



How is public access defined?

Public access refers to the ability of the general public to reach, touch, and enjoy the water's edge, to travel on the waters of the state, and to view the water and the shoreline from adjacent locations. The King County Shoreline Master Program only manages and plans for access to shorelines on public lands in the unincorporated area.

What types of shoreline facilities are considered public access and how many existing facilities are there?

Examples of shoreline public access facilities include:

- Public docks/piers;
- Parks;
- Trails;
- Swimming beaches;
- Camping and picnic areas;
- Trailheads and parking areas (associated with shoreline trails);
- Carry-in boat launches and trailer boat launches;
- Informal public access sites on King County's parks and natural resource lands;
- Private property where owners have committed to providing public access to shorelines as part of enrolling in King County's Public Benefit Rating System;

Public access can refer to both formal and informal uses of the shoreline. Formal public access sites are those managed specifically for recreational use by the public, and informal public access sites include those where access is not managed for recreation by a public agency.

Existing Public Access Facilities in King County's Unincorporated Shoreline Jurisdiction

Type of Public Access and Quantity

- Public docks/piers: 4
- Carry-in boat launches: 30
- Trailer boat launches: 28
- Public camping and/or picnic areas: 15
- Swimming beaches: 2
- PBRS parcels providing public Access: 45 (824 acres)
- Trail head: 1
- Parking lots: 18

Parks with Public Access and Acreage

- King County Parks: 2,040 acres
- King County Natural Resource Lands: 2,115 acres
- District: 32 acres
- State: 1,620 acres
- Federal: 8,825 acres
- Other: 12 acres

Miles of Trails per Owner

- King County Parks: 32 miles
- State: 2 miles
- Federal: 25 miles
- Private: 1 miles

Land Parcels with Informal Public Access and Quantity

- Parks - visual access only: 11 sites
- Parks - physical access: 22 sites
- Natural Lands visual access only: 6 parcels
- Natural Lands physical access: 67 parcels

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Are there areas where we should pursue new public access to shorelines?

Public access is a key goal in managing shorelines. Areas that meet the following criteria are good candidates for shoreline recreational use.

1. The public access point minimizes impacts to ecologically critical areas.
2. The public access point does not present a public safety risk.
3. King County site management could minimize effects on adjacent properties, including effects on adjacent land uses, effects on the original size and condition of adjacent lots, impacts to environmental conditions, and effects associated with site access (such as trails and parking).
4. Use of or access to the site is in accordance with guidance on public use contained in King County property or site management guidance and funding sources associated with King County ownerships.

As an additional consideration, the availability of legal parking or ability to provide legal parking nearby (by the County or otherwise) can be considered. Parking is not a requirement for shoreline public access, as some sites will be accessed by means other than automobiles (bus, bicycle, or other means).

King County used the following criteria to develop a draft map showing shoreline areas where there may be a gap in public access.

1. A notable geographic absence in public access opportunities.
2. A notable absence in type of public access opportunities:
 - Visual
 - Physical
 - Type of facility/opportunity
3. Informal access and use of a site in the gap area has been identified, confirming need.
4. General population in proximity and/or demand for access at the site

The results of a draft analysis of shoreline public access gaps and opportunities are presented in Volume 2, Map 9.

Opportunities for new public access could include expanding facilities at existing formal access sites, improving informal access sites, and creating new access in areas such as public street ends along the shoreline. There are 136 known public street ends at or within sight of the waterfront within the shoreline jurisdiction.

