



## **King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Forest Stewardship Program**

### **Background**

King County, with 1.9 million inhabitants, is the 14th most populous county in the country. King County DNRP manages 26,000 acres of parks, natural areas and open space lands along the county's urban and rural interface. Of the 26,000 acres managed by King County Parks, 22,000 acres are natural forest land: 3,416 acres are designated as working forests which also provide passive recreation opportunities; 11,725 acres are designated as multiuse open space sites which allow passive recreation; and, 6,708 acres are designated as ecological natural areas which have limited public access. All of these properties were acquired to create and preserve public open space, provide a “green” buffer along the urban growth boundary, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and provide passive recreational opportunities. The working forest sites are managed under forest stewardship plans which balance timber production with resource protection and restoration through sustainable and adaptive forest practices. We intend to expand the [Forest Stewardship Program](#) beyond the working forest sites, and conduct forest health evaluation, stewardship planning and active restoration on other King County Parks forestland sites, as appropriate

The adopted 2010 King County Open Space Plan recognizes the importance of active, sustainable stewardship of all DNRP forest lands. This Plan promotes an assessment and inventory of open space properties to determine the health of ecological, economic and social resources of these forested properties. This assessment, as well as subsequent forest stewardship plans and stewardship practices, will be done in accordance with the Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Working Forest Properties (August 2003), Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Ecological Lands (January 2004), and the 2010 King County Open Space Plan: Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas.

### **General characteristics of King County Parks’ forests:**

- Altered by past human activity (logging, development) and not managed for ecological purposes prior to County acquisition;
- Characterized by maturing stands of red alder, with few conifers, often with dense salmonberry understory, or by overstocked conifer stands with little diversity or understory and relatively low rates of carbon sequestration;
- Susceptible to insects, diseases, fire, and storm damage, with possible consequences to adjacent lands;
- Affected by encroaching urban development and increasing recreational use.

### **Program Goals**

- Conserve or restore the health and biological diversity of the forest ecosystem;
- Conserve or restore ecological and hydrological functions;
- Demonstrate environmentally-sound forest management and the importance of conservation of the county’s forestland;
- Provide opportunities for passive recreation and interpretive education for the public;
- Conserve or restore wildlife habitat for a diversity of species; especially sensitive, threatened, or rare species;
- Use any revenue produced through ecologically sustainable management of the site to support the stewardship of King County forestlands;
- Promote ongoing forestland protection through acquisition, conservation easements, purchase of development rights and other incentive programs.

## **Forest Assessment**

King County has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service, University of Washington and the Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC) on a two-year (2010-2012) American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) project called “Integrated Urban Forest Assessments: Green Jobs and Other Public Values” (IUFA). As a lead partner, King County DNRP will conduct a field assessment of all county-managed forests.

ARRA grant provides crucial funding to:

- a) Obtain baseline forest conditions data on all King County lands in order to determine ecosystem services values and forest restoration prioritization;
- b) Develop and implement rapid forest condition assessment protocols;
- c) Evaluate the feasibility of quantifying carbon storage and sequestration potential, and identify key sites for restoration to promote carbon sequestration;
- d) Develop and implement tools to evaluate how forested parklands and natural open spaces contribute to human health through physical activity;
- e) Develop best management practices for planning and managing volunteer stewardship programs;

## **Future Program Implementation**

- Develop forest stewardship plans based on information collected through the forest assessment and other factors such as the goals of the acquisition;
- Implement plans to accomplish forest restoration and improvement actions. This may include: ecological thinning, restoration harvests including appropriate reforestation measures, afforestation of appropriate non-forest areas, reforestation projects, noxious weed control, trail and trail-related facilities improvements, wildlife habitat enhancement, ecological restoration projects, carbon sequestration projects, and other projects necessary to obtain the stated goals of this program;
- Public outreach and education programs will accompany forest stewardship plans and implementation projects when necessary;
- Educate and engage environmental groups and other stakeholders in stewardship activities.

## **Reference Documents**

King County, 2003. King County Water and Land Resources Division Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Working Forest Properties. King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division. Seattle, Washington  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/2003/kcr985.pdf>

King County, 2004. King County Water and Land Resources Division Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Ecological Lands. King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division. Seattle, Washington.  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/2004/kcr1557.pdf>

King County, 2010 King County Parks and Recreation Division King County Open Space Plan: Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas. King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Parks and Recreation Division, Seattle, Washington  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/about/openspaceplan.aspx>