

Chapter Nine Recreation

Introduction

Recreational opportunities in Whatcom County are abundant. The County's geography and its natural features contribute greatly to opportunities for recreation. Bounded by sea and forested mountains, with wide open vistas, and vibrant flowing rivers, streams, and tranquil lakes, Whatcom County is a perfect spot for residents and visitors alike who seek a wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences as well as entrepreneurs looking for a great place to locate a business, attract employees, and grow recreation based and other types of businesses.

Recreation is a vital component to the rich quality of life enjoyed by many Whatcom County residents and visitors. Whether formal or informal, public or private, indoor or outdoor, Whatcom County has become a regional destination for many recreational enthusiasts, and has attracted many new residents who now call Whatcom County "home". This chapter explores many of the key issues involved in maintaining the high quality of Whatcom County's existing recreational services and facilities, and also outlines strategies in the form of goals and policies that support the provision of expanded recreational services and facilities.

Purpose

~~This~~The primary focus of this chapter provides is on goals and policies that support ~~for~~ park and recreation facilities designed to serve Whatcom County as a whole. It does not focus extensively on open space resource areas which are addressed under land use. Nor does it address neighborhood parks which are also discussed under land use in the urban growth area section. This chapter also adopts by ~~reference the entire~~Whatcom County's first Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan (CPROS Plan) was adopted in 1989 as part of Whatcom County's pre-growth management comprehensive land use plan. The CPROS Plan is regularly updated by the County Parks and Recreation Department in accordance with Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office requirements to retain eligibility for certain funding programs. This chapter relies on the CPROS Plan which includes ~~background—historical information on Whatcom County's communities; on Parks and Recreation public participation processes; it outlines,~~ standards for park and trail development, recreation, and senior services, programs ~~and an action plan contains policies that support implementation of for providing~~ park and recreation facilitiesfacility goals. The goals and policies in this plan ~~chapter repeat—echo most many of the goals and~~ policies found in the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan. In addition, this chapter also ~~adopts, by reference,~~ the entire~~Whatcom County~~ Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan and the 1991 Natural Heritage Plan also support and inform many of the goals and policies of this chapter.

1
2 **Background Summary**
3

4 Recreation has always played an important role in the quality of life for Whatcom
5 County residents. Choices to recreate abound with three national wilderness areas,
6 a national forest, one national park, two national recreation areas, three state parks
7 and multitude of county and local parks and trails all located within the County.

8
9 Recreation provides health and social benefits while contributing to the economics
10 of the community supporting tourism, hospitality businesses, equipment
11 manufacturers, and retailers, and area outfitters. Recreational opportunities and
12 abundance of parks and trails is often used as a recruitment tool by area
13 businesses and institutions.

14
15 Access to recreation areas provides significant economic benefits through tourism,
16 and retail sales, and business retention and recruitment. In Whatcom County,
17 recreation expenditures annually amount to \$705 million in spending. This spending
18 supports over 6,500 jobs in a variety of industries. The recreation industry itself
19 supports 279 businesses employing 3,728 persons with \$508 million in revenues.
20 County residents spend an average of 78.1 days a year recreating compared to the
21 state average of 59 days annually (Source: 2015: Economic Contribution of
22 Outdoor Recreation to Whatcom County, Earth Economics).

23
24 The continued availability of diverse and numerous recreational opportunities will
25 play a key role in ensuring a high quality of life for future generations in Whatcom
26 County.

27
28 **Process**
29

30 In August 1989, Whatcom County adopted a its first Comprehensive Parks and
31 Recreation Open Space Plan, and subsequently this plan was adopted as an part of
32 official the Optional Recreation element Element of the county's County's
33 comprehensive plan. Subsequently, in July 1991, the Whatcom County Council
34 adopted Preserving a Way of Life: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County. In
35 1991, the Whatcom County Council approved a resolution that endorsed
36 "Preserving a Way of Life: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County" This plan
37 has some overlap with the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan
38 but. The Natural Heritage Plan focuses primarily on a vision that supports
39 preservation and conservation of on preserving and protecting natural areas in the
40 county without necessarily assuming they the need to be infor public ownership.
41 The Natural Heritage Plan was adopted by resolution with reference to specific
42 goals; several goals were modified and others deferred to future consideration. In
43 preparation for this plan, the Parks Commission recommended some updated
44 policies from the 1989 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan.
45 These have been incorporated here and in the parks plan. This plan chapter
46 specifically adopts references the updated Comprehensive Park and Recreation

1 Open Space (CPROS) Plan, while utilizing the Natural Heritage Plan, and the
2 Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, all as a background documents.

3
4 Existing Parks and Recreation facilities and services are responsive to an increasing
5 resident population, and must also serve an increasing visitor population as
6 Whatcom County increasingly becomes a regional and world class recreation
7 destination.

8
9 In regards to existing Whatcom County Park system capacity, draft 2014 CPROS
10 Plan, states, that: "In 2012, the Whatcom County Park system had over 732,000
11 visitations to parks and trails, and 186,000 visitations in senior services. In
12 general, most park areas and facilities are currently meeting visitor needs. Many
13 parks have additional capacity or with improvements can accommodate greater
14 user numbers without compromising the visitor's experience or the parks
15 resources."

16
17 A joint planning effort between Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Department
18 and Whatcom County Planning & Development Services Department ensures that
19 Parks & Recreation capital facilities improvement projects that are identified in the
20 CPROS Plan, are consistent with Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Parks &
21 Recreation Level of Service (LOS) standards (adopted in WCCP Chapter 4), along
22 with a six year financing plan for improvement projects, including senior centers,
23 addressed as part of the WCCP Capital Facilities Element.

24
25 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Department plays an essential role in
26 providing recreation, senior services, and facilities to county residents and visitors,
27 and in the long range planning that is needed to accommodate future parks, senior
28 centers, recreation, and open space needs in the county during the next 20 years of
29 growth that this chapter of the WCCP seeks to guide and support. The CPROS Plan
30 is a separate document from the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (WCCP),
31 and is established for distinct but overlapping purposes. The CPROS Plan should be
32 read alongside this chapter of the WCCP, as it informs many of the Issues, Goals,
33 and Policies that are outlined in the following pages of this chapter.

34
35 **GMA Goals, and County-Wide Planning Policies, and Visioning Community**
36 **Value Statements**

37
38 This chapter addresses supports fulfillment of several Growth Management Act
39 (GMA) goals, including: Goal #9, Open Space and Recreation, and GMA Goal #12,
40 Public Facilities and Services, and Goal # 13, Historic Preservation by directly by
41 addressing parks, senior centers and recreation ~~needs services and facility needs.~~
42 Habitat and other open space ~~needs resources are also addressed, briefly considered~~
43 in this chapter, but are more completely, addressed elsewhere in this plan in the
44 land use and environment chapters of this plan, in Chapter 2 and Chapter 11,
45 respectively. Similarly, this chapter addresses Section H, Open Space/Greenbelt
46 Corridors of the County-wide Planning Policies (CWPP). It also partially addresses

1 CWPP Policy K (1) by identifying needs for recreation facilities, including senior
2 centers. ~~This chapter also addresses value statement #1 under Open Space and~~
3 ~~Recreation which encourages retention/development of recreational opportunities~~
4 ~~along with other open space categories.~~

6 **GMA Requirements**

8 ~~The Growth Management Act specifies recreation as an optional element of the~~
9 ~~comprehensive plan. This chapter supports implementation of Growth Management~~
10 ~~Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) provisions that encourage counties to adopt an optional~~
11 ~~“Recreation Element” under RCW 36.70A.080(1)(c). This chapter is coordinated~~
12 ~~and consistent with other GMA Comprehensive Plan elements such as the Land Use~~
13 ~~element which includes Open Space & Environment; Capital Facilities (including~~
14 ~~senior centers); Transportation; and Economics. It is responsive to, informs, and~~
15 ~~relies on the Whatcom County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (CPROS Plan).~~

17 **Background Summary**

19 ~~Leisure time is a relatively new concept to Americans. It was not too long ago that~~
20 ~~the average American worked 48 hours per week and children had daily chores.~~
21 ~~Today more leisure time is generally available.~~

23 ~~However, too much leisure time can be a problem if not channeled wisely. Our~~
24 ~~rapidly changing lifestyles have brought about many frustrations which frequently~~
25 ~~manifest in juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse and other misuses of~~
26 ~~leisure time. For the younger generation, especially those who find it difficult to~~
27 ~~obtain gainful and meaningful employment, it is a real challenge to make wise use~~
28 ~~of leisure time. If Americans are provided with opportunities to use leisure time in~~
29 ~~socially and personally satisfying ways, many problems can be avoided. Recreation~~
30 ~~not only provides a diversion and refreshment from the pace of our complex lives,~~
31 ~~but it also enriches our mental health.~~

33 ~~With the existence of two National Forests, the North Cascades National Park,~~
34 ~~Washington State Department of Natural Resources land, three state parks and~~
35 ~~land held by private timber companies within Whatcom County, it is hard to believe~~
36 ~~there is an additional need for public open space.~~

38 ~~However, most public land cited above is located in the eastern two-thirds of the~~
39 ~~county and little public land is available near the population centers. With the~~
40 ~~county now undergoing a major shift towards urban development, the public is~~
41 ~~becoming aware of the lost opportunities for close-in public open space. Added to~~
42 ~~this concern is the fact that while Whatcom County has more than 130 miles of~~
43 ~~saltwater shoreline, only about 6% is currently accessible to the public. Nearly~~
44 ~~everyday the opportunity for additional public access is reduced as land is~~
45 ~~developed.~~

~~In years past, the primary responsibility of Whatcom County Department of Parks and Recreation has been to offer recreation programs and manage park facilities. With the need to preserve and manage open space, the department could soon become a steward of the land.~~

~~It is with the need to preserve open space and shoreline access and to expand recreation services for a growing population that the recreation chapter of the comprehensive plan is adopted, as the county has undergone considerable population growth and new concerns for the environment and livability have become prominent.~~

Issues, Goals, and Policies

The following policies and design standards apply to the acquisition and/or development of ~~day-use~~regional parks, multi-use camping areas, trail systems, specialized facilities, senior centers, and shoreline access areas ~~and recreation resource management areas~~ (~~Maps Maps 22 and 239-1 and 9-2~~).

~~Day Use Parks~~Regional Parks

~~Day use parks are large~~ Regional parks include day use parks that are designed to offer a wide range of passive day use activities. They often contain facilities or recreation opportunities that county residents are willing to travel some distance to reach. In most cases, they are located in the rural areas of the county, although there are some exceptions. Often a feature will dominate the site. Examples are the farmstead at Hovander Park, the nature interpretative areas at Tennant Lake and the lake shoreline at Samish Park.

Goal 9A: Address county-wide recreational needs by adequate provision of day-useregional parks.

Policy 9A-1: Because the cities currently provide the highly developed urban parks, the ~~county's~~County's role should be to provide rural day useregional parks that are centered around a unique feature or recreation opportunity.

Policy 9A-2: Because of the unique features of the site, location within the county is not ~~too~~as important ~~although they must have~~as good road access.

Policy 9A-3: Development standards will vary according to the use intended. For the intensive use park areas, all facilities and improvements should be built to a high standard and designed to be easily maintained.

- 1 Policy 9A-4: All parks must be designed to create a minimal impact upon
2 surrounding property and to the site itself.
3
- 4 Policy 9A-5: ~~Day-use~~Regional parks should be designed with one entrance
5 and control point so that entrance fees can be charged.
6
- 7 Policy 9A-6: If possible, ~~day-use~~regional parks should be located on ~~an~~
8 existing or proposed trail routes and ideally should enhance
9 countywide trail system connectivity.
10
- 11 Policy 9A-7: The parks should be designed to accommodate a range of age
12 groups, accessibility, and interests.
13
- 14 Policy 9A-8: The ~~county~~County should only accept sites that meet the above
15 standards.
16

17 Multi Use Camping Parks

18
19 Multi-use camping parks provide camping opportunities in addition to other uses.
20 Lighthouse Marine Park and Silver Lake Park fit this category. ~~The type of camping~~
21 ~~can vary from primitive camp sites to the full-service RV site.~~ It should be
22 recognized that much of the camping activity use will be from non-county residents.
23

24 **Goal 9B: Provide multi-use camping parks to serve county resident**
25 **needs as well as provide a tourism draw.**

- 26
27 Policy 9B-1: All the policy statements and design standards for ~~day~~
28 ~~use~~regional parks should also apply to multi-use camping parks.
29
- 30 Policy 9B-2: Because camping parks will attract many non-county residents,
31 they should be recognized for their tourism value but at the
32 same time county residents should not subsidize the cost of
33 camping. Camping fees should pay for camp-site expenses.
34
- 35 Policy 9B-3: A wide variety of camping types should be offered including
36 primitive sites, tent sites, full-service RV sites and group
37 camping areas.
38
- 39 Policy 9B-4: The camping areas should be physically separated from the
40 other parts of the park with the ability to be closed off during
41 winter months.
42
- 43 Policy 9B-5: Most large camping areas should be designed to a high standard
44 with full-service hookups, flush toilets and rest rooms, showers,
45 laundry, and other support facilities.
46

1 Policy 9B-6: Future Park development should consider the financial ability of
2 the ~~county~~County, and should focus on existing park lands
3 before considering further acquisition.
4

5 Trail Systems

6
7 Trail systems include unpaved foot trails, paved and unpaved multi-use trails, and
8 paved bike paths. Multi-use trails are designed for two or more of the following
9 activities: bicycle riding, mountain bike riding, walking and hiking, and horseback
10 riding. Unpaved foot paths are primarily for walking and hiking, although a
11 compacted gravel surface is suitable for mountain bikes as well.
12

13 While essentially all trails are suitable for foot traffic, bicyclists and horseback riders
14 find many trails not adequately maintained or built to appropriate construction
15 standards. Poorly built or maintained trails are less enjoyable to travel and can
16 induce safety hazards and damage to the environment. User conflicts may occur
17 between all three groups. Horseback riders often express concern with mountain
18 bikes that suddenly appear at a bend or rise in the trail, spooking the animal and
19 endangering both riders. Hikers complain about similar problems, but are generally
20 more concerned with personal safety and damage to trails caused by the two rider
21 groups. Motorized (ORV) use of trails is generally incompatible with non-motorized
22 use for similar reasons. Noise and safety issues and environmental impacts
23 preclude motorbikes from most of the trails identified in this plan. Solutions to user
24 conflicts require some separation of use by designating specific loops or segments
25 for particular users. Hikers comprise the largest user group, but tend to have the
26 lowest impact on the trail. Although all trails are essentially available for hiking,
27 trails that are particularly narrow, steep, or fragile, and those subject to heavy
28 pedestrian use should be designated for hikers only. In addition, trails, loops, or
29 alternate routes should be designated for ~~the~~ horseback and mountain bike rider
30 groups where conditions warrant.
31

32 Properly built and maintained old logging roads in reforested areas provide some of
33 the best riding trails since they are much wider than a footpath for easier passing,
34 and their base is usually firm and less prone to damage. It is not enough, however,
35 to simply direct horses and bikes to old road grades. They are often seeking the
36 same views and aesthetic experience that hikers wish. Some trails will therefore
37 need to be improved to a higher standard to accommodate the use. On shared
38 routes, appropriate design elements need to be implemented to avoid conflicts and
39 to enhance the trail experience for each group.
40

41 The difficulties in obtaining continuous access through private lands is a major issue
42 in trail development that can discourage ~~citizens~~residents, planners, and
43 administrators from pursuing what might otherwise be a worthwhile project.
44 Access is usually obtained by way of gift or purchase of an easement or parcel of
45 land containing the trail corridor. On private timber land, access is normally
46 permitted in most areas on an informal basis with the understanding that closures

1 | may occur due to logging, fire danger, or other circumstances. Horse club
2 | volunteers have been successful in obtaining permission to construct new trails on
3 | private and state timber land with and without formal easements.
4 |

5 | In developed areas of the county where multiple properties are involved, the task
6 | becomes more complicated since lack of participation by one landowner can
7 | obstruct the trail. Concerns range from vandalism, fire and nuisances to liability
8 | and invasion of privacy. In most cases, trail design, careful facility planning, and
9 | public education will help avoid these problems. An existing statute (RCW
10 | 4.24.210) ~~already offers some protects protections to~~ landowners from liability
11 | where they allow public access to their land without charge. Where access is
12 | denied, ~~an alternate needs alternatives need~~ to be considered.
13 |

14 | ~~A friendly alternative, the "handshake agreement," has been experimented with in
15 | some areas and found to be successful in most instances (see "Pathways Across
16 | America," Spring 1989 newsletter, by the American Hiking Society and the National
17 | Park Service). Here, a reluctant landowner is approached with the plan and asked
18 | to allow public access for an indefinite period, while retaining the right to close the
19 | trail at any time if problems should occur. The trail is closed once a year to help
20 | avoid problems with adverse possession. The experience has been that once a trail
21 | is developed, impacts to the landowner are found to be minimal or nonexistent,
22 | initial fears are dispelled and the trail remains open indefinitely. Rarely are the
23 | agreements withdrawn. Later, the land owner may find it advantageous to grant an
24 | easement or sell the property for permanent public use, thereby reducing property
25 | taxes.~~
26 |

27 | In 2001, Whatcom County formed the Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory
28 | Committee. The Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
29 | developed the Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. ~~The Whatcom County
30 | Council adopted the Plan, by resolution, on May 6, 2003.~~ The plan makes
31 | recommendations with regard to facility type, primary and secondary routes, design
32 | guidelines, safety and education. Additionally the plan includes strategies for
33 | implementation that addresses priority projects, acquisition, development,
34 | maintenance, and administration of bicycle routes. The Whatcom County Pedestrian
35 | and Bicycle Plan provides a basis for many of the goals and policies of this chapter
36 | and is considered an important background/reference document that contributes to
37 | the Recreation optional element of Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan.~~This
38 | plan specifically adopts and incorporates the most recent Whatcom County Bicycle
39 | Plan.~~
40 |

41 | **Goal 9C: Expand outdoor recreation opportunities for county**
42 | **residents by providing enjoyable trails for hiking,**
43 | **horseback riding, bicycling, walking, boating, and other**
44 | **trail activities in a safe environment.**
45 |

- 1 Policy 9C-1: Trails should be interesting and attractive. Trails which follow
2 natural water courses, pass significant natural resources,
3 traverse interesting scenery or cross areas of outstanding
4 beauty provide interesting and enjoyable experiences for the
5 trail user.
6
- 7 Policy 9C-2: ~~Trails should be looped and interconnected to provide a variety~~
8 ~~of trail lengths and destinations. Incorporate existing and~~
9 ~~proposed trails into a comprehensive and integrated system of~~
10 ~~looped and interconnected trails which give users a wide choice~~
11 ~~of routes and environments.~~
12
- 13 Policy 9C-3: Trails should link other recreational uses in the Foothills area
14 and connect to existing trail systems in the National Forest and
15 state land.
16
- 17 Policy 9C-4: The wet climate of Whatcom County may preclude extensive
18 multi-use of some trails or require seasonal limitations ~~on their~~
19 ~~use~~. Trail routes should take into account soil conditions, steep
20 slopes, surface drainage and other physical limitations that
21 could impact the areas from over-use.
22
- 23 Policy 9C-5: Bicycle trails should provide opportunities for ~~the~~ recreational
24 riders, as well as ~~the~~ touring and commuter bicyclists.
25
- 26 Policy 9C-6: Bicycle routes and paths should minimize the conflicts between
27 motorists and bicyclists.
28
- 29 Policy 9C-7: Hiking trails should have a variety of lengths and grades for ~~the~~
30 casual strollers as well as ~~the~~ serious hikers and when
31 practicable, be accessible.
32
- 33 Policy 9C-8: Hiking trails should reach areas of natural beauty with the
34 purpose of permitting ~~the~~ hikers to seek areas of solitude and
35 get away from the built environment, especially noise and other
36 pollution.
37
- 38 Policy 9C-9: Equestrian trails should be ~~accessible~~ usable most of the year.
39 Some equestrian trails should be close-in to the urban areas.
40
- 41 Policy 9C-10: Adequate parking, signage, trash receptacles, and toilet facilities
42 should be provided at all major trailheads.
43

- 1 Policy 9C-11: Where public funds are used to construct or maintain dikes,
2 levees, or revetments, public access should be encouraged for
3 trail purposes, where appropriate.
- 4 Policy 9C-12: Water trails for non-motorized boats should be identified with
5 provisions made for parking, launching areas, and places of
6 interest along the water route where boats can land.
7
- 8 Policy 9C-13: Work toward partnering with other agencies and the public to
9 accomplish recreational goals.
10
- 11 Policy 9C-14: Investigate multi-solutions that will accommodate several
12 county goals, such as recreation, water retention, and flood
13 prevention measures, utilizing a similar piece of property.
14
- 15 Policy 9C-15: Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails, and other
16 transportation rights-of-way is encouraged when not in conflict
17 with goals to protect wildlife, public health, and safety.
18
- 19 Policy 9C-16: ~~Implement the goals, policies and recommendations of the~~
20 ~~latest Whatcom County Bicycle Plan and continue to update the~~
21 ~~plan as needs and conditions change.~~ Implement the goals,
22 policies and recommendations of the latest Whatcom County
23 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan that are consistent with this plan
24 and within the County's fiscal capabilities.
25
- 26 Policy 9C-17: Promote the integration of trails within subdivisions, planned
27 unit developments, and other development proposals that
28 provide internal circulation and connect to nearby recreational
29 opportunities and ideally enhance countywide trail system
30 connectivity.
31
- 32 Policy 9C-18: Acquisition of and planning for trail corridors should be
33 ~~encourages~~ encouraged as new subdivisions and development
34 occurs, if the trail has been identified in a park, trail, open
35 space, or other plan adopted by Whatcom County.
36
- 37 Policy 9C-19: Continue to update the trails inventory to identify all designated
38 and non-designated trails in the county.
39
- 40 Policy 9C-20: Work with private property owners and developers to acquire
41 trail corridors or easements. Monitor land development
42 proposals to ensure that existing trails are not lost. Continue to
43 support the County's long range parks and recreation vision of
44 developing a county-wide trail network, while respecting
45 property rights, and working collaboratively with willing

landowners to acquire easements or property for public trails, when opportunities exist.

Policy 9C-21: Provide non-motorized access to regional recreational and outstanding scenic areas in the county.

Policy 9C-22: Reduce conflicts between the various trail user groups and provide appropriate signage.

Policy 9C-23: Provide bike lanes or wide shoulders where appropriate in conjunction with major road improvements.

Policy 9C-24: Coast Millennium Trail - Continue to develop trail corridors, particularly off-road segments such as the airport connector and shoreline access.

Policy 9C-25: Hertz North Lake Whatcom Trail Extension - Develop and implement a plan to either acquire Rights of Way for a trail corridor along the abandoned RR R/W between the existing North Shore Trail and Blue Canyon Road or consider an alternative route to link these points.

Policy 9C-26: Bay to Baker Trail - Develop and implement a plan to secure Rights of Way for trail segments along the abandoned RR R/W in conjunction with the Nooksack River Trail to achieve a contiguous trail system between communities and recreation areas.

Policy 9C-27: Nooksack River Trail - Develop and implement a plan to acquire Rights of Way for a trail corridor and picnic areas along the Nooksack River between Ferndale and Glacier, to provide recreation opportunities, inter-community transportation, and tourism development.

Policy 9C-28: Continue to collaborate with other organizations, groups, or individuals consistent with the goals identified in the Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County and the Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.

Specialized Recreation Areas

Specialized areas include nature interpretative centers and small park sites, including those related to Urban Growth Areas, Rural Communities, and neighborhood developments.

- 1 **Goal 9D: Provide specialized recreation areas taking advantage of**
2 **unique opportunities to serve both county residents and**
3 **visitors.**
- 4 Policy 9D-1: Because these facilities are unique, adopt specific standards for
5 each one individually.
6
- 7 Policy 9D-2: Explore need for ~~neighborhood~~ community parks as
8 undeveloped areas of county increase in density.
9
- 10 Policy 9D-3: Encourage development of sport field complexes to meet the
11 needs of organized recreation activities, using public and private
12 partnerships where possible.
13
- 14 Policy 9D-4: Promote the integration of recreational and open space
15 opportunities in subarea planning, subdivisions, and other
16 development proposals.
17
- 18 Policy 9D-5: The dedication and acquisition of open space and recreation
19 opportunities should be encouraged as new subdivisions and
20 development occurs.
21

22 Shoreline Access Areas

23

24 Shoreline access areas include saltwater beaches and bluffs, rivers and streams and
25 lake frontage. Access may be via a public park area, a street end, or just a trail
26 easement. Access includes both physical access to the water and visual access
27 from points above ~~(Map 23)~~. An excellent source of information about existing and
28 proposed recreational opportunities featuring shorelines is the Whatcom County
29 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (CPROS Plan). The CPROS
30 Plan contains detailed information and maps which identify waterfront and shoreline
31 recreational opportunities on both public and private shorelines across the county.
32

- 33 **Goal 9E: Recognize the shoreline as one of Whatcom County's**
34 **unique assets and provide adequate physical and visual**
35 **access for present and future generations.**
- 36
- 37 Policy 9E-1: As economically feasible, acquire for public use as much of the
38 saltwater shoreline as possible. Public and private resources
39 should be explored to further this policy. A reasonable goal is to
40 acquire for public access a minimum of 15% of the saltwater
41 shoreline and adjacent tidelands in Whatcom County.
42
- 43 Policy 9E-2: Continue to review the Nooksack River Plan (Jones and Jones,
44 1973) and implement those elements which are beneficial,
45 appropriate, and economically feasible.
46

1 Policy 9E-3: Provide pedestrian, interpretative, and small boat access sites
2 for a diversity of public shoreline.

3 ~~Policy 9E-4: When the County acquires property for flood storage or fish and~~
4 ~~wildlife purposes, the County should consider secondary use for~~
5 ~~park and open space purposes.~~

7 ~~Recreation Resource Management Areas~~

8
9 ~~These open space areas are identified as large undeveloped parcels of land having~~
10 ~~unique or attractive natural features. Often they will also contain extensive trail~~
11 ~~systems. They lack distinct boundaries and are intended to emphasize open space~~
12 ~~and recreation values. The land may or may not be in public ownership. It is not~~
13 ~~intended for Whatcom County to acquire these parcels of land but rather to secure~~
14 ~~conservation and access easements to ensure that public access is maintained and~~
15 ~~unique scenic areas preserved.~~

16
17 ~~Goal 9F: Identify large undeveloped parcels of land with unique or~~
18 ~~attractive features and with the cooperation/coordination~~
19 ~~of public agencies and private landowners provide~~
20 ~~conservation opportunities and, where possible, public~~
21 ~~access.~~

22
23 ~~Policy 9F-1: Thoroughly study each of the Recreation Resource Management~~
24 ~~Areas (RRMA) identified in the Comprehensive Park and~~
25 ~~Recreation Open Space Plan to identify their unique features,~~
26 ~~scenic quality and open space value. Studies should then be~~
27 ~~made to determine how these qualities can be preserved for~~
28 ~~future generations.~~

29
30 ~~Policy 9F-2: Trail systems within the RRMA's should be used for non-~~
31 ~~motorized trail activities only.~~

32
33 ~~Policy 9F-3: While Whatcom County will probably not own the land within the~~
34 ~~RRMA's, it should take on a major management role to ensure~~
35 ~~that its recreation and open space value is maintained.~~

36
37 ~~Policy 9F-4: A special advisory committee should be formed of users and~~
38 ~~land owners of the RRMA's. Their role will be to inventory, plan~~
39 ~~and prepare recommendations regarding the management of~~
40 ~~these areas.~~

41 42 **Off Road Vehicle Riding Areas**

43
44 Recognizing that it is better to regulate and manage where off-road vehicle (ORV)
45 riding may occur, the county attempted twice to develop an area for exclusive ORV

1 use. Both proposals were met with controversy and not pursued. However, ORV
2 riding still occurs and in many instances on land not suitable for that use and
3 without the owner's permission. The end result is that ORV riding is impacting
4 neighbors and the land in which riding occurs, and is in general creating a problem
5 for less intrusive recreational activities.

6
7 **Goal 9G: Coordinate with the DNR to provide ORV opportunities.**

8
9 Policy 9G-1: Recognizing that there will continue to be a demand for ORV
10 riding, the county should continue to assess its role in the ORV
11 program. Between the Washington State Department of Natural
12 Resources and the Forest Service, some joint solution may be
13 possible.

14
15 **Activity Centers**

16
17 Activity centers are indoor facilities which provide recreational opportunities. They
18 include the existing senior/community centers, Plantation Rifle Range, ~~and the~~
19 Roeder Home, ~~and full-scale~~ indoor recreation centers (multi-purpose centers) ~~and~~
20 ~~indoor aquatic facilities.~~

21
22 ~~Five of t~~The eight senior/community centers ~~managed by the county are owned by~~
23 ~~the Cities of~~ are located in Bellingham, Ferndale, Blaine, Everson, Lynden, Sumas,
24 ~~Welcome, and the PtPoint-~~ Roberts Park District. ~~Combined, these eight facilities~~
25 ~~served over 206,546 visitors in 2003, 80% of whom were seniors.~~ There is an
26 increasing trend for use by different agencies and community groups and even
27 church congregations who rent the facilities in Lynden and Bellingham. With
28 appropriate scheduling, the existing senior/community centers have the capacity to
29 absorb additional activity.

30
31 The Plantation Rifle Range includes two outdoor ranges, a trap field, an indoor
32 range, and a meeting room ~~which served 16,824 people in 2003.~~ It is a unique
33 facility which receives ~~60% of its~~ use from law enforcement agencies, educational
34 activities, and recreation.

35
36 The Roeder Home, donated to the County and on the National Historic Register, is a
37 unique facility which provides space for meetings, ~~and~~ wedding receptions, special
38 events, and classes. ~~and serves as the center for cultural arts programs in the~~
39 ~~County. This facility served 33,042 people in 2003.~~

40
41 As population numbers grow, the need for additional aquatic facilities should be re-
42 evaluated.

The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in Maple Falls provides community services such as early childhood education, family support and health services, transportation, and community gardens.

Goal 9H: Encourage multi-use indoor activity centers to meet the needs of the population, using public and private partnerships where possible.

Policy 9H-1: Support multi-use of the existing senior/community centers to maximize their full potential.

Policy 9H-2: Continue the cooperation between the County and the Cities and Point Roberts Park District on ownership and management of the existing senior/community centers.

Policy 9H-3: Evaluate the cost/benefit ratio of adding a multi-purpose facility on the property owned by the Parks Department at Smith and Northwest Roads to meet the expanding demand by all age groups in the Bellingham/Ferndale growth corridor.

Policy 9H-4: Expand the Plantation Rifle Range to meet the needs of citizens residents, organizations, and law enforcement agencies.

Policy 9H-5: Acquire property for a buffer area around the Plantation Rifle Range to insure the ability to continue its use in the future.

Policy 9H-6: Continue to utilize the Roeder Home as the for cultural arts facility flagship activities, community events, and gatherings, while utilizing partnerships, leased space, or creative opportunities to accommodate program expansion.

Policy 9H-7: Continue to monitor the need for additional aquatic facilities in the community, with the basic assumption that Whatcom County will not be an indoor aquatic provider in the near future.

Policy 9H-8: Continue to search for partnerships with other public agencies and private groups in providing recreation facilities such as golf facilities, camping, and resort centers.

Policy 9H-9: Expand the partnership concept to incorporate school buildings and other public or private facilities which can accommodate meetings and recreational functions.

Park Facilities

- 1
2 **Goal 9I:** **As economically feasible, continue to implement the**
3 **Whatcom County Comprehensive Park, Recreation and**
4 **Open Space (CPROS Plan) goals and policies through**
5 **adoption of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan**
6 **Six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).**
7 **Policy 9I-1:** **Continue to monitor park and recreation service needs**
8 **throughout the county and encourage others to provide the**
9 **identified service needs.**
10
11 **Policy 9I-2:** **Develop facilities and areas that will be particularly attractive to**
12 **Whatcom County residents.**
13
14 **Policy 9I-3:** **Develop and maintain facilities at a high standard. These**
15 **standards should be established in accordance with the**
16 **Whatcom County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open**
17 **Space (CPROS Plan) and the Whatcom County Comprehensive**
18 **Plan.**
19
20 **Policy 9I-4:** **Design and develop recreation facilities for low maintenance.**
21
22 **Policy 9I-5:** **In keeping with policies in other chapters of this plan, consider**
23 **strategies for ensuring the provision of community parks in**
24 **accordance with appropriate standards. In the residential UGAs**
25 **not associated with cities and in Rural Communities,**
26 **mechanisms are needed for acquisition, development, and**
27 **subsequent maintenance and operations. Community**
28 **Associations and Park Districts are options to be explored.**
29
30 **Policy 9I-6:** **Continue to plan for full utilization of existing senior/community**
31 **centers and explore partnerships to help absorb future need.**
32
33 **Policy 9I-7:** **Continue to identify and develop major planning initiatives**
34 **identified in the CPROS Plan.**
35
36 **Policy 9I-8:** **Develop strategies to acquire land currently leased for the**
37 **Plantation Rifle Range and a buffer around the rifle range.**
38
39 **Policy 9I-9:** **Galbraith/Lookout Mt. - Develop and implement a plan**
40 **cooperatively to acquire Rights of Way for trail corridors and for**
41 **the purchase or lease of additional acreage, along with pursuit**
42 **of formal usage and mitigation agreements with private**
43 **individuals or land owners, to preserve or expand the**
44 **recreational values for residents and tourists with reasonably**
45 **limited impact on both local residents and the environment.**
46

1 Policy 9I-10: Stewart Mt. - Negotiate with current landowner to obtain formal
2 usage agreements for access to logging trails, to open public
3 access corridors between Lake Whatcom recreation areas and
4 the South Fork Valley.

5
6 **Goal 9J: Develop a stronger financial base for recreational**
7 **services:**

8
9 Policy 9J-1: Design future recreation facilities and areas with the ability to
10 charge user fees.

11
12 Policy 9J-2: Explore new innovative methods of financing facility
13 development, maintenance, and operating needs.

14
15 Policy 9J-3: Consider joint ventures with private clubs, public agencies,
16 commercial operations, and other groups to build and maintain
17 facilities.

18
19 Policy 9J-4: Seek to design and develop facilities that will encourage
20 tourism.

21
22 Policy 9J-5: Consider the establishment of park impact fees based on the
23 Growth Management Act.

24
25 Policy 9J6 Experiment with novel public-private partnerships to provide
26 facilities that will provide a quality experience to draw tourists to
27 Whatcom County's parks. Some examples would be privately
28 operated zip-line facilities and strategically located seasonal
29 food trucks. Part or all of the "rent" provided could be by the
30 provision of privately funded public use facilities such as toilets
31 and shuttle buses used to service these private facilities.

32
33 **Recreation — Action Plan**

34
35 **General Park and Recreation Services**

36
37 ~~1. Continue to monitor park and recreation service needs throughout the county~~
38 ~~and encourage others to provide the identified service needs.~~

39
40 ~~2. Stress a good public image and the importance of public relations to all~~
41 ~~employees of the Parks and Recreation Department.~~

42
43 ~~3. As economically feasible, and as need warrants, implement the recreation~~
44 ~~and service programs in Chapter VII of the *Comprehensive Park and Recreation*~~
45 ~~*Open Space Plan*.~~

1 ~~4. Continue to implement those elements of the Nooksack River Plan (Jones and~~
2 ~~Jones 1973) which are beneficial, appropriate and economically feasible.~~

3
4 **Park Facilities**

5
6 ~~5. As economically feasible, and as need warrants, implement the~~
7 ~~Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan including the goals and~~
8 ~~policies and maps incorporated herein through adoption of the six-year~~
9 ~~capital improvement program.~~

10
11 ~~6. Develop facilities and areas that will be particularly attractive to Whatcom~~
12 ~~County residents.~~

13
14 ~~7. Develop and maintain facilities at a high standard. These standards should~~
15 ~~be established in accordance with the Comprehensive Park and Recreation~~
16 ~~Open Space Plan and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.~~

17
18 ~~8. Design and develop recreation facilities for low maintenance.~~

19
20 ~~9. In keeping with policies in other chapters of this plan, develop a mechanism~~
21 ~~for ensuring the provision of neighborhood parks in accordance with~~
22 ~~appropriate standards when residential areas are developed outside of~~
23 ~~incorporated areas. In the residential UGAs not associated with cities and in~~
24 ~~Rural Communities mechanisms are needed for acquisition, development and~~
25 ~~subsequent maintenance and operations. Community Associations and Park~~
26 ~~Districts are options to be explored.~~

27
28 ~~10.1. Develop a strategic plan for full utilization of the existing senior/community~~
29 ~~centers and partnerships to help absorb future need.~~

30
31 ~~11. Develop a master plan for the property at Smith and Northwest Road,~~
32 ~~contingent upon funding, to include an indoor multi-purpose center.~~

33
34 ~~12. Update and implement the master plan for the Plantation Rifle Range and~~
35 ~~Hovander Homestead Park.~~

36
37 ~~13. Work with timber companies and other private property owners to acquire~~
38 ~~the land currently leased for the Plantation Rifle Range and a buffer around~~
39 ~~the rifle range.~~

40
41 ~~14. Preserve additional cultural heritage sites such as the Hovander House, the~~
42 ~~Roeder Home, and Tennant Lake Interpretative Center for recreation~~
43 ~~purposes.~~

1 ~~15. Galbraith/Lookout Mt. — Develop and implement a plan to acquire Rights of~~
2 ~~Way for trail corridors and purchase of additional park acreage, along with~~
3 ~~pursuit of formal usage agreements with private land owners, to preserve the~~
4 ~~recreational value for residents and tourists.~~

5
6 ~~16. Stewart Mt. — Negotiate with Crown Corporation to obtain formal usage~~
7 ~~agreements for access to logging trails, to open public access corridors~~
8 ~~between Lake Whatcom recreation areas and the South Fork Valley.~~

9
10 **Preservation of Natural Areas**

11
12 ~~17. Complete the inventory and study of Recreation Resource Management Areas~~
13 ~~in accordance with policies under goal 9(F).~~

14
15 ~~18. Make it advantageous to land developers and landowners to dedicate land for~~
16 ~~public use.~~

17
18 ~~19. Develop design standards that provide for the integration of open space and~~
19 ~~recreation opportunities within subdivisions, planned unit developments and~~
20 ~~other development proposals.~~

21
22 ~~20. Create alternative revenue sources and develop mechanisms to earmark~~
23 ~~funds to help pay for the acquisition, maintenance and operation of parks,~~
24 ~~open space and shoreline access.~~

25
26 ~~21. Develop mechanisms for land banking of public open space.~~

27
28 ~~22. Prime open space, and river corridors and natural areas should be designated~~
29 ~~and prioritized for future acquisition. River corridors will be evaluated for~~
30 ~~increased wetland/water storage areas for flood mitigation and fish and~~
31 ~~wildlife habitat and potential secondary use for reservoirs as park and open~~
32 ~~space attractions.~~

33
34 ~~23. Develop specific implementation strategies for those elements of the *Natural*~~
35 ~~*Heritage Plan* that are appropriate, beneficial, consistent with this plan and~~
36 ~~within the County's fiscal capabilities. Review the *Natural Heritage Plan*~~
37 ~~annually and incorporate appropriate items in the Capital Facilities planning~~
38 ~~for parks and recreation in future years.~~

39
40 ~~24. Continue the partnerships with other organizations, groups, or individuals~~
41 ~~consistent with the goals identified in the *Natural Heritage Plan* for Whatcom~~
42 ~~County.~~

43
44 **Trails**

- 1 | ~~25. Incorporate existing and proposed trails into a comprehensive and integrated~~
2 | ~~system of looped and interconnected trails which give users a wide choice of~~
3 | ~~routes and environments.~~
4 |
- 5 | ~~26. Continue to update the trails inventory to identify all designated and non-~~
6 | ~~designated trails in the county.~~
- 7 | ~~27.14. Work with private property owners and developers to acquire trail corridors~~
8 | ~~or easements. Monitor land development proposals to ensure that existing~~
9 | ~~trails are not lost.~~
10 |
- 11 | ~~28. Provide non-motorized access to regional recreational and outstanding scenic~~
12 | ~~areas in the county.~~
13 |
- 14 | ~~29. Reduce conflicts between the various trail user groups and provide~~
15 | ~~appropriate signage.~~
16 |
- 17 | ~~30. Provide bike lanes or wide shoulders where appropriate in conjunction with~~
18 | ~~major road improvements.~~
19 |
- 20 | ~~31. Coast Millennium Trail – Continue to develop trail corridors, particularly off-~~
21 | ~~road segments such as the airport connector and shoreline access.~~
22 |
- 23 | ~~32. Hertz North Lake Whatcom Trail Extension – Develop and implement a plan~~
24 | ~~to either acquire Rights of Way for a trail corridor along the abandoned RR~~
25 | ~~R/W between the existing North Shore Trail and Blue Canyon Road or pursue~~
26 | ~~an alternative route to link these points.~~
27 |
- 28 | ~~33. Bay to Baker Trail – Develop and implement a plan to secure Rights of Way~~
29 | ~~for trail segments along the abandoned RR R/W in conjunction with the~~
30 | ~~Nooksack River Trail to achieve a contiguous trail system between~~
31 | ~~communities and recreation areas.~~
32 |
- 33 | ~~34. Nooksack River Trail – Develop and implement a plan to acquire Rights of~~
34 | ~~Way for a trail corridor and picnic areas along the Nooksack River between~~
35 | ~~Ferndale and Glacier, to provide recreation opportunities, inter-community~~
36 | ~~transportation and tourism development.~~
37 |
- 38 | ~~35. Implement the goals, policies and recommendations of the latest Whatcom~~
39 | ~~County Bicycle Plan that are consistent with this plan and within the County's~~
40 | ~~fiscal capabilities.~~
41 |
- 42 | ~~36. Continue to update the Whatcom County Bicycle Plan as needs and~~
43 | ~~conditions change.~~
44 |
- 45 | ~~37. Develop a Growth Management Act based ordinance to encourage dedication~~
46 | ~~of trail corridors in the consideration of park or transportation mitigation, as~~

~~new subdivisions and development occurs, if the trail has been identified in a park, trail, open space or other plan adopted by Whatcom County.~~

~~38. Develop design standards that include the integration of trails within subdivisions, planned unit developments and other development proposals to provide internal circulation and connect to nearby commercial and activity centers, and recreational opportunities.~~

Funding

~~Develop a stronger financial base for recreational services by:~~

~~39. Designing future recreation facilities and areas with the ability to charge user fees.~~

~~40. Investigating new innovative methods of financing facility development, maintenance, and operating needs.~~

~~41. Considering joint ventures with private clubs, public agencies, commercial operations and other groups to build and maintain facilities.~~

~~42. Providing facilities that will encourage tourism.~~

~~43. Where timber needs to be removed due to disease, windfall or for park facility improvements, timber shall be harvested and sold using best management practices.~~

~~39. Consider the establishment of park impact fees based on the Growth Management Act.~~