

# Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Master Plan

June 1, 2021

## June 2021 Project Update

### Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Master Plan Process

The Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Master Plan will address the transition of former commercial timber harvest land into a public park. The planning process will evaluate strategies for restoration and protection of natural areas, land management for public access and recreation, and relevant economic benefits and tradeoffs. Various conservation, recreation, restoration, and other land uses will be evaluated during the planning process while considering community preferences, financial feasibility, easements and legal agreements, and land suitability.

Most importantly—we will work together to determine a shared vision for the future of the park!

### Building on Past Efforts

In response to a proposal by Pope Resources to develop a housing “Legacy Project,” a partnership of organizations, groups, and individuals gathered to form the *Kitsap Forest & Bay Coalition* in 2007, focused on conserving the forest timberland that Pope had planned to divest. Forterra joined the coalition to help provide funding to purchase the land and, by 2017, 3,500 acres was acquired and preserved as Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park.

To enhance its message, the *Kitsap Forest & Bay Coalition* engaged Jeffrey Veregge, an award-winning Native American Artist & Writer from the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, to create a logo that symbolized the campaign. The logo uses Salish design elements, green above symbolizing the forest, blue below symbolizing the bay, the shape of a saw blade representing the history of logging and the sawmill, and saw teeth shaped as bird heads symbolizing wildlife habitat.



### Upcoming Events

#### *Ecological Restoration Panel Q&A*

Our team has engaged with various local land management, forestry, and restoration ecology experts to address questions and concerns regarding park restoration. We’ll hear from the panelists this Thursday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 3:30 pm (PDT). The Ecological Restoration Panel will include representatives from Kitsap County and Pierce County Parks and Recreation, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, Western Washington University, Northwest Natural Resources Group, Great Peninsula Conservancy, and Forterra. This meeting is virtual, open to the public, and we hope to see you there! Please visit this website to register for the meeting and to find out more information about the Master Plan project: [Port Gamble Forest Master Plan](#).

#### *Public Open House*

Following our inaugural open house meeting, the team is ready to present information collected to date regarding the challenges and opportunities considered in developing the park master plan. The forum will be interactive, as we want to learn how the community feels about where the project is going. Stay tuned for more details but mark your calendars for June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm (PDT)!

## Current Work

The master planning effort is ongoing while a few specific, already approved projects within the park are in various stages of detailed design, engineering, or permitting.

### *Mountain Bike Ride Park*

In collaboration with Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (EMBA), the Kitsap County Parks Department has developed the design (modeled after the Duthie Hills Ride Park in Issaquah, WA) and maintenance plan of a new mountain bike ride park. The 177-acre Ride Park will feature over 10 miles of new trails for riders of all skill levels, along with a skills course intended for mountain bike training and introduction to the sport. Combined with the existing 65 miles of mountain bike trails throughout the park, the Ride Park will be a leading destination for mountain bike users in the region. Permitting is wrapping up to start construction soon!

The Ride Park project also includes plans for a new parking lot and trailhead amenities, with a new access road from the town of Port Gamble, in coordination with Rayonier (formerly Pope Resources). Construction for the parking lot is expected to begin later this year, and the development of the access road will likely start in 2022.

### *Stottlemeyer Trailhead and the Sound to Olympics Trail*



The Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail is a regional multi-use, non-motorized trail that will connect the Olympic Discovery Trail with the eastern side of Puget Sound through both Kingston and Bainbridge Island. Six miles of the STO will extend through the park and the route also serves as a link in a larger state-wide trail that extends from Idaho to the Pacific Coast. The Kitsap County Public Works Department has selected a team to begin the design of the first few sections of this trail, connecting the Ride Park to the town of Port Gamble.

In support of the STO through the park, the Kitsap County Parks Department will be building a parking lot to serve the trailhead off Stottlemeyer Road. It will include equestrian parking to support horseback rider access. Construction on this trailhead parking lot will also begin in the summer.

The Public Works Department selected Parametrix to lead this effort based upon the experience of the assembled team, history of successful coordination with project stakeholders, and delivery of quality engineering designs. That design effort has kicked off and is led by Public Works and the County's Non-Motorized Transportation Committee - we'll keep you posted on the progress.

## Planning for the Future

Kitsap County Parks Department is developing a Master Plan for the Park with Fischer Bouma Partnership as the lead design firm, supported by Anchor QEA and Highland Economics, and OAC Services, the project manager. An established steering committee also provides guidance and recommendations for the Master Plan and represents the many interested partner organizations involved. Those committee members are Mark Shorn, Don Willott, and Kathryn Thompson.

Guiding the visioning and program development of the Master Plan, the PGFHP Vision and Goals have been developed based on previous efforts of the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Stewardship Committee, the Kitsap Forest & Bay Coalition, and the greater community. Funding for the project was secured by the Public Facilities District.



### PROPOSED VISION

Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park is focused on the quality of its diverse environment, wildlife, user experience and recreation opportunities. The Park is managed to ensure ecological, educational and economic sustainability by attracting local and regional visitors while bringing compatible economic benefits to the area.

### PROPOSED GOALS



#### WILDLIFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT & REGENERATION

To promote sensitive stewardship of park lands and trails, especially from previously altered landscapes to improve habitat and regenerate natural systems for a wide range of wildlife.



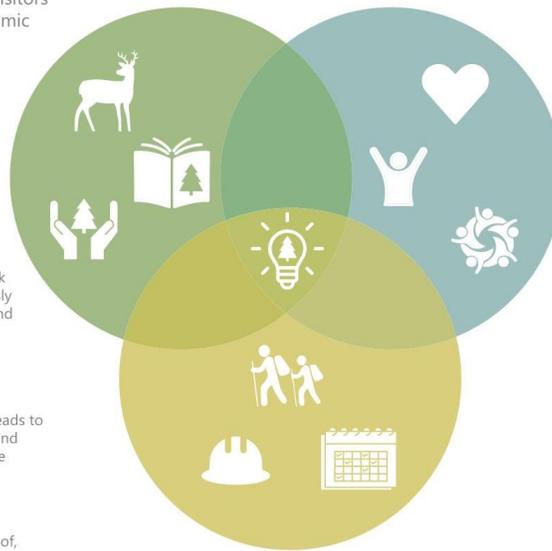
#### CONSERVATION ETHIC

To promote outdoor recreation, which leads to people placing value on natural places and believing it is important to steward these places for future generations.



#### EDUCATION

To provide access to, and interpretation of, park lands that have the array of wildlife, vegetation, history, and other assets which give the public a greater understanding of the importance of nature in our lives.



### QUALITY OF LIFE

To improve quality of life for those in the community by increasing the amount of open space, particularly those with recreation opportunities.



### PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

To provide access to natural areas, trails, and outdoor recreation facilities, which has been shown to support improved physical and emotional health of users.



### ACCESS & INCLUSION

To create a park and policies that support community values and provide equitable access to all people, with an active effort to ensure diverse participation in advancing the park's vision and goals.



### NEW VENUES FOR ACTIVE RECREATION

To develop new facilities targeting specific events and activities providing a benefit to the local and regional community.



### ECONOMIC VITALITY

To realize the economic benefit of increased recreation and conservation-related jobs while providing job stability and security.



### PREDICTABILITY

To plan for the long-term to assure that development and programming will move forward in a way that is predictable, reliable and in keeping with community goals and aspirations.

## Inaugural Open House Recap

Nearly 150 people participated in the first of four planned open house meetings addressing the Master Plan for Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park. Commissioner Rob Gelder warmly welcomed participants and complimented the community on the robust partnerships that allowed Kitsap County to acquire 3,500 acres of commercial timberland for the park. Alex Wisniewski, the new Kitsap County Parks Director, introduced and provided a general description of the project.

The project goals and schedule were reviewed, and the desired outcomes for the meeting were presented. The overarching goal is to create an inspired yet achievable master plan to convert 3,500 acres of commercial timberland into a heritage park that balances recreation and natural resource conservation. This first meeting introduced the project, described the legal, environmental, and policy planning context, and encouraged the engagement of diverse groups in co-creating and stewarding a long-term vision. The 12-month planning process and opportunities for engagement via meetings, committees, surveys, and the website were presented.

The presenters summarized the park history, opportunities, constraints, guiding principles and goals, and vision of land conservation that began 10 years ago that resulted in the acquisition of the land. There were short presentations from Anchor, Fischer Bouma, and Highland Economics related to land use, environmental, and economics. Participants were reminded that the acquisition agreement allows for one additional timber harvest across a portion of the park. This allowed the County to purchase more land as permanent open space at a lower cost.



The meeting attendees were placed in smaller break-out groups where people discussed the goals, questions, and ideas. Toward the end of the session, the entire group came back to gather and participate in a survey with results displayed as word clouds. A diversity of opinions was represented and indicated that recreational trails and habitat are treasured resources.

### What's Happening?

Our team has received a LOT of feedback from the inaugural open house event, and we're still collecting feedback! Right now, we're in the visioning and program development phase, where we collect input on the challenges and opportunities that will feed into the next step of spatial planning. The team has been focused on targeted engagement with the various partner organizations and representatives centered around the project goals, which continues today. Join the next open house event to learn about the information we've gathered!



### Get Involved!

*Help us with our planning efforts!*

To register for updates and upcoming public meetings, please visit <http://portgambleforestpark.com/>

It's not too late to provide input on what might be considered in the master plan either! We want to hear your feedback, so please check out our survey and let us know what you think: [take the survey!](#)

### *Volunteer on a Trail Crew*

When walking/biking through the Port Gamble Forest, have you ever wondered who removed that tree that fell over the trail, or fixed that muddy spot in the trail, or cut back the scotch broom? Port Gamble Forest has a dedicated volunteer-based trail crew that has worked closely with Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, North Kitsap Trails Association, and Back Country Horsemen to fund, build, and maintain the trails in the park. They meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month at 9:00 am, usually at the Bayview (SR104) trailhead. For more information, check out the Port Gamble Trails page on Facebook. (<https://www.facebook.com/portgambletrails/>)

### *Port Gamble Forest Stewardship Committee*

The Port Gamble Forest Stewardship Committee has been integral in the development of the Port Gamble Forest. Comprised of volunteers representing various user groups/environmental advocates, the committee has helped fundraising efforts to acquire the Western and Eastern blocks, develop and maintain trails, coordinate timber harvest/user interface, and advocate for park policy. The meetings and membership are open to the public and occur on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month.

For more information, please contact Mark Schorn at [mschorn@live.com](mailto:mschorn@live.com)



Photo by Don Willott