sense.

...

- *Acquire Land:* Existing park land does not have the capacity to meet desired recreation and habitat conservation needs. The table notes areas where land will need to be acquired to meet these needs. Acreage needs for new sites will be driven by the type and amount of habitat to be protected, ~~as well as~~ and the size and scale of ~~the any~~ recreation ~~facility~~ facilities to be developed.
- *Plan/Design Park:* New sites and existing sites with non-niche facilities (that are to be renovated) will need site designs or site master plans to ensure that any facilities are well-placed to support habitat protection and recreational use.
- *Develop New Facilities:* Many existing park lands and all new park lands will require the development of new facilities to meet recreation needs. This may include signing County road ends adding water access, a trail and trailhead, a boat ramp, boat launch, primitive campground, dog park, etc.

⁶ This policy is consistent with CFP Objective 2.3 Operating and Maintenance Costs in the Capital Facilities Element of the Island County Comprehensive Plan.

⁷ The amount should be based on estimated costs per acre for site stewardship and maintenance.

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- *Consider Trade or Divestment:* Several County sites support non-niche uses that may be better managed by another agency. ~~As noted in Table 12, s~~Some County sites are not well positioned to meet habitat or recreation needs. Very small sites ~~(and don't appear to have a capacity to do so with improvements)~~ meet the County niche. In these cases, it is recommended that the County further evaluate these sites and consider divestment. This recommendation is especially applicable to the many small, unassigned, undesignated sites in the inventory. Site divestment may involve selling properties, trading them for different parcels, assigning or giving them to another agency or County department for management.

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~~Links nearby park lands, natural recreation/habitat parcels.~~ Priority consideration should be given to land acquisition opportunities that connect smaller existing County park lands to create larger parcels, ~~or projects that protect a high value habitat area adjacent to an existing park land.~~ Larger park lands typically provide enhanced habitat protection and expanded recreation opportunities

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Setting County Priorities

Even with prioritization criteria and land acquisition/evaluation criteria, Island County may find it

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When resources are available to acquire new sites, the County will find a balance between recreation and habitat conservation needs. For example, the results of Community Questionnaire indicated that the County should focus on the acquisition and protection of inland conservation lands (top priority) and shorelines (second highest priority). Given the dual desire to provide recreation and habitat conservation, both recreation and conservation needs may help determine what types of recreation are provided and habitat are protected and where. For example, shoreline protection becomes a priority where beach activities are needed and critical shoreline is present. The protection of inland forests becomes a priority where recreational trails are needed and a significant wetland or aquifer recharge area has been identified.⁸

...

7.3 Funding Strategies

...

- *Build on successful efforts.* The County should build on successful funding strategies, reinvesting funds into land and facilities that will continue to support this success.

⁸ In both cases, this assumes that recreation needs can be met without damaging habitat or natural resources. If not, another suitable site should be found.

Similarly, the County should continue to build on its successful partnerships and the relationship it has with volunteers, agencies, and groups who have helped fund or complete capital projects and ongoing maintenance efforts. The ~~City-County~~ should continue to support “model” efforts that will help build support for future park efforts.

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7.4 Next Steps

From this point onward, Island County will continue its ~~hunt-search~~ for a brighter future and a better quality of life. Park lands, for recreation, and habitat conservation will play an integral role in creating this future. As new projects enter the County’s scope, staff must carefully evaluate its options and determine whether the value of the project is worth the cost of the effort to obtain it. In the short and long term, the County should carefully identify and weigh these costs. These include:

...

- *Operations Costs:* The amount of money invested in Island County park maintenance is not comparable to the amounts invested by many other providers in the Pacific Northwest. Island County has a unique park ~~and habitat~~ system. Therefore, no specific financial guidelines have been proposed for increasing the park maintenance budget. However, the County should consider more than doubling the amount it spends per acre on facility maintenance and increasing that amount steadily as the level of park development increases. In addition, the County should consider habitat stewardship needs, since funds have not been budgeted consistently for this purpose in the past.
- *Community Costs:* The cost of community support is intangible and unquantifiable. We often talk about community support in terms of its value. The reality is that there can be a cost as well. The County needs to pursue ~~highly visible, popular~~ projects that will foster community support for parks, ~~recreation, and habitat conservation~~. ~~The long term goal is to build a constituency of future supportive voters.~~ On the other hand, the County should temporarily avoid ~~controversial projects or~~ projects that will stretch County resources even more thinly. The County cannot afford the social costs for such undertakings, and may have a hard time justifying major new expenses.

Commissioner Howard suggested a couple of changes: on Page 17 of 21, Criterion 14...he stated he thought it should say “the site needs to have the capacity” rather than the site has the capacity.

On page 18 of 21 under the Capital Facilities Plan, he suggested inserted the word regarding: . However, regarding sites with important ecological value, the County should consider an accompanying legal instrument that assures long-term protection and management of the site.

RECESS

Chair Enell opened the meeting for Public Comment:

Steve Erickson - WEAN

- Concerned about wildlife corridors and future protection.
- Item #3 should or shall have some sort of legal protection for those conservation values. Feels there should be a clear policy, i.e. page 18 of 21.
- Regarding whether Parks should be acquiring lands that have conservation value but are too sensitive for recreation; it is easy to say that other departments can take care of the conservation lands, but this is too vague. Suggestion: this plan should assign it to a specific department.
- The appropriate place to deal with the signs for beach access should be under the parks plan since it is a public land and roads. Understands there can be conflicts with neighbors but if it's public land they should be able to use the public land/beaches.
- Point number nine; all the lands they listed should be under conservation lands, Rhododendron Park is one that needs to be protected as a conservation area.

Tim Verskyl, NE Oak Harbor in the Dugualla Bay area

Would like to know more about wildlife corridors and if this document is addressing just County park lands and connections with other County park lands or does it include private property; and if so then how does it work with property rights and how does it impact the private landowner.

Susan Bennett - 2191 Gossridge Rd., Freeland

There was a brief mention of the use of volunteers to maintain the existing levels of the parks and to improve them to a certain extent. Does the park plan have a policy on the use of volunteers in place and is there an opportunity to use existing groups. There is an opportunity to use an existing pool of knowledge from organizations like Audubon and Beach Watchers.

Sarah Schmidt 243 Rhodena Dr., Coupeville. Speaking on behalf of Whidbey Audubon Society Confirmed that they agreed to eliminate table 12 and understands it is a preliminary screening tool and can stay there as far as they are concerned.

Concerned about the soft language about divesting conservation lands; the County can't be entrusted with important conservation lands if there is not a policy of ensuring that should the County need to get out of the ownership of those lands, those values will be protected with a legal instrument. Without that there is no guarantee of the preservation of lands. What is the implication of RCO funding?

Concerned of the lack of agreement on item 9 as far as Rhododendron Park and the other properties requested to be reclassified as "conservation areas".

There was a comment not addressed on page 7-99 of the plan, seems to imply there is a motivation to develop more trails in order to bring in more funding, but there are a number of County properties like the Kettles and Putney Woods that already have an over proliferation of trails that threaten to reduce the integrity of the habit so a suggestion was made to change the wording, but it wasn't followed. She wanted to ask about that.

Beach Access: Whidbey Audubon Society's mission is to conserve and restore natural eco systems and their habitats. Beach access, page 7-9 states the current update of the Shoreline

Master Program will provide direction on priority shoreline habitat for protection and acquisitions while the Parks and Recreation Plan addresses recreation needs for beach and shoreline areas. It seems to say that this plan is going to be the one that is talking about public access.

There is language in the plan and comments from staff that seem to question the value of small beach accesses. Small places that may not be considered significant are sufficient for launching a kayak and can provide access for bird watching and bird research. They are critically important whether or not you are allowed to walk the beach, swim or other activities mentioned.

Tom Cahill, 1895 Brainers Rd. Freeland on behalf of Whidbey Camano Land Trust
Emphasized the critical item 3 they suggested needs special attention. It was suggested that they should go to an appropriate source with the proper legal documents to restrict and protect the environmental values. This is not talking about just any lands, but lands with significant conservation value. To allow those to go into hands that may not protect them is not appropriate.

He also wanted to emphasize the critical importance of keeping this process moving for. In order to have this plan be effective for grant funding it in needs to get to the Board before the end of the year and be approved before March to meet the RCO deadlines, otherwise it will be another two years before they can apply for grants. Hopes this does not get bogged down by little items.

Rufus Rose, 6529 Four Sister Lane, South Whidbey

Concerning acquisitions, there have been acquisitions made by testament and the County found itself in the position where it could not use the land for park purposes. He suggested adding language in the plan that no lands could be accepted by Island County except those that have been through the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners in a public hearing. The conditions of testament or any other acquisition or purchase must be acceptable to the County and to the public; approved through a public hearing process prior to accepting land.

He further stated that part of that public process should include an analysis of the economic impacts of accepting any properties.

“Wildlife corridors” needs to refined, it sounds like a trail, but there is probably an amplified definition. The potential impacts on private property should also be spelled out.

On page 13 of 21 there is a reference to shoreline access and there is a place where it is obvious the word all should be inserted - on policy # 17. Inform the public of all existing Island County public shore accesses.... he stated he acknowledged that some of them may have problems, but he thinks it is reasonable for the public to know where they are.

Page 14 policy # 30 discusses fostering economic vitality etc. A close reading could suggest that it is exclusive to tourism, agriculture, and forestry and he thinks it shouldn't be.

He further discussed tax benefit programs, wanting it mentioned in the Parks Plan that these programs carry the obligation of the harvesting of trees. It clearly impacts people who live next door to forest land who are unaware of this requirement.

The Native Americans have access to the beaches and to clams etc. It would be short sighted not to acknowledge this in the plan.

Steve Erickson

The issue of beach access is a universal thing. It is time to let the public know where they can get down to the shore.

The inventory for this plan included easements, PBRs lands may also be something to look at.

He did not feel acquisition of land should be something that needs to go through the Planning Commission. It already has a legislative process.

Tim Versckyl,

Discussed shoreline access, questions whether the maintenance of public access should be addressed as well as the parking issue. Thinks all aspects should be looked at, not sure if this is the appropriate venue.

Discussed Open Timber current use plans, wildlife corridors, and timber production. In Island County, Timber Use Plans are a tax avoidance system for the vast majority. He feels these are all inter-related and it should be considered together.

Christine Williams, Langstaff Lane, Langley

Concerned about the shore access issue, if it is land that is owned by the County it is owned by the public and it doesn't seem right for the public to be unsure of what is there.

Wildlife corridors; stated she didn't understand it or know what it means to home owners.

Joantha Guthrie responded to some of the public's concerns:

- Regarding specific Conservation Lands, timber harvest, and open space, all that content is addressed in the Natural Lands Element and those issues are not addressed specifically in the Parks and Recreation Element because the proper place for those issues is in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Need for a specific plan akin to the State's Plan, the issue is addressed, but not the specific properties.
- Use of volunteers: there is an Adopt a Parks Plan, the major limitation is staff time. There is not a dedicated employee to work as a volunteer co-coordinator; the Plan does say it needs to be addressed.
- Policy # 30 the open space comments of Mr. Rose are also items that should be addressed in the Natural Lands Element, not the Parks and Recreation Element.

Public Works Director Bill Oakes provided a brief overview of the Island County Parks Department.

- Two employees, one person on each island
- Limited admin support budgeted for the Parks Plan

The Parks Plan was addressed to put in place a document that will allow the County to seek grant funding. The document is not perfect, but it will work and will pass muster with the State for the grant opportunities they hope to pursue.

- Wildlife corridors, this document is about acquiring and protecting land. It is not about establishing regulations to cover what can be done in a wildlife corridor. The intent is to identify areas where property rights or fee simple ownership by the County or other non-profits could be acquired for the purpose of a wildlife corridor.
- Beach access: In November of 1889 the Washington Constitution was adopted. In the next legislature the legislature started enacting a policy to sell tidelands. Over the next 70 – 80 years 70% of the tidelands were sold.
 - The Department has no intention of giving up beach access; they are protected and are in the public trust.
 - A conscious decision was made when preparing this plan, based on what the Board of County Commissioners budgeted, to leave the detailed inventory and assessment of the tidal access to the Shoreline Master Plan Update. It cannot be done all at once. They are very difficult things. In one case it took thousands of dollars to establish one 20 foot access. In order to sign what the public can use surveys must be done to define the area. It is a complex problem.
 - Large obvious beach access points are signed and will continue to be kept open. Regarding the maintenance, there is only one employee per island trying to maintain 50 places considered community parks. Public Works worries about being able to buy toilet paper and garbage bags. It is not funded at a level that meets nationally accepted standards for maintenance of these parks.
 - The ultimate goal of this plan is to relieve the need of County general fund dollars being spent on maintenance of the parks; either through marketing facilities or through alternative funding mechanisms.
 - Divestment; the Department has no objection to workable language for this topic, his angst with the language specifically relates to what constitutes significant conservation areas. If RCO funding or others funding comes with restrictions on title that would prevent the County from transferring significant conservation properties without their approval, and generally their approval means some burden on title.
 - Rhododendron Park may end up being a parcel with three separate designations; conservation, natural, and some of it as a community park. The vision of the area along the campground, both in this plan and in the trails plan is that ultimately it will be a trail corridor. There are active plans to extend the trail from Coupeville into the park and

then up the park access road into Rhododendron Park. They also have interest in possibly expanding some public camping activity there.

Mr. Pederson stated that given the time constraints they would like to get the recommendation from the Planning Commission no later than next week, to the extent changes can be identified today; those documents could be prepared for motion and actions next week.

Chair Enell closed the public hearing and opened it to the Planning Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Sibon covered a list of her concerns and sentiment on the topic:

1. Agreed if the County transfers ownership of land it should be “shall include” as opposed to just consider.
2. Agreed shoreline public areas should be signed, but does not think it is sensible to sign a piece of property that is landlocked as this may cause altercations. Parking can become a big point of contention.
3. Questioned Rhododendron campgrounds being expanded; suggested expansion of the type of use such as walk-in camp sites that wouldn't require large scale alteration to the landscape.
4. Asked why the County felt the other areas do not meet the conservation criteria for conservancy. The wildlife corridors need to be clearly defined.
5. Agreed with Mr. Rose, a lot of beach front owners are unaware that Native Americans can fish on their properties. Thought it should be included in this document.

Mr. Pederson replied on the beach access question, there are several levels. There is widespread agreement to inventory and list all beach access to the public. Then there is the policy level of discussion of what should be done with them and how should they be managed. Then there is the management and operational aspects to be considered. Should there be a sign, how big, how many etc. In addition there is the regulatory level related to the SMP update and what the environmental designation of the site is as well as what uses and activities are important.

Commissioner Howard stated he would also like to have the divestment verbiage be stricter. He also stated he would like the wildlife corridor to be more defined. He asked why only Deer Lagoon was called out by name and others weren't.

Chair Enell stated he felt that before the County sells or conveys land that once had conservation and recreational purposes than there shall, not should but should be something attached to the title that those uses shall be retained. Regarding lands with multiple uses such as suggested for Rhododendron Park he thought that it should be emphasized. It can't all be treated as one. Regarding public access he stated he thought the properties that could easily be identified should be signed for the public's use.

Andrew Hicks addressed the next procedural step. Public Works has indicated they will consolidate all of the comments made today, identify any outstanding questions and have a final document by the 15th of November.

Commissioner Howard moved to continue this hearing to November 15th, Commissioner Havens seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS – Public Workshop

Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Update

Planning Commission members were provided an e-mail from Mr. Elliot Menashe.

Planner Karen Stewart provided an introduction of the following documents:

Inventory and Characterization – A technical background report for the Shoreline Master Program.

Shoreline Environment Designation – The criteria to establish these designations.

Ms. Stewart explained today's workshop is part of the three year process for this update, the documents are preliminary. The purpose of the workshop is to provide the Planning Commission with an overview of what is being done in this incremental process. Unlike the earlier agenda item, there is not a complete draft document to review, but rather a discussion on the process.

A CD will be provided of the draft documents and colored maps as this document is in its preliminary stages and is currently being evaluated by Department of Ecology. It is available online on the Shoreline link, accessed through the Planning Department website.

www.islandcounty.net/planning or <http://www.islandcounty.net/planning/shorelines.htm>

The Draft Island County Shoreline Master Program Update Shoreline Inventory and Characterization Report

The document has nine chapters plus the attachments.

It is essentially the large technical scientific understanding of our shoreline conditions. This is then used as the foundation of information as the program is developed.

There is an introduction, a chapter discussing the methods and data inventory. One key item in Chapter 3 is an ecosystem profile. Department of Ecology's preliminary comments on the draft profile stated that it does provide the necessary context in information, to understand Island County shoreline ecology and the reach based analysis that follows. Ecology further stated they appreciated that the report does not get bogged down in describing generic ecosystems principals and conditions that would apply anywhere in Puget Sound, but discusses the local situation.

One of the aspects of the report is the detail reach guide, summary document for the shoreline conditions. Ms. Stewart encouraged everyone to look at this and provide comments.

Commissioner Hillers asked if that was also available on the website.

Ms. Stewart confirmed that it was.

Chapter 5 of the inventory document shows the reaches of west Whidbey.

Chapter 6 shows east Whidbey and Camano shorelines

Chapter 7 shows the six freshwater lakes.

The shoreline area was divided into planning segments that are called reaches which signify an ecological connection for that particular portion of the shoreline.

Chapter 8 is where the planning team has the initial description of the major issues, and what has been learned from the shoreline visioning workshops. It is a beginning analysis of recommendations of how to proceed.

Preliminary Shoreline Environment Designation Criteria, Document dated Oct 20, 11.

One of the key steps now that there is an inventory of the shoreline is to take the information and look at the existing shoreline designations. There are new state guidelines that were proposed in 2003. This update will bring the program into compliance with these new guidelines.

In 1998 the designations were changed by Island County, compared with some of the other shoreline jurisdictions this puts Island County a bit ahead of the game because we have an Aquatic designation, which is required.

Table 1 shows the existing shoreline designations.

Table 1. Existing Island County shoreline environment designations

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Natural	Preserve, protect, and restore those natural features and resources valuable in their natural or original condition by requiring severe restrictions on intensities and types of uses, thus allowing them to continue in their natural state.
Rural	Protect prime farm land as well as other historically rural areas from high intensity commercial, industrial and residential development.
Aquatic	Ensure protection and appropriate use of aquatic resources, protect and encourage multiple water-dependent uses, when such uses are compatible with each other and with uses in the adjoining shoreline environment.
Aquatic-Conservancy	Protect valuable fisheries resources that are held in public trust from degradation.
Urban	Ensure optimum County benefits through appropriate intensive development that also enhances the shoreline area.
Conservancy	Protect, conserve, and manage harvestable natural resources, as well as aesthetic, cultural, ecological, historic, and recreational areas in order to achieve a continuous flow of sustained yield resource utilization.
Shoreline Residential	Allow for the continuation of residential use and development

Table 2 shows the designations being recommended.

Table 2. Recommended shoreline environment designations from WAC 173-26-211

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Natural	Protect those shoreline areas that are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions intolerant of human use. Very low intensity uses allowed to maintain ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes.
Rural Conservancy	Protect ecological functions, conserve existing natural resources and valuable historic and cultural areas in order to provide for sustained resource use, achieve natural flood plain processes, and provide recreational opportunities. Appropriate uses include low-impact outdoor recreation, timber harvesting on a sustained-yield basis, agriculture, aquaculture, low-intensity residential development.
Aquatic	Protect, restore, and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.
High Intensity	Provide for high-intensity water-oriented commercial, transportation, and industrial uses while protecting existing ecological functions and restoring ecological functions in areas that have been previously degraded.
Urban Conservancy	Within UGAs, protect /restore ecological functions of open space, floodplain & other sensitive lands where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible uses.
Shoreline Residential	Accommodate residential development and appurtenant structures that are consistent with the SMA, and provide for appropriate public access and recreational uses.

Designations have not been reassessed since 1998. State guidelines are being brought forwards, like inclusion of the word natural, which is very important.

What changes are recommended to the current SED titles and purpose statements?

1. Retain the Natural, Aquatic, and Shoreline Residential designations, but review the purpose statement to ensure that they are clear and effective at supporting the purposes of the SMA as well as the vision for shorelines in Island County.
2. Because all portions of the shoreline within incorporated areas are now outside of County jurisdiction, and because this includes most of the existing Urban designation in the Island County SMP, eliminate the Urban designation. The two shoreline areas within urban growth boundaries are appropriate for an Urban Conservancy designation, and include a small area in the Langley UGA and an area of shoreline in Freeland that is designated a Non-Municipal Urban Growth Area (NMUGA).
3. Designate areas currently outside of incorporated areas that support ferries, and commercial boatyards as High Intensity, to allow management of these areas in a manner that supports these water-dependent uses while providing adequate protection of shoreline ecology.
4. Because the stated purpose of the current Rural designation is not one of the objectives of the SMA and is better accomplished through zoning, eliminate the Rural designation.
5. Create a Rural Conservancy designation that has as its purpose protection of ecological functions, and conservation of existing natural resources and valuable historic and cultural areas in order to

provide for sustained resource use, achieve natural floodplain processes, and provide recreational opportunities.

6. Because the purpose of the current Aquatic-Conservancy sub-designation is to protect fishery resources and these resources must be protected in all aquatic habitats, the sub-designation is not needed. Specific issues related to critical habitat areas can and must be addressed through critical saltwater habitat policies and regulations.

7. For all environments, refine the designation criteria to better align with the data available from the inventory so that the designations can be consistently applied across the county.

8. Consider parallel shoreline environment designations on areas landward of the ordinary high water mark to protect critical areas such as geologically hazardous areas and habitat areas that are relatively intact but may be separated from the shoreline by development.

In Island County much of the shoreline would be considered Rural Conservancy. Protecting the shoreline is important to everyone in the County.

Another presentation will be scheduled after the Planning Commission has had time to review all the documents. The next step is working with the shoreline Technical Advisory Group to apply these designations to the actual map. This too will be coming forward to the Planning Commission for review.

Commissioner Abdel-Monem moved to adjourn, Commissioner Howard seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Bradshaw