

Chapter 3: King County's Open Space System

The following sections present the Parks and Recreation Division's site classification system and standards, as well as the functional roles that the assets play in the larger system, providing context to understand how King County's open space sites each individually contribute to the county's open space goals. It also demonstrates how, as a whole, the system provides additional benefits for all King County residents, such as stormwater detention, water quality protection, conservation of fish and wildlife habitat corridors, and protection of scenic, cultural and historical features.

3.1. A 'Systems' Approach to Open Space

Prior generations invested wisely in preserving open space in King County. Over the past six decades, a vast system of recreation and natural areas, trails, and working resource lands has been created through the acquisition of sites and conservation easements and the development of recreation facilities.

King County takes a 'systems' approach to open space, which views open space assets from a landscape level and strategically focuses King County's open space acquisitions and capital improvements. Through such an approach, contiguous and complementary corridors within geographies, such as watersheds and sub-watersheds, increase the environmental and recreational value of open space lands, so that when taken together, all the elements of the system provide multiple benefits and mutual goals. While specific open space sites are managed according to individual site management plan, this Open Space Plan, as well as other source documents mentioned in Appendix II, helps ensure continuity across sites along larger geographic corridors, watersheds, and at the landscape level.

- OS-101 King County will focus its regional open space efforts on key corridors within the following: Snoqualmie/Skykomish Watershed; Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed; Green/Duwamish Watershed; White River Watershed; and Vashon-Maury Island.**
- OS-102 King County will focus its regional open space efforts on the following functional roles: recreation (active and passive), trails (regional and backcountry), natural area parks, forest lands, and multi-use sites.**
- OS-103 Future research, planning efforts and priorities for the regional open space system should focus on the protection and enhancement of the areas and categories identified in OS-101 and OS-102. This work should result in planning, acquisition, development and management plans and strategies for each system that coordinates recreation and public use with resource conservation.**
- OS-104 King County should consider adding significant natural areas not directly associated with the areas identified in OS-101 and OS-102 only if they include regionally significant features and improve the distribution of open space within the county.**
- OS-105 King County's efforts in aquatics will focus on the operation of the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center as a venue for regional, national and international competitive events and recreation programs.**
- OS-106 King County will work with a variety of public and private groups to identify and protect significant open space lands.**

3.2. Classification of King County's Open Space System

The King County's open space system includes lands and facilities with a variety of resources and functions. This classification system forms the framework for stewardship and management of open space sites, while balancing elements such as recreational opportunities, public access, and ecological values.

- OS-107** Open spaces in the King County system will be classified using a three level system; first, identifying the site as regional or local (rural or urban (UGA)); second, identifying its primary role within the system; and third, identifying use areas within a site.
- OS-108** New open spaces will be classified at the time of acquisition and through development of site management, site development or master plans.

3.2.1 Level One Classification: Regional/Local Open Space

Level one classifies a site as regional or local based on size, features, significance of ecological value, and who it serves. This classification guides future use, development, and preservation and is appropriately scaled to serve site's purposes and identified users. Local sites are further identified by location within a rural area or UGA.



Regional Open Space

- OS-109** Regional sites and facilities are generally large in size, have unique features or character, and/or are important as part of a larger system. These sites are destinations whose users come from distances and from multiple jurisdictions drawn by the type of site or facility (such as a regional trail), and/or that provide a unique or high level of activity, contain significant facilities, and/or have high ecological value.

Designating a site as regional establishes a presumption of county ownership and management responsibility. For those regional sites that lie within multiple jurisdictions, single custodianship is more appropriate, thus ensuring consistent management and cost efficiencies.

Some sites with both regional and local characteristics may attract a significant number of users from a city, and these sites may best be owned and managed by a city or cities. Cities and other agencies may negotiate with King County to own or develop partnerships for these regional sites. King County may also pursue cost sharing arrangements with cities, where appropriate.

- OS-110** King County should retain ownership of regional open space system assets, including sites that lie within both urban and rural areas and those that serve as “urban separators” providing a buffer along the Urban Growth Area boundary. However, partnerships and cost-sharing are encouraged to maximize opportunities and enhance levels of service.

Local Open Space

Local parks are often the informal meeting place for the surrounding neighborhood or community, providing a social function and a sense of community identity. Traditional local parks have active and passive recreation facilities including play areas, open grassy fields, developed ballfields, tennis or sport courts, small picnic areas and trails. Less developed local parks provide for conservation of local community character and natural resources and offer opportunities for passive recreation.

OS-111 Local sites and facilities are smaller in size and serve the close-to-home park and recreation needs of a community. These sites are predominantly used by nearby residents.

OS-112 King County will provide local sites in the rural area predominantly serving rural residents.

The designation of local facilities within unincorporated King County is used to guide future ownership responsibility. Consistent with the State Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), King County's role in the urban unincorporated area is the temporary stewardship of remaining local facilities in these areas until they annex to cities. Annexations were contemplated by the CPPs to be completed by 2012.

OS-113 King County will transfer local parks and other open space sites to the cities in which they are located. Transfer of local open space sites should be included as part of annexation or incorporation interlocal agreements which cover other services and facilities.

OS-114 King County will encourage and promote the transfer of local parks in the UGA to the cities in whose potential annexation area (PAA) they are located.

3.2.2 Level Two Classification: Role in the System

Level two classifies each site based on its primary intended purpose, while acknowledging that many sites may have multiple benefits and/or functions. This designation guides the site's use, development, restoration, management and conservation. These classifications are introduced here and will be discussed as they directly relate to the open space inventory in Section 3.4.

OS-115 All King County open space sites will be classified within the following categories: 1) recreation site, 2) trail, 3) natural area park, 4) working forest land, and 5) multi-use site.



1) Recreation Site

Active recreation sites support independent, group and team activities that require a significant level of development and operations. This includes scheduled sports activities and large scale special events and tournaments. They support high impact forms of recreation. Site development, maintenance and programming will reflect this level of developed facilities and intensive use.

OS-116 Recreation sites are dominated by recreation facilities. They receive a higher level of public use and are intended to accommodate developed areas for informal, organized or intense recreation. This may include either or both active and passive recreation activities.

Passive recreation sites require a lower level of development and provide areas for informal, self-directed activities for individuals and groups. Uses may also include less formal levels of sports fields (open playfields) or sport courts. These activities require some level of improvement or development to support them.

2) Trail

This category refers to regional trails, which comprise a countywide network of greenways that provide multi-use recreational opportunities and non-motorized transportation/mobility options. Regional trails

accommodate such uses as walking, jogging, cycling, horseback riding, and roller skating. Safety and enjoyment for trail users is important to the trail experience.

OS-117 Trails provide non-motorized recreational and transportation opportunities and may serve a variety of user types or may be designed for a more limited user group.

OS-118 Regional trail corridors serve multiple users and where possible should be designed to include separate surface areas to serve different modes of use. This includes a hard surface with shoulders along with a parallel or nearby soft surface path with adequate separation between them.

Regional trails are designated into two broad categories in order to ensure consistent development and mapping. Regional trails may be designated as “primary” regional trails or “secondary” regional trails based on the development characteristics of the trails and whether they are suitable for multiple uses. These designations help identify trail characteristics important to users.

OS-119 Regional trails may be designated as primary or secondary for mapping or other purposes based on the trail's development condition and its ability to be used for multiple purposes such as bicycling, walking, skating, jogging, horseback riding and other uses.

A “primary” regional trail is defined as a shared-use (multi-purpose) regionally-significant off-road facility that provides recreational opportunities and enhances regional mobility. Primary trails are facilities that meet regional trail development guidelines for size, grade, and other characteristics and are suitable for multi-purpose use (e.g., bicycling, hiking, jogging, skating, etc.). Some trails may also be appropriate for equestrian use.

A “secondary” regional trail is a regionally significant off-road facility that provides connections essential to the Regional Trails System, but which may not meet all of the criteria for shared-use, size, grade, surfacing, and other characteristics. While not being appropriate for all uses, secondary trails may provide important connections within the regional trails system. Some of these trails may be appropriate for equestrian use.

King County has a growing system of backcountry trails, which are natural surface trails located primarily within natural area parks, forest lands, and multi-use sites. Backcountry trails will be discussed further in Section 3.4.2.2 and are not part of the open space classification system.

3) Natural Area Park

In addition to their ecological value, natural area parks are characterized by low-impact recreation opportunities in a natural setting that require minimal levels of development.

OS-120 Natural area parks, also known as ecological lands, recognize areas valued for their important natural resource functions and character, including but not limited to benefiting and protecting ecosystems, air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, native biodiversity, trees and other natural or scenic resource purposes. They also contribute to climate change adaptation and should be managed to promote resiliency in the face of a changing climate. Improvements and enhancements will focus on keeping the site as a fully functioning natural ecosystem. There may be low impact public access and use of these sites and development of related supporting infrastructure.

- OS-121 Appropriate uses of natural area parks may include interpretive and educational programs, nature programs, and activities that emphasize the enjoyment and appreciation of the natural resources of the site and the outdoors.
- OS-122 Appropriate public access, use and management activities should be allowed on natural area parks as compatible with the natural resource values of these sites and consistent with the long-term quality of the site or its resources. Development will be limited to making the site available for public enjoyment in a manner consistent with site resources.
- OS-123 Natural area parks require individual management plans to determine how best to support public uses and to determine the enhancement and restoration efforts needed. A site management plan should be developed for natural area parks as outlined by the *Site Management Guidelines*.

4) Working Forest Land

King County's working forest lands were acquired for and are managed to balance sustainable timber production with conservation and restoration of resources and public use. Some forestry-related policies may also be appropriate to guide stewardship of forest lands on other open space sites.

- OS-124 Forest lands should be acquired to provide a buffer between commercial forestland and adjacent residential development, to protect forested lands from development, and to retain lands in active forestry.
- OS-125 Management goals for forest lands should include enhancing ecological benefits and services, demonstrating progressive forest management, providing passive recreation opportunities and generating revenue to facilitate sustainable management of those sites.
- OS-126 Forest lands shall be managed consistent with the Executive Order for Implementation of Forestry Policies (PUT 8-18) and the *Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Working Forest Properties (2003)*.
- OS-127 Forest Stewardship Plans shall be completed for each working forest site consistent with Public Rule 8-19-1, which outlines format and content requirements for such plans.
- OS-128 Balancing multiple management goals will be most effective taking into context the surrounding regional situation; therefore, sites should be managed through a cooperative approach with other public agencies, conservation organizations and private owners to retain a viable forested landscape.

5) Multi-Use Site

- OS-129 Multi-use sites include lands that may have areas of environmental value, but also may accommodate extensive public access and active and/or passive recreation opportunities.

Each portion of a multi-use site will be developed and managed to support the level of use or conservation appropriate to that portion of the site.

3.2.3 Level Three Classification: Use Areas Within Open Space Sites

King County at times applies an addition classification to specific open space sites, further describing use areas within the site.

- OS-130 Site use area designations establish areas of development, use, restoration or enhancement, and direct maintenance and stewardship. Their purpose is to organize and identify uses within a site.
- OS-131 The following categories may be used to identify the individual use areas within a site: 1) natural area, 2) active recreation area, 3) passive recreation area, 4) staging area, and 5) special management area.
- OS-132 “Natural area” designates areas of a site with natural character and natural resources. These areas may support little development and limited public access. Development may include basic improvements necessary for appropriate public access, restoration projects, trails, nature study and related outdoor activities.
- OS-133 “Active recreation area” designates areas with the highest level of development, use and programming. These areas include facilities to support organized athletics, such as athletic fields or sports courts, and areas for large scale group picnics, gatherings and special events.
- OS-134 “Passive recreation area” designates areas for informal, self-directed activities such as informal play, hiking, bicycling, jogging, and picnicking. These areas may include open fields, trails, children’s play equipment, and picnic sites.
- OS-135 “Staging area” designates a place for support facilities needed for public access and recreational use of a site. Facilities will generally be located in the least sensitive portions of a site, at the edge of a site or at previously disturbed locations within a site.
- OS-136 “Special management area” designates areas within a site identified for special management or recreational use. These areas may include wetland or forest management areas, habitat corridor enhancement areas, resource restoration areas, scenic corridors, cultural sites, and historical districts.



3.3 Open Space Standards

Park standards are traditionally used by jurisdictions as guidelines to evaluate park, recreation and other open space levels of service and needs. In the past, King County applied standards or guidelines; however, King County has transitioned to a provider of regional parks for passive and active recreation, regional trails, and forest lands, with limited local parks in the rural area. As such, King County's current and future open space systems do not lend themselves to measurement by traditional urban park standards.

Instead, King County serves a broader role that is best implemented by acquiring, developing and restoring large sites with features and facilities of regional importance. These sites are not distributed in terms of acres per thousand in discreet geographic areas, but by the geographic distribution of sites within the landscape characteristics that define the county. These sites are located based on the opportunities provided by the natural and physical processes that shaped the formation of the Puget Sound Basin. Location of open space sites is also influenced by past development patterns in the region. Growth of the system will be influenced by population growth trends and the expressed needs of county residents. Future acquisitions will be influenced by the historical acquisition and development of county open spaces in order to build upon the current inventory and address the county's landscape-level approach and emphasis on connectivity.

Local park standards in rural areas differ from urban standards. In rural areas, individual lots tend to be larger and provide more outdoor recreation space than in urban areas. The character of the rural area with large-sized lots and low residential densities result in the need for fewer individual sites in the rural area.

- OS-137** Park standards are guidelines to evaluate park, recreation and other open space needs, direct the planning, acquisition, development and management of the system and evaluate the impact of growth and development.
- OS-138** King County's goal for the regional open space system is to preserve the county's valuable open space and natural resources and provide a wide range of recreational opportunities to county residents. This goal is implemented based on the opportunity presented by the physical landscape and can be evaluated by degree of protection of a system and its resources, features and processes.
- OS-139** King County's goal for the Regional Trails System will be based on opportunities to expand the overall network for recreation and mobility and to increase connectivity to local trails and other open space sites.
- OS-140** King County's goal for location, size and distribution of regional active and multipurpose parks and facilities will be based on geographic distribution of sites, consideration of need, and public support and partnership opportunities.
- OS-141** King County shall consider equity in the development and acquisition of its open space system to help in the reduction of health disparities and in the promotion of environmental justice.
- OS-142** Local parks in the rural areas should be equitably distributed throughout the rural area. However, due to lower population densities, there will be fewer individual facilities, and users can expect to travel greater distances in the rural areas. Ideally, rural park facilities should be located near schools, rural communities or activity centers.

3.4 Functional Roles of King County's Open Space Assets

In the following section, the major functional groupings of the assets found in King County's open space system are presented. These categories identify sites by their purpose or relationship, similar characteristics, type of facilities, and/or program use, such as athletic field complexes, regional trails, or forestry. These sites are distributed throughout the county and linkages among them have a multiplier effect on the benefits provided by King County's open space system.

As noted in Section 3.2, King County first classifies its open space sites as either regional or local, which reflects the types of recreational opportunities and users that a site accommodates. King County's regional role is focused on the provision of large facilities that have a broad geographic usage and benefit. King County's local role is focused on serving the unincorporated rural areas of the county and providing smaller facilities that have a more narrow geographic usage or benefit.

More detailed information about King County's open space assets may be found in other county inventories, plans, reports and studies. These include individual park management and master plans, regional trail planning documents, and programmatic plans for King County's natural area parks and forest lands. See Appendix II for a list of source documents that contributed to this plan.

A full inventory of King County's open space assets is included in Section 3.5.

3.4.1 Recreation

King County provides both active and passive recreation opportunities.

For both regional and local sites, active recreation can be characterized by the prevalence of organized, scheduled activities and/or a variety of recreational uses, such as a highly developed athletic field complex with lights and extensive support facilities or large picnic shelters and areas for organized group picnics. This type of recreation accommodates intensive use that requires a significant amount of development to support the sites. Undeveloped or low development areas may exist on predominantly active recreation sites, providing additional benefits such as habitat value, environmental protection, and scenic value.

For both regional and local sites, passive recreation can be characterized by the prevalence of unscheduled, individually-oriented activities, such as informal play, hiking, walking, jogging, picnicking, and mountain biking. This type of recreation is less intensive and may require some improvement or development, which helps ensure appropriate public access. Examples of such improvements or development include picnic tables and park furniture, children's play equipment, signage, grass fields or open meadows, and backcountry trails.

Some examples of recreation sites in King County's inventory include:

Marymoor Park (regional)

From its beginning as a dairy farm and country estate to its current use as a regional hub for recreation, Marymoor Park has been recognized for its rich natural setting and outstanding location at the north end of Lake Sammamish. King County first acquired Marymoor Park in 1962 in an effort to save the land from development and establish a public park.

Today, the 640 acres that make up Marymoor Park offer a myriad of year-round recreational opportunities, which include natural and artificial athletic fields (soccer, baseball, tennis, cricket, lacrosse, and rugby), a velodrome, walking/biking trails, nature trails, a community garden, a rowing launch, an off-leash dog park, a climbing rock, a foot reflexology path, and a model airplane flying field. Marymoor is also home to outdoor summer concerts and movies and the historic Clise Mansion, which is often used for weddings and other events.

Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center (regional)

The Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center (WKCAC), a legacy venue of the 1990 Seattle Goodwill Games, is a 2,500-seat facility that maintains an active competition schedule, hosting more than 50 events annually. Recognized as one of the fastest pools in the country, it has been the site of Olympic Trials, top national and international competitions, and the Pacific Northwest's premiere swimming and diving events. In addition to the competitive events, WKCAC also offers open lap swims, swimming and diving training, and swimming lessons, and the recreational pool is an ideal space for family swims or to rent for private events. WKCAC also has a banquet hall available for weddings, parties, and company events.

Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park (regional)

With 36 miles of backcountry trails, forested hills, open meadows, and sweeping vistas, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park covers more than 3,000 acres and is the largest park in the King County Park system. It is an integral part of a publicly-owned greenway of natural lands that extends from Lake Washington to Snoqualmie Pass that was created in part through a partnership with state and local agencies and non-profit conservation organizations. Cougar Mountain provides an excellent example of King County's unique historical and cultural heritage while preserving important wildlife habitat and offering ample recreational opportunities.

The park features many diverse habitats, such as mature second growth forests, streams and wetlands, and cliffs, talus, and caves. There are sweeping views of the region, including vistas of Lake Sammamish, the Cascades, and Bellevue, Seattle and beyond. Hosts of birds are regularly seen at Cougar, along with wildlife such as black bear and bobcats. Over the years, Cougar Mountain has been home to Native Americans, miners, loggers, and even the US Army. Many of the remnants of the park's past uses can be observed throughout the park today.

Ravensdale Park (local)

Ravensdale Park is located in Rock Creek Valley, a few miles east of Maple Valley between Kent-Kangley Road and Ravensdale Way. The historic mining town of Ravensdale sits adjacent to the park's southeast corner, and the small community of Georgetown borders the north side of the park, across the road. The facilities in the park, consisting of four athletic fields, the Gracie Hansen Community Center, parking, and a picnic area and restrooms, serve many of the rural residents of Rock Creek Valley, as well as the city of Maple Valley. Aside from the Tahoma School District's fields, there are no public athletic fields in the valley other than those at Ravensdale Park.

See Section 3.5 for a full inventory of King County's recreation sites.

3.4.2 Trails

King County's open space inventory offers a variety of trail-based recreational opportunities which occur largely on a countywide network of shared-use paths or within passive recreation sites, natural area parks, forest lands, and multi-use sites.

Regional Trails in King County

Burke-Gilman Trail
Cedar River Trail
East Lake Sammamish Trail
Foothills Trail
Green River Trail
Green-to-Cedar Rivers Trail
Interurban Trail
Issaquah-Preston Trail
Lake Youngs Trail
Marymoor Connector Trail
Preston-Snoqualmie Trail
Redmond Ridge Trails
Sammamish River Trail
Snoqualmie Valley Trail
Soos Creek Trail
Tolt Pipeline Trail

3.4.2.1 Regional Trails System

Through the Regional Trails System, King County is home to one of the largest non-motorized trail systems in the country. King County and numerous city jurisdictions collectively offer approximately 300 miles of shared-use (multi-purpose) paved and unpaved trails connecting urban areas of the county with rural valleys and mountains, linking communities along the way. The King County government stewards some 175 miles of the overall network, and several cities and other jurisdictions are responsible for the remaining portions of the current network.

Regional trails are non-motorized facilities and may be paved or soft-surface (gravel) or a combination of both. Regional trails provide both recreational opportunities and mobility options, connecting users with dedicated non-motorized routes to parks, work, school and other destinations. Trails can be used for walking, jogging, cycling, skating, and horseback riding, where appropriate.

Local trails, which may include safe routes to schools, local municipal paths, or official neighborhood connectors, are locally important facilities but are not part of the Regional

Trails System. Connections from the local trails that feed into the Regional Trails System are coordinated between King County and the relevant local jurisdictions.

Regional trails run through residential neighborhoods, commercial and business districts, and industrial areas, as well as farmlands, river valleys, lake shores, foothills, and dense forests. Routes use abandoned railroad grades, water pipeline and power line corridors, linear parks, river levees and other special features. Wooded trail corridors also provide routes for wildlife migration throughout the county. Soos Creek Trail, for example, parallels one of the largest wetland corridors in King County; this stream and wetland system provide habitat for hundreds of species of animals.

Several regional trails cross county boundaries to the north and south and connect with similar trails in Snohomish and Pierce counties and to the east with the cross-state John Wayne Pioneer Trail and Iron Horse State Park.

For more than 30 years, King County has played a leadership role in developing the overall vision of a countywide Regional Trails System, as well as in maintaining the regional trails that fall under its direct jurisdiction. King County works with other county agencies, local jurisdictions and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to develop the overall trails network and ensure connectivity throughout the county. King County also collaborates with community groups and trail users, such as Cascade Bicycle Club and Friends of Soos Creek Park, who help maintain trails and advocate for the vision of the Regional Trails System.

See Section 3.5 for a full inventory of King County's regional trails.

3.4.2.2 Backcountry Trails

Many local, state, federal, and private open space sites in the county offer hundreds of miles of natural surface “backcountry” trails that allow users to directly experience the county’s vast and varying natural beauty found in its forests, meadows, and marine and fresh water shorelines. These trails are intended for passive recreation and users of backcountry trails are generally looking for a natural experience with forests and trees, streams and wetlands, and birds and wildlife.

King County’s Parks and Recreation Division stewards a growing network of more than 200 miles of backcountry trails distributed among 26 sites, and other landowners allowing backcountry trails include USDA Forest Service, various state agencies, private landholders, and some cities.

Backcountry trails are designed to take advantage of the natural terrain. These trails are generally narrow paths, but may also include existing maintenance roads and old logging roads. Backcountry trails are characterized by natural surface trails that cross a variety of landscapes and terrain and at varying lengths and distances. These trails feature loops, single track trails and trail connections between parks and other natural areas. In many cases, backcountry trails have evolved from ‘social trails’, or networks informally created by local hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers.

The different backcountry trail uses include hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, running and nature observation. Designated allowable uses may differ by trail and site, though at present, most backcountry trails in King County’s jurisdiction are shared by all users. Backcountry trails are managed in a manner that protects natural resources, ensures public safety, and requires minimal maintenance.

Many of the natural area parks, multi-use sites, and forest lands acquired by King County over the past 25 years contain existing networks of ‘social trails’, which were originally created by local hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers. King County formalized and improved some of these trails, which now serve as the backbone of its backcountry trail network.

Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, purchased in the mid 1980s, was the first backcountry trail network developed and managed by King County in partnership with hiking and equestrian trail users. Other major backcountry trail sites in King County’s inventory were once private timber holdings (Taylor Mountain Forest, Grand Ridge Park) or Washington State Department of Natural Resources Trust Lands (Soaring Eagle, Island Center Forest).

King County collaborates with other major public and private land holders of adjacent sites with backcountry trails to ensure connections and improve access to these trails. King County also relies upon trail users and community groups to help preserve lands for trails and open space, maintain and improve existing trails, and construct new trails to meet the growing demand for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking. King County partners with many trail user and advocacy groups including the Washington Trails Association, Evergreen Mountain Biking Alliance, Issaquah Alps Trails Club, Backcountry Horsemen – Tahoma Chapter, Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association, Friends of Rock Creek Valley, King County Executive Horse Council, Vashon-Maury Island Horse Association and the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust.

Backcountry Trails Sites

Big Bend Natural Area
Big Finn Hill Park
Black Diamond Natural Area
Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park
Cougar Mt. - Squak Mt. - Tiger Mt. Corridor
Dockton Forest
Duthie Hill Park
Grand Ridge Park
Green River Natural Area
Island Center Forest
Landsburg Reach Natural Area
Maple Ridge Highlands Open Space
Maury Island Marine Park
McGarvey Park Open Space
Mitchell Hill Forest
Moss Lake Natural Area
Pinnacle Peak Park
Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area
Ravensdale Retreat Natural Area
Ring Hill Forest
Rock Creek Natural Area
Shinglemill Creek
Soaring Eagle Regional Park
Spring Lake - Lake Desire Park
Taylor Mountain Forest
Tolt MacDonald Park

3.4.3 Natural Area Parks

A natural area park is characterized by a site's uniqueness or diversity of native vegetation, which provides fish and wildlife habitat and embodies the beauty and character of the region's landscape. These lands often support wetlands, streams and rivers, riparian areas, small lakes and ponds, and other vulnerable or rare habitats and are managed to conserve and enhance ecological value including native biodiversity. Appropriate public access and use may be allowed, and some improvement and development may be needed to support such recreational uses.

Some examples of natural area parks in King County's inventory include:

Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area (regional)

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area is located along the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River, about nine miles east of the city of North Bend. At nearly 658 acres, it contains primarily forested lands and wetlands, and its tributary streams provide important habitat for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. River access for hand-boat launching and fishing is also possible from the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area. Adjacent state lands provide thousands of acres of additional passive recreational opportunities.

Cold Creek Natural Area (regional)

Located near Woodinville and Redmond, Coal Creek Natural Area and the adjacent Bassett Pond Natural Area create a contiguous open space site of 250 acres. This area contains extensive wetland systems, numerous springs, and one of the highest quality salmon-bearing streams in the Big Bear Creek drainage basin. It also provides high quality habitat for birds and other terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and features a peat deposit of state significance.

Cavanaugh Pond Natural Area (regional)

The 57-acre Cavanaugh Pond Natural Area is located just east of Renton on the Cedar River. Cavanaugh Pond is the only Class 1 wetland in the Cedar River Valley, meaning that it is of the highest quality of wetland ecosystems. There are stands of alder and cottonwoods on site, and current restoration projects are working to control invasive vegetation and establish native forest. Cavanaugh Pond supports spawning sockeye salmon in the fall and provides year-round habitat for other fish and wildlife species. Recreation at Cavanaugh Pond is primarily walking and nature observation.

See Section 3.5 for a full inventory of King County's Natural Area Parks.

3.4.4 Forest Lands

Forests are an important part of the character, environment, and economy that make King County a unique place to work, live, and play. Yet, development pressure in King County has resulted in a rapid decline in forested acreage. Since the values forests provide are best achieved at the landscape level, forest viability quickly erodes when fragmentation by conversion to residential development or other land uses occurs.

Forest lands contribute significant benefits to any open space system. They have important ecological value for the retention and infiltration of stormwater, the elimination of runoff and replenishment of groundwater, as a source of water for rivers and streams that support fish populations, and for providing fish and wildlife habitat, improving air quality, and sequestering and storing carbon dioxide. Forests provide economic value, both as a source of revenue generated from harvesting timber and other forest products and as a recreation destination.

As the regional government, King County has undertaken a multi-faceted approach to forestry that encourages the conservation of forest land and economically viable forestry, and as such, is working cooperatively across agency and landowner boundaries to retain a viable forested landscape.

King County has acquired some properties in its open space inventory that should be managed as working forest lands. The lands were acquired to preserve contiguous tracts of forested property in the Rural Forest Focus Areas and the Forest Production District to retain lands in active forestry, protect areas from development, and/or provide a buffer between commercial forestland and adjacent residential development.

King County manages its working forest properties to sustain and enhance environmental benefits, demonstrate progressive forest management and research, and provide revenue for a self-supported management program. When managing working forests, King County balances sustainable timber production with conservation and restoration of resources, and with public use. Managing this balance will be most effective over time if done in the context of the surrounding regional landscape of each working forestland. Success of this forestland conservation vision will depend on a cooperative approach with other public agencies, conservation organizations and private owners to retain a viable forested landscape.

King County also stewards almost 17,000 acres of forest lands that are part of other open space sites, such as those classified as multi-use or natural area parks. A majority of this acreage is located near the urban/rural boundary and experiences heavy public use. These forest lands are managed to conserve public open space, serve as a buffer along the urban growth boundary, enhance wildlife habitat, and provide recreational opportunities such as hiking and trail running, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Prior to county ownership, neither the working forest lands nor the forest lands on other open space sites were managed for conservation purposes. They tend to be low-elevation, second- or third-growth forests altered by previous human activity and impacted by adjacent development. The forests conditions are dominated by monoculture and/or overstocked stands and contain minimal understory vegetation. These site conditions make them susceptible to insects, diseases, fire and storm damage and negatively affect the forests' ecological values, scenic qualities, and recreational enjoyment.

Complementing the working forests owned by the Parks and Recreation Division, King County holds forest conservation easements on more than 141,000 acres of land, including those secured as part of the transfer of development rights program.

Key policies and goals for managing working forests in the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks inventory are outlined in the *King County Comprehensive Plan*, Executive Order for

the Implementation of Forest Policies (PUT 8-18), the *Programmatic Plan for Management of King County-owned Forest Properties* (2003), and the *Farm and Forest Report* (1996).

Examples of sites that include forest lands are included throughout this chapter.

Some examples of working forests in King County's inventory include:

Taylor Mountain Forest (regional)

Acquired by King County in 1997, Taylor Mountain Forest sits on the southwest side of Taylor Mountain, near the community of Hobart in eastern King County. It is a critical habitat link between large tracts of public land that include the City of Seattle's Cedar River Watershed and the state's Tiger Mountain State Forest. From red alder and black cottonwood to salmonberry and lady fern, Taylor Mountain features a mosaic of forest stands and wetland areas. The park's 75 wetlands provide high quality habitat for fish and wildlife and important flood storage capacity. Taylor Mountain Forest is also home to two major tributaries of Issaquah Creek, Holder Creek and Carey Creek, which provide more than five miles of spawning and rearing habitat for salmon. This 1,822-acre site also features a 30-mile backcountry trail network for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Island Center Forest (regional)

Located in the center of Vashon Island, Island Center Forest is a 369-acre working forest and nature preserve that is managed to demonstrate sustainable forest management while protecting and restoring the health of the site's habitat. Island Center Forest features various forest stands, Mukai Pond, and Meadowlake wetlands, and forms the headwaters of Judd Creek. Island Center Forest provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including more than 70 bird species. There are more than nine miles of backcountry trails used by hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers, and its wetlands are popular for bird watching and wildlife photography. A diverse site with a unique history, Island Center Forest is also used for scientific research.

Some examples of forest conservation easements held by King County include:

Snoqualmie Tree Farm

In 2004, King County executed one of the nation's largest forest conservation agreements to protect almost 90,000 acres in east King County from development and ensure the area will always remain green to the crest of the Cascade Mountains. This historic agreement more than tripled the amount of open space preserved by the county over the past 35 years.

Upper Green River Watershed Forest

In 2008, Plum Creek and King County finalized a conservation agreement to transfer development rights for 45,500 acres of timberland in the Upper Green River Watershed in southeast King County. King County received a conservation easement that precludes conversion to housing development. Plum Creek will continue to manage the land as a working forest and received 514 development credits that allow for increased density of development in urban areas.

Ames Lake Forest

In 2002, King County acquired this 435-acre forest conservation easement using a number of different acquisition tools. Ames Lake Forest is adjacent to King County's 550-acre Tolt-MacDonald Park and contains forested upland above the Snoqualmie River, as well as backcountry trails used for mountain biking and hiking. The easement restricts development and outlines terms for forest practices on site.

See Section 3.5 for a full inventory of King County's working forest lands and conservation easements.

3.4.5 Multi-Use Sites

Generally regional in scope, a multi-use site is characterized by a site's ability to accommodate extensive use while also preserving a site's ecological value by managing for appropriate public access. Recreation on these sites can be either passive or active, but more frequently feature low-impact recreation, including walking, hiking, jogging, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Grand Ridge Park (regional)

Grand Ridge Park is 1,200 acres of forested lands rising 1,100 feet in elevation above Issaquah and Lake Sammamish. Established to provide natural resource protection and passive recreation along the edge of urban and rural living, the park is located between Mitchell Hill Forest to the east and the Issaquah Highlands residential development to the west. The steep slope above the North Fork of Issaquah Creek is covered by stands of large second growth Douglas fir trees.

A special feature of Grand Ridge is the groves of western redcedar trees and sword ferns in the central part of the ridge. Some of the redcedars are over five feet in diameter. The red alder forests and wetlands in the north end of the park act as the headwaters for salmon-bearing Canyon Creek, which flows into the Snoqualmie Watershed, and the North Fork of Issaquah Creek, which flows west into Lake Sammamish.

Grand Ridge has a seven-mile backcountry trail network that supports hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Soaring Eagle Park (regional)

Named in 2001 by a second grader at Samantha Smith Elementary School, Soaring Eagle Regional Park is 600 acres of mature forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Formerly Washington State school trust land known as Section 36, Soaring Eagle sits above Patterson Creek on the edge of the Sammamish Plateau along the western flank of the Snoqualmie River Valley. This naturally beautiful area provides sanctuary for black bear, bobcat, black tail deer and more than 40 species of birds. There are 12 miles of backcountry trails that are regularly used by hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Thirty acres of this site is slated for transfer to the City of Sammamish in the future.

Maple Ridge Highlands Open Space (regional)

Maple Ridge Highlands is a 587-acre forested park located in southern King County near the communities of Ravensdale and Black Diamond. The park is made up of two sections, which are divided by the city of Kent's municipal watershed. Locally the northern portion is referred to as Danville-Georgetown and the southern portion is known as Henry's Ridge. This site provides passive recreation opportunities including hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding and is an important corridor providing a buffer between urban and rural areas.

See Section 3.5 for a full inventory of King County's multi-use sites.

3.5 Current Open Space Inventory

Today, the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Parks and Recreation Division stewards of more than 26,000 acres of open space, which is comprised of 200 parks, 175 miles of regional trails, and more than 200 miles of backcountry trails. In addition, King County holds nearly 145,000 acres of conservation easements.

King County's open space system is an ever-evolving inventory of public land that has experienced considerable change since its beginnings in the early twentieth century. Many of the first parks in the system were donated to the county, and early park facility development was spurred on by the construction of community centers by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Many of the initial county park sites and facilities are now owned and operated by cities that have expanded or incorporated in the ensuing years.

Over the years, King County has expanded, shifted and refined its role in the provision of park and recreation services to become an open space system that is focused on regional active and passive parks and recreation amenities, natural area parks, regional trails, forest lands, and local parks in rural unincorporated areas of the county. In response to the State Growth Management Act, this shift called for local parks located in the urban area to be transferred to cities. Since 2002, more than 60 parks and pools comprising nearly 1,600 acres of local park sites have been transferred to cities, among them, the transfer of the King County Fairgrounds to the City of Enumclaw.

Moreover, thousands of acres of open space have been added to the inventory, mainly in the form of new sites, additions to existing sites, and through conservation easements. These acquisitions reflect the shift toward regional natural area parks, regional trails and forest lands.

In addition, King County has looked beyond fee acquisition for the preservation of open space and has utilized a number of tools to obtain conservation easements that provide conservation values and benefits without the need for county ownership. Since 2004, King County has added nearly 140,000 acres of conservation easements, which today total nearly 145,000 acres.

The chart on the following pages shows the inventory of King County's open space system, identifying each site by its primary role and classification as described in Section 3.2 Classification of the Open Space Plan. The classification system provides a method to describe the role of each site in the system and provides direction for its use, management, development or restoration and enhancement.

This inventory list can be expected to change, but provides a snapshot of today's system of open space lands.

Open Space Inventory

NATURAL AREA PARKS BY REGIONAL SYSTEM

Snoqualmie/Skykomish Watershed

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Carnation Marsh Natural Area	68 + (12 E)
Chinook Bend Natural Area	71 + (3 E)
Fall City Natural Area	49 + (29 E)
Griffin Creek Natural Area	63
Little Si Natural Area	29
Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area	658
Moss Lake Natural Area	372
Nowak Natural Area	8
Patterson Creek Natural Area	205
Raging River Natural Area	51
Stillwater Natural Area	45 + (101 E)
Tollgate Farm	161
Tolt River Natural Area	270

Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Bassett Pond Natural Area	32
Belmondo Reach Natural Area	16
Big Bend Natural Area	101
BN Peninsula Natural Area	27
Carey Creek Natural Area	(10 E)
Cavanaugh Pond Natural Area	57
Cedar Grove Natural Area	75
Cedar Grove Road Natural Area	3
Cold Creek Natural Area	130
Crow Marsh Natural Area	21+ (100 E)
Dorre Don Reach Natural Area	94+ (1 E)
Evans Creek Natural Area	38
Evans Crest Natural Area	30
Hazel Wolf Wetland Natural Area	(116 E)
Issaquah Creek Natural Area	49
Jones Reach Natural Area	3
Kathryn C. Lewis Natural Area	10
Landsburg Reach Natural Area	50

Log Cabin Reach Natural Area	118
Lower Bear Creek Natural Area	11
Lower Lions Reach Natural Area	3
Lower Peterson Creek Corridor Natural Area	67
May Valley 164th Natural Area	4
Middle Bear Creek Natural Area	66 + (25 E)
Middle Evans Creek Natural Area	(38 E)
Middle Issaquah Creek Natural Area	49
Mouth Of Taylor Reach Natural Area	12
Paradise Lake Natural Area	123 + (31 E)
Peterson Lake Natural Area	145
Ravensdale Retreat Natural Area	138
Ricardi Reach Natural Area	10
Rock Creek Natural Area	144
Upper Bear Creek Natural Area	22 + (16 E)
Wetland 14 Natural Area	41
Wetland 79 Natural Area	7

Green/Duwamish Watershed

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Auburn Narrows Natural Area	105
Bass Lake Complex Natural Area	235
Big Spring/Newaukum Creek Natural Area	77 +(21 E)
Black Diamond Natural Area	637 + (511 E)
Cemetery Reach Natural Area	46
Covington Natural Area	56
Flaming Geyser Natural Area	73
Green River Natural Area	998
Hatchery Natural Area	24
Horsehead Bend Natural Area	35
Jenkins Creek Natural Area	7
Kanaskat Natural Area	179
Lower Newaukum Creek Natural Area	34
Neely Bridge Natural Area	28

Open Space Inventory *continued*

Green/Duwamish Watershed Natural Area Parks *continued*

Porter Levee Natural Area	56
Shadow Lake Natural Area	(59 E)

White River Watershed

Sites designated in other classifications

Vashon-Maury Island

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Christiansen Pond Natural Area	(19 E)
Dockton Natural Area	44
Ellis Creek Natural Area	3
Inspiration Point Natural Area	6 + (7 E)
Island Center Forest Natural Area	81
Manzanita Natural Area	2
Marjorie R. Stanley Natural Area	18
Neill Point Natural Area	53
Northilla Beach Natural Area	6
Paradise Valley Natural Area	5 + (39 E)
Piner Point Natural Area	8
Point Heyer Natural Area	19
Raabs Lagoon Natural Area	12
Shinglemill Creek Natural Area	(46 E)

REGIONAL TRAILS & TRAIL SITES

Trail Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
BNSF Trail Corridor	(264 E)
Burke Gilman Trail	34
Cedar River Trail	145
Landsburg Kanaskat Trail Site	21
Cedar River to Lake Sammamish Trail Site	22 + (2 E)
Fred V. Habenicht Rotary Park	4
Landsburg Trailhead	38
East Lake Sammamish Trail	124
Foothills Trail ²	65 + (1.87)
Green River Trail	22
Cecil Moses Memorial Park	3
Green to Cedar Trail	130

Interurban Trail ³	
Issaquah Preston Trail ³	
Lake Youngs Trail ²	35
Lake Youngs Park	5
Lake Youngs Trailhead ²	7
Preston Snoqualmie Trail	96
Redmond Ridge Trail ³	
Redmond Watershed Addition Park	2
Redmond Watershed Trail Site	1
Sammamish River Trail	130
Snoqualmie Valley Trail	437
Soos Creek Trail and Park	730
Soos Creek To Lake Youngs Trail Site	0.46
Tolt Pipeline Trail	(142 E)
West Sammamish River Trail	56 + (7 E)

OTHER TRAIL CORRIDORS & SITES

Trail Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Klahanie Trail Site	(8 E)
Boxley Creek Site	147
East Plateau Trail Site	27 + (3 E)
Green River Trail Site - Kent ³	
Green River Trail Site - Tukwila ³	
Pipeline Number 5 Trail Site	(1 E)
PSE Trail Site ³	

REGIONAL RECREATION & MULTI-USE PARKS

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Big Finn Hill Park	219
Canyon Creek Site	(27 E)
Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park	3101 + (5 E)
Cougar/Squak Corridor	431
Duthie Hill Park	120
Grand Ridge Park	1285 + (1 E)

Juanita Woodlands Park (including Juanita Triangle)	36
Maple Ridge Highlands Open Space	588
Marymoor Bellevue Ballfield Complex ²	20
Marymoor Park	613
Maurry Island Marine Park	321
McGarvey Park Open Space	401 + (2 E)
Petrovitsky Park	88
Pinnacle Peak Park	256
Preston Athletic Fields	13
Preston Mill	23
Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area	1859
Soaring Eagle Regional Park	627
Spring Lake/Lake Desire Park	386
Squak Mt/Tiger Mt Corridor	266
Steve Cox Memorial Park	10
Three Forks Park	267 + (1 E)
Tolt River - John MacDonald Park	528

WORKING FOREST SITES

Forest Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Ames Lake Forest	(425 E)
Dockton Forest	19
Dockton Forest Lease Site ²	(43.42 E)
Island Center Forest	288
Mitchell Hill Connector Forest	426
Patterson Creek Preserve Forest	(243 E)
Preston Ridge Forest	190
Ring Hill Forest	321
Snoqualmie Forest	(89,596 E)
Sugarloaf Mountain Forest	284
Taylor Mountain Forest	1845
Uplands Forest	(506 E)
Upper Green River Watershed Forest	(45,051 E)
Upper Raging River Forest	(5733 E)

LOCAL RURAL PARKS

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Cedar Downs Site	78
Coalfield Park	20
Cottage Lake Park	21
Dockton Park	21
Duvall Park	25
Fall City Park	28
Fall City Park West	33
Flaming Geyser Park ¹	104.34
Gold Creek Park	35 + (3 E)
Hollywood Hills Equestrian Park	7
Hyde Lake Park	25
Instebo Park	1
Kathryn Taylor Equestrian Park	26
Kentlake Athletic Fields ²	12
Lake Francis Park	10
Lake Joy Park	1
Levdansky Park	17
Maple Valley Heights Park	3 + (10 E)
May Valley Park	54
Mirrormont Park	11
Northshore Athletic Fields	19
Novelty Hill Little League Fields	7
Preston Park	1
Quigley Park	1
Ravenhill Open Space	26
Ravensdale Park	42
Sixty Acres Park	90
Tanner Landing Park	41
Whitney Bridge Park	30

Open Space Inventory *continued*

LOCAL PARKS IN URBAN GROWTH AREA

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Bingaman Pond Natural Area	17 + (1 E)
Boulevard Lane Park	30
Bryn Mawr Park	5
Camelot Park	18
Five Mile Lake Park	25
Hamm Creek Natural Area	4
Klahanie Park	64
Lake Desire 2 Natural Area	1
Lake Geneva Park	19
Lakewood Park	29
Maplewood Park	45
Maplewood Heights Park	19
North Green River Park	101
North Shorewood Park	6
Redmond Ridge Park	10
Renton Park	19
Sierra Heights Park (including Honeydew)	8
Skyway Park	23
South County Ballfields	21
Southern Heights Park (40 year agreement)	3
White Center Heights Park	6
White Center Pond Natural Area ²	9

LOCAL PARKS IN RECENTLY ANNEXED AREAS

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
132nd Square Park	10
Arbor Lake Park	9
East Norway Hill Park	26
Edith Moulton Park	27
Green Tree Park	1
Hazel Valley Park	3
Hilltop Park	7

Juanita Heights Park	3
Kingsgate Park	7
North Meridian Park	35
Park Orchard Park	6
Puget Sound Park	5
Salmon Creek Park	5
Windsor Vista Park	5

LOCAL PARKS IN CITIES

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Bridle Crest Trail Site	2
May Creek Parcels - County	47
Sunset Playfield ¹	14

POOLS

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center Site	11
Vashon Pool	(0.62 E)
Cottage Lake Pool (within Cottage Lake Park)	

SHOP AND UTILITY SITES

Park Name	Acres Owned + (E=Acres of Easement)
Cougar Mountain Wellsite 2	1
Renton Shop Site ²	
Soos Creek Shop Complex	6
Sunset Shop Site	3
Vashon Shop Site ²	

¹ Site is owned by King County and managed by others

² Site is managed by King County by Agreement

³ King County has oversight agreement/responsibility