

# 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.

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". Increased demand for recreation not only contributes to economic opportunities but at the same time also increases the need for new services and facilities and the need for maintenance to existing facilities. 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 new recreational services and facilities.

## Purpose

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) 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 historical background 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 facility 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 the Whatcom County Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan and

1 the 1991 Natural Heritage Plan also support and inform many of the goals and  
2 policies of this chapter.

### 3 4 **Background Summary**

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

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

16  
17 The continued availability of diverse and numerous recreational opportunities will  
18 play a key role in ensuring a high quality of life for future generations in Whatcom  
19 County.

20  
21 ~~In an historical context, leisure time is a relatively new experience for Americans.~~  
22 ~~It was not too long ago that the average American worked 48 hours per week and~~  
23 ~~children had daily chores that were counted on to support family life. Today more~~  
24 ~~leisure time is generally available for almost everyone.~~

25  
26 ~~However, too much leisure time can be a problem if not channeled wisely,~~  
27 ~~especially for youth. For the younger generations, and especially those who find it~~  
28 ~~difficult to obtain gainful and meaningful employment, it may be a real challenge to~~  
29 ~~make wise use of leisure time. Recreation not only provides a diversion and~~  
30 ~~refreshment from the pace of our complex lives, but it also enriches our mental~~  
31 ~~health.~~

### 32 33 **Process**

34  
35 In August 1989, Whatcom County adopted ~~a~~its first Comprehensive Park and  
36 Recreation Open Space Plan, and subsequently this plan was adopted ~~as an part of~~  
37 ~~official~~the Optional Recreation element~~Element~~ of the ~~county's~~County's  
38 comprehensive plan. In 1991, the Whatcom County Council approved a resolution  
39 that endorsed the Preserving a Way of Life: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom  
40 County and many of its goals but with reference to specific goals some were  
41 modified and implementation strategies of others were deferred for future  
42 consideration.~~Subsequently, in In~~ July 1991, the Whatcom County Council also  
43 adopted Preserving a Way of Life: A Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County.  
44 ~~This~~The Natural Heritage Plan plan has some overlap with the ~~Comprehensive Park~~  
45 ~~and Recreation Open Space Plan but~~ focuses primarily on a vision that supports  
46 preserving and protecting preservation and conservation of natural areas in the

1 county without necessarily assuming ~~they—the~~ need to be infor public  
2 ownership. ~~The In 1991, the Whatcom County Council approved a resolution that~~  
3 ~~endorsed the Natural Heritage Plan was and many of its goals adopted but by~~  
4 ~~resolution with reference to specific goals; several goals were some were~~ modified  
5 and ~~implementation strategies of others were~~ deferred to for future consideration.  
6 In preparation for this plan, the Parks Commission recommended some updated  
7 policies from the 1989 ~~Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan.~~  
8 These have been incorporated here and in the parks plan. This plan chapter  
9 specifically ~~adopts the updated specifically references the~~ *Comprehensive Park and*  
10 *Recreation Open Space Plan (CPROS)*, while ~~utilizing the- the~~ *Natural Heritage Plan,*  
11 ~~and the Whatcom County Pedestrian Bicycle Plan-, all as a~~ background documents.  
12

13 Existing Parks and Recreation facilities and services are responsive to an increasing  
14 resident population, and must also serve an increasing visitor population as  
15 Whatcom County becomes more and more a regional recreation destination.  
16

17 In regards to existing Whatcom County Park system capacity, draft 2014 CPROS,  
18 states, that: “In 2012, the Whatcom County Park system had over 732,000  
19 visitations to parks and trails, and 186,000 visitations in senior services.... In  
20 general, most park areas and facilities are currently meeting visitor needs. Many  
21 parks have additional capacity or with improvements can accommodate greater  
22 user numbers without compromising the visitor’s experience or the parks  
23 resources.”  
24

25 A joint planning effort between Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Department  
26 and Whatcom County Planning & Development Services Department ensures that  
27 Parks & Recreation capital facilities improvement projects that are identified in the  
28 CPROS Plan, are consistent with Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Parks &  
29 Recreation Level of Service (LOS) standards (adopted in WCCP Chapter 4), along  
30 with a six year financing plan for improvement projects, addressed as part of the  
31 WCCP Capital Facilities Element.  
32

33 Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Department plays an essential role in  
34 providing recreation services and facilities to county residents and visitors, and in  
35 the long range planning that is needed to accommodate future parks, recreation  
36 and open space needs in the county during the next 20 years of growth that this  
37 chapter of the WCCP seeks to guide and support. The CPROS Plan is a separate  
38 document from the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (WCCP), and is  
39 established for distinct but overlapping purposes. The CPROS Plan should  
40 be considered a companion guide and read alongside this chapter of the WCCP, as  
41 it informs many of the Issues, Goals, and Policies that are outlined in the following  
42 pages of this chapter.  
43  
44  
45

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

~~This chapter~~This chapter supports fulfillment of addresses several Growth Management Act (GMA) goals, including: Goal #9, - Open Space and Recreation; ~~and~~ GMA Goal #12, Public Facilities and Services, and Goal # 13 – Historic Preservation ~~directly by~~ by directly addressing parks, and recreation services, and facility needs. Habitat and other open space ~~needs-resources~~ are also briefly addressed ~~considered in this chapter,~~ but are more completely, addressed elsewhere in this plan in the land use element and the environment element of this plan, in Chapter 2, and Chapter 11, respectively. Similarly, this chapter addresses Section H, Open Space/Greenbelt Corridors of the County-wide Planning Policies (CWPP). It also partially addresses CWPP Policy K (1) by identifying needs for recreation facilities. ~~This chapter also addresses value statement #1 under Open Space and Recreation which encourages retention/development of recreational opportunities along with other open space categories.~~

**GMA Requirements**

This chapter supports implementation of Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) provisions that encourage counties to adopt an optional "Recreation Element" under RCW 36.70A.080(1)(c). ~~The Growth Management Act specifies recreation as an optional element of the comprehensive plan.~~ This chapter is coordinated and consistent with functions to link other GMA required Comprehensive Plan elements such as Land Use (Open Space), Environment, Capital Facilities, Transportation, and Economics. It is responsive to, informs, and relies on the Whatcom County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (CPROS).

**Background Summary**

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

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

~~With the existence of two National Forests, the North Cascades National Park, Washington State Department of Natural Resources land, three state parks and~~

~~land held by private timber companies within Whatcom County, it is hard to believe there is an additional need for public open space.~~

~~However, most public land cited above is located in the eastern two-thirds of the county and little public land is available near the population centers. With the county now undergoing a major shift towards urban development, the public is becoming aware of the lost opportunities for close-in public open space. Added to this concern is the fact that while Whatcom County has more than 130 miles of saltwater shoreline, only about 6% is currently accessible to the public. Nearly everyday the opportunity for additional public access is reduced as land is 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 parks, multi-use camping areas, trail systems, specialized facilities, shoreline access areas and recreation resource management areas (**Maps 9-1 and 9-222 and 23**).

**Day Use ParksRegional Parks**

~~Day use parks are large~~ 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 regional day use 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~~

- 1 | ~~use~~regional parks that are centered around a unique feature or  
 2 recreation opportunity.  
 3
- 4 Policy 9A-2: Because of the unique features of the site, location within the  
 5 county is not too important although they must have good road  
 6 access.  
 7
- 8 Policy 9A-3: Development standards will vary according to the use intended.  
 9 For the intensive use park areas, all facilities and improvements  
 10 should be built to a high standard and designed to be easily  
 11 maintained.  
 12
- 13 Policy 9A-4: All parks must be designed to create a minimal impact upon  
 14 surrounding property and to the site itself.  
 15
- 16 | Policy 9A-5: ~~Day use~~Regional parks should be designed with one entrance  
 17 and control point so that entrance fees can be charged.  
 18
- 19 | Policy 9A-6: If possible, ~~day use~~regional parks should be located on an  
 20 existing or proposed trail route.  
 21
- 22 Policy 9A-7: The parks should be designed to accommodate a range of age  
 23 groups, accessibility and interests.  
 24
- 25 | Policy 9A-8: The ~~county~~County should only accept sites that meet the above  
 26 standards.  
 27

### 28 Multi Use Camping Parks

29  
 30 Multi-use camping parks provide camping opportunities in addition to other uses.  
 31 Lighthouse Marine Park and Silver Lake Park fit this category. ~~The type of camping~~  
 32 ~~can vary from primitive camp sites to the full-service RV site.~~ It should be  
 33 recognized that much of the camping activity use will be from non-county residents.  
 34

35 **Goal 9B: Provide multi-use camping parks to serve county resident**  
 36 **needs as well as provide a tourism draw.**  
 37

- 38 Policy 9B-1: All the policy statements and design standards for day use parks  
 39 should also apply to multi-use camping parks.  
 40
- 41 Policy 9B-2: Because camping parks will attract many non-county residents,  
 42 they should be recognized for their tourism value but at the  
 43 same time county residents should not subsidize the cost of  
 44 camping.

- 1 Policy 9B-3: A wide variety of camping types should be offered including  
2 primitive sites, tent sites, full-service RV sites and group  
3 camping areas.  
4
- 5 Policy 9B-4: The camping areas should be physically separated from the  
6 other parts of the park with the ability to be closed off during  
7 winter months.  
8
- 9 Policy 9B-5: Most large camping areas should be designed to a high standard  
10 with full-service hookups, flush toilets and rest rooms, showers,  
11 laundry and other support facilities.  
12
- 13 Policy 9B-6: Future Park development should consider the financial ability of  
14 the ~~county~~County, and should focus on existing park lands  
15 before considering further acquisition.  
16

### 17 Trail Systems

18  
19 Trail systems include unpaved foot trails, paved and unpaved multi-use trails and  
20 paved bike paths. Multi-use trails are designed for two or more of the following  
21 activities: bicycle riding, mountain bike riding, walking and hiking, and horseback  
22 riding. Unpaved foot paths are primarily for walking and hiking, although a  
23 compacted gravel surface is suitable for mountain bikes as well.  
24

25 While essentially all trails are suitable for foot traffic, bicyclists and horseback riders  
26 find many trails not adequately maintained or built to appropriate construction  
27 standards. Poorly built or maintained trails are less enjoyable to travel and can  
28 induce damage to the environment. User conflicts may occur between all three  
29 groups. Horseback riders often express concern with mountain bikes that suddenly  
30 appear at a bend or rise in the trail, spooking the animal and endangering both  
31 riders. Hikers complain about similar problems, but are generally more concerned  
32 with personal safety and damage to trails caused by the two rider groups.  
33 Motorized (ORV) use of trails is generally incompatible with non-motorized use for  
34 similar reasons. Noise and safety issues and environmental impacts preclude  
35 motorbikes from most of the trails identified in this plan. Solutions to user conflicts  
36 require some separation of use by designating specific loops or segments for  
37 particular users. Hikers comprise the largest user group, but tend to have the  
38 lowest impact on the trail. Although all trails are essentially available for hiking,  
39 trails that are particularly narrow, steep, or fragile, and those subject to heavy  
40 pedestrian use should be designated for hikers only. In addition, trails, loops or  
41 alternate routes should be designated for the horseback and mountain bike rider  
42 groups where conditions warrant.  
43

44 Properly built and maintained old logging roads in reforested areas provide some of  
45 the best riding trails since they are much wider than a footpath for easier passing,  
46 and their base is usually firm and less prone to damage. It is not enough, however,

1 to simply direct horses and bikes to old road grades. They are often seeking the  
2 same views and aesthetic experience that hikers wish. Some trails will therefore  
3 need to be improved to a higher standard to accommodate the use. On shared  
4 routes, appropriate design elements need to be implemented to avoid conflicts and  
5 to enhance the trail experience for each group.

6  
7 The difficulties in obtaining continuous access through private lands is a major issue  
8 in trail development that can discourage citizens, planners and administrators from  
9 pursuing what might otherwise be a worthwhile project. Access is usually obtained  
10 by way of gift or purchase of an easement or parcel of land containing the trail  
11 corridor. On private timber land, access is normally permitted in most areas on an  
12 informal basis with the understanding that closures may occur due to logging, fire  
13 danger or other circumstances. Horse club volunteers have been successful in  
14 obtaining permission to construct new trails on private and state timber land with  
15 and without formal easements.

16  
17 In developed areas of the county where multiple properties are involved, the task  
18 becomes more complicated since lack of participation by one landowner can  
19 obstruct the trail. Concerns range from vandalism, fire and nuisances to liability  
20 and invasion of privacy. In most cases, trail design, careful facility planning and  
21 public education will help avoid these problems. An existing statute (RCW  
22 4.24.210) already offers some protections to landowners from liability where they  
23 allow public access to their land without charge. Where in situations where public  
24 access is denied, an alternate needs alternatives should to be considered.

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

38  
39 In 2001, Whatcom County formed the Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory  
40 Committee. The Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (BPAC) developed  
41 the Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. ~~The Whatcom County Council~~  
42 ~~adopted the most recent version of this Plan, by resolution, on May 6,~~  
43 ~~2003February 8, 2011.~~ The plan makes recommendations with regard to facility  
44 type, primary and secondary routes, design guidelines, safety and education.  
45 Additionally the plan includes strategies for implementation that addresses priority  
46 projects, acquisition, development, maintenance and administration of bicycle



1 routes. The Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan provides a basis  
2 for informs many of the goals and policies of this chapter and is considered an  
3 important background/reference document that contributes to the Recreation  
4 optional element of Whatcom County’s Comprehensive Plan. This plan specifically  
5 adopts and incorporates the most recent Whatcom County Bicycle Plan.  
6

7 **Goal 9C: Expand outdoor recreation opportunities for county**  
8 **residents by providing enjoyable trails for hiking,**  
9 **horseback riding, bicycling, walking, boating, and other**  
10 **trail activities in a safe environment.**

11  
12 Policy 9C-1: Trails should be interesting and attractive. Trails which follow  
13 natural water courses, pass significant natural resources,  
14 traverse interesting scenery or cross areas of outstanding  
15 beauty provide interesting and enjoyable experiences for the  
16 trail user.

17  
18 Policy 9C-2: ~~Trails should be looped and interconnected to provide a variety~~  
19 ~~of trail lengths and destinations. Incorporate existing and~~  
20 ~~proposed trails into a comprehensive and integrated system of~~  
21 ~~looped and interconnected trails which give users a wide choice~~  
22 ~~of routes and environments.~~  
23

24 Reason for Change: Former Action Item #21 provides more context to policy intent.

25  
26 Policy 9C-3: Trails should link other recreational uses in the Foothills area  
27 and connect to existing trail systems in the National Forest and  
28 state land.

29  
30 Policy 9C-4: The wet climate of Whatcom County may preclude extensive  
31 multi-use of some trails or require seasonal limitations on their  
32 use. Trail routes should take into account soil conditions, steep  
33 slopes, surface drainage and other physical limitations that  
34 could impact the areas from over-use.

35  
36 Policy 9C-5: Bicycle trails should provide opportunities for the recreational  
37 rider as well as the touring and commuter bicyclist.

38  
39 Policy 9C-6: Bicycle routes and paths should minimize the conflicts between  
40 motorists and bicyclists.

41  
42 Policy 9C-7: Hiking trails should have a variety of lengths and grades for the  
43 casual stroller as well as the serious hiker and, when  
44 practicable, be accessible.  
45

- 1 Policy 9C-8: Hiking trails should reach areas of natural beauty with the  
2 purpose of permitting the hiker to seek areas of solitude and get  
3 away from the built environment.
- 4 Policy 9C-9: Equestrian trails should be usable ~~accessible~~ most of the year.  
5 Some equestrian trails should be close-in to the urban areas.  
6
- 7 Policy 9C-10: Adequate parking, signage trash receptacles, and toilet facilities  
8 should be provided at all major trailheads.  
9
- 10 Policy 9C-11: Where public funds are used to construct or maintain dikes,  
11 levees or revetments, public access should be encouraged for  
12 trail purposes, where appropriate.  
13
- 14 Policy 9C-12: Water trails for non-motorized boats should be identified with  
15 provisions made for parking, launching areas, and places of  
16 interest along the water route where boats can land.  
17
- 18 Policy 9C-13: Work toward partnering with other agencies and the public to  
19 accomplish recreational goals.  
20
- 21 Policy 9C-14: Investigate multi-solutions that will accommodate several  
22 county goals, such as recreation, water retention, and flood  
23 prevention measures, utilizing a similar piece of property.  
24
- 25 Policy 9C-15: Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails and other  
26 transportation rights-of-way is encouraged when not in conflict  
27 with goals to protect wildlife, public health and safety.  
28
- 29 Policy 9C-16: ~~Implement the goals, policies and recommendations of the~~  
30 ~~latest Whatcom County Bicycle Plan and continue to update the~~  
31 ~~plan as needs and conditions change. Implement the goals,~~  
32 ~~policies and recommendations of the latest Whatcom County~~  
33 ~~Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan that are consistent with this plan~~  
34 ~~and within the County's fiscal capabilities. Continue to update~~  
35 ~~the Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan as needs and~~  
36 ~~conditions change.~~  
37
- 38 Reason for Changes: Former action items 31 and 32 provide more context to policy  
39 intent.
- 40
- 41 Policy 9C-17: Promote the integration of trails within subdivisions, planned  
42 unit developments and other development proposals that  
43 provide internal circulation and connect to nearby opportunities.  
44
- 45 Policy 9C-18: Acquisition of and planning for trail corridors should be  
46 encouraged as new subdivisions and development occurs, if

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

- 1 ~~Policy 9C-29: Implement the goals, policies and recommendations of the~~  
2 ~~latest Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan that are~~  
3 ~~consistent with this plan and within the County's fiscal~~  
4 ~~capabilities.~~
- 5
- 6 ~~Policy 9C-30: Continue to update the Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle~~  
7 ~~Plan as needs and conditions change.~~
- 8
- 9 ~~Policy 9C-31: Develop a Growth Management Act based ordinance to~~  
10 ~~encourage dedication of trail corridors in the consideration of~~  
11 ~~park or transportation mitigation, as new subdivisions and~~  
12 ~~development occurs, if the trail has been identified in a park,~~  
13 ~~trail, open space or other plan adopted by Whatcom County.~~
- 14
- 15 ~~Policy 9C-32: Develop design standards that include the integration of~~  
16 ~~Integrate trails within subdivisions, planned unit developments~~  
17 ~~and other development proposals to provide internal circulation~~  
18 ~~and connectivity to nearby commercial and activity centers, and~~  
19 ~~recreational opportunities.~~

20

### 21 Specialized Recreation Areas

22

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

26

27 **Goal 9D: Provide specialized recreation areas taking advantage of**  
28 **unique opportunities to serve both county residents and**  
29 **visitors.**

30

31 Policy 9D-1: Because these facilities are unique, adopt specific standards for  
32 each one individually.

33

34 Policy 9D-2: Explore need for community neighborhood parks as  
35 undeveloped areas of county increase in density.

36

37 Policy 9D-3: Encourage development of sport field complexes to meet the  
38 needs of organized recreation activities, using public and private  
39 partnerships where possible.

40

41 Policy 9D-4: Promote the integration of recreational and open space  
42 opportunities in subarea planning, subdivisions and other  
43 development proposals.

1 Policy 9D-5: The dedication and acquisition of open space and recreation  
2 opportunities should be encouraged as new subdivisions and  
3 development occurs.  
4

### 5 **Shoreline Access Areas**

6

7 Shoreline access areas include saltwater beaches and bluffs, rivers and streams and  
8 lake frontage. Access may be via a public park area, a street end, or just a trail  
9 easement. Access includes both physical access to the water and visual access  
10 from points above (**Map 9-223**).  
11

12 **Goal 9E: Recognize the shoreline as one of Whatcom County's**  
13 **unique assets and provide adequate physical and visual**  
14 **access for present and future generations.**

15 Policy 9E-1: As economically feasible, acquire for public use as much of the  
16 saltwater shoreline as possible. Public and private resources  
17 should be explored to further this policy. A reasonable goal is to  
18 acquire for public access a minimum of 15% of the saltwater  
19 shoreline and adjacent tidelands in Whatcom County.  
20

21 Policy 9E-2: Continue to review the Nooksack River Plan (Jones and Jones,  
22 1973) and implement those elements which are beneficial,  
23 appropriate and economically feasible.  
24

25 Policy 9E-3: Provide pedestrian, interpretative and small boat access sites for  
26 a diversity of public shoreline.  
27

28 Policy 9E-4: When the County acquires property for flood storage or fish and  
29 wildlife purposes, the County should consider secondary use for  
30 park and open space purposes.  
31

### 32 **Recreation Resource Management Areas**

33

34 These open space areas are identified as large undeveloped parcels of land having  
35 unique or attractive natural features. Often they will also contain extensive trail  
36 systems. They lack distinct boundaries and are intended to emphasize open space  
37 and recreation values. The land may or may not be in public ownership. It is not  
38 intended for Whatcom County to acquire these parcels of land but rather to secure  
39 conservation and access easements to ensure that public access is maintained and  
40 unique scenic areas preserved.  
41

42 **Goal 9F: Identify large undeveloped parcels of land with unique or**  
43 **attractive features and with the cooperation/coordination**  
44 **of public agencies and private landowners provide**  
45 **conservation opportunities and, where possible, public**  
46 **access.**

- 1 Policy 9F-1: Thoroughly study each of the Recreation Resource Management  
2 Areas (RRMA) identified in the *Comprehensive Park and*  
3 *Recreation Open Space Plan* to identify their unique features,  
4 scenic quality and open space value. Studies should then be  
5 made to determine how these qualities can be preserved for  
6 future generations.
- 7
- 8 Policy 9F-2: Trail systems within the RRMA's should be used for non-  
9 motorized trail activities only.
- 10
- 11 Policy 9F-3: While Whatcom County will probably not own the land within the  
12 RRMA's, it should take on a major management role to ensure  
13 that its recreation and open space value is maintained.
- 14
- 15 Policy 9F-4: A special advisory committee should be formed of users and  
16 land owners of the RRMA's. Their role will be to inventory, plan  
17 and prepare recommendations regarding the management of  
18 these areas.
- 19
- 20 Policy 9F-5: Continue to collaborate ~~partner~~ with other organizations,  
21 groups, or individuals consistent with the goals identified in the  
22 Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County, and Whatcom  
23 County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.
- 24

Reason for Change: Moved from Action Items and modified.
--

**Off Road Vehicle Riding Areas**

Recognizing that it is better to regulate and manage where off-road vehicle (ORV) riding may occur, the county attempted twice to develop an area for exclusive ORV use. Both proposals were met with controversy and not pursued. However, ORV riding still occurs and in many instances on land not suitable for that use and without the owner's permission. The end result is that ORV riding is impacting neighbors and the land in which riding occurs, and is in general creating a problem for less intrusive recreational activities.

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

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

## 1 Activity Centers

2  
3 Activity centers are indoor facilities which provide recreational opportunities. They  
4 include the existing senior/community centers, Plantation Rifle Range, ~~and~~ the  
5 Roeder Home, ~~and full-scale~~ indoor recreation centers (multi-purpose centers), ~~and~~  
6 ~~indoor aquatic facilities.~~

7  
8 ~~Five of t~~The eight senior/community centers ~~managed by the county are owned by~~  
9 ~~the Cities of~~ are located in Bellingham, Ferndale, Blaine, Everson, Lynden, Sumas,  
10 Welcome and ~~the~~ Pt. Roberts, ~~Park District. Combined, these eight facilities served~~  
11 ~~over 206,546 visitors in 2003, 80% of whom were seniors.~~ There is an increasing  
12 trend for use by different agencies and community groups and even church  
13 congregations who rent the facilities in Lynden and Bellingham. With appropriate  
14 scheduling, the existing senior/community centers have the capacity to absorb  
15 additional activity.

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

21  
22 The Roeder Home, donated to the County and on the National Historic Register, is a  
23 unique facility which provides space for meetings, ~~and~~ wedding receptions, special  
24 events and classes. ~~and serves as the center for cultural arts programs in the~~  
25 ~~County. This facility served 33,042 people in 2003.~~

26  
27 ~~Whatcom County has a shortage of available indoor recreation facilities such as~~  
28 ~~include~~ swimming pools, gymnasiums, and activity centers. The only public pool in  
29 the county is the Arne Hanna Aquatic Center facility located in the City of  
30 Bellingham ~~pool.~~ There are two YMCA swimming pools (Bellingham and Lynden);  
31 ~~the YMCA located in Ferndale partners with Super 8 Motel for use of its pool where~~  
32 ~~it holds swim lessons,~~ ~~and one there is also a~~ YWCA pool in Bellingham. As  
33 population numbers grow, the need for additional indoor recreational aquatic  
34 facilities should be re-evaluated.

35  
36 The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in Maple Falls provides community  
37 services such as early childhood education, family support and health services,  
38 transportation, and community gardens.

39  
40 **Goal 9H: Encourage multi-use indoor activity centers to meet the**  
41 **needs of the population using public and private**  
42 **partnerships where possible.**

43  
44 **Policy 9H-1: Support multi-use of the existing senior/community centers to**  
45 **maximize their full potential.**  
46

- 1 Policy 9H-2: Continue the cooperation between the County and the Cities and  
2 Point Roberts Park District on ownership and management of  
3 the existing senior/community centers.  
4
- 5 Policy 9H-3: Evaluate the cost/benefit ratio of adding a multi-purpose facility  
6 on the property owned by the Parks Department at Smith and  
7 Northwest Roads to meet the expanding demand by all age  
8 groups in the Bellingham/Ferndale growth corridor.  
9
- 10 Policy 9H-4: Expand the Plantation Rifle Range to meet the needs of citizens  
11 and law enforcement agencies.  
12
- 13 Policy 9H-5: Acquire property for a buffer area around the Plantation Rifle  
14 Range to insure the ability to continue its use in the future.  
15
- 16 Policy 9H-6: Continue to utilize the Roeder Home as the cultural arts facility  
17 flagship while utilizing partnerships, leased space, or creative  
18 opportunities to accommodate program expansion.  
19
- 20 Policy 9H-7: Continue to monitor the need for additional aquatic facilities in  
21 the community, with the basic assumption that Whatcom  
22 County will not be an indoor aquatic provider in the near future.  
23
- 24 Policy 9H-8: Continue to search for partnerships with other public agencies  
25 and private groups in providing recreation facilities such as golf  
26 facilities, camping, and resort centers.  
27
- 28 Policy 9H-9: Expand the partnership concept to incorporate school buildings  
29 and other public or private facilities which can accommodate  
30 meetings and recreational functions.  
31

**Recreation — Action Plan**

Reason for Change: Incorporating action items into goals or policies or deleting outdated items.

**General Park and Recreation Services**

- ~~1. Continue to monitor park and recreation service needs throughout the county and encourage others to provide the identified service needs. See New Policy 9I-1~~
- ~~2. Stress a good public image and the importance of public relations to all employees of the Parks and Recreation Department. See New Policy 9I-2~~



1 ~~3. As economically feasible, and as need warrants, implement the recreation~~  
 2 ~~and service programs in Chapter VII of the Comprehensive Park and~~  
 3 ~~Recreation Open Space Plan. Recommend Deletion~~

4  
 5 ~~4. Continue to implement those elements of the Nooksack River Plan (Jones and~~  
 6 ~~Jones 1973) which are beneficial, appropriate and economically feasible. See~~  
 7 ~~Existing Policy 9E-2~~

### 9 **Park Facilities**

10  
 11 5. **Goal 9I: As economically feasible, and as need warrants, implement the**  
 12 **continue to implement Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open**  
 13 **Space Plan including the goals and policies ~~and maps incorporated~~**  
 14 **herein through adoption of the six-year capital improvement**  
 15 **program.**

16  
 17 Policy 9I-1: Continue to monitor park and recreation service needs  
 18 throughout the county and encourage others to provide the identified service  
 19 needs.

20  
 21 Reason for change: Moved from Action Items.

22  
 23 ~~6.~~ Policy 9I-2: Develop facilities and areas that will be particularly attractive to  
 24 Whatcom County residents.

25  
 26 ~~7.~~ Policy 9I-3: Develop and maintain facilities at a high standard. These  
 27 standards should be established in accordance with the Comprehensive Park  
 28 and Recreation Open Space Plan and the Whatcom County Comprehensive  
 29 Plan.

30  
 31 ~~8.~~ Policy 9I-4: ~~Continue to d~~Design and develop recreation facilities for low  
 32 maintenance.

33  
 34 ~~9.~~ Policy 9I-5: In keeping with policies in other chapters of this plan, consider  
 35 strategies for develop a mechanism for ensuring the provision of community  
 36 neighborhood parks in accordance with appropriate standards ~~when~~  
 37 ~~residential areas are developed outside of incorporated areas.~~ In the  
 38 residential UGAs not associated with cities and in Rural Communities  
 39 mechanisms are needed for acquisition, development and subsequent  
 40 maintenance and operations. Community Associations and Park Districts are  
 41 options to be explored.

42  
 43 ~~10.~~ ~~Develop a strategic~~ Policy 9I-6: Continue to plan for full utilization of ~~the~~  
 44 existing senior/community centers and explore partnerships to help absorb  
 45 future need.

- 1 | ~~11. Develop a master plan for the property at Smith and Northwest Road,~~  
2 | ~~contingent upon funding, to include an indoor multi-purpose center.~~
- 3 |
- 4 | ~~12. Update and implement Policy 9I-7: Continue to identify and develop major~~  
5 | ~~planning initiatives identified in the CPROS Plan. the master plan for the~~  
6 | ~~Plantation Rifle Range and Hovander Homestead Park.~~
- 7 |
- 8 | ~~13. Policy 9I-8: Work with timber companies and other private property owners~~  
9 | ~~to Develop strategies to acquire the land currently leased for the Plantation~~  
10 | ~~Rifle Range and a buffer around the rifle range.~~
- 11 |
- 12 | ~~14. Preserve additional cultural heritage sites such as the Hovander House, the~~  
13 | ~~Roeder Home, and Tennant Lake Interpretive Center for recreation purposes.~~
- 14 |
- 15 | ~~15. Policy 9I-9: Galbraith/Lookout Mt. - Develop and implement a plan to acquire~~  
16 | ~~Rights of Way for trail corridors and purchase of additional park acreage,~~  
17 | ~~along with pursuit of formal usage agreements with private land owners, to~~  
18 | ~~preserve the recreational value for residents and tourists.~~
- 19 |
- 20 | ~~16. Policy 9I-10: Stewart Mt. - Negotiate with the current land owner Crown~~  
21 | ~~Corporation to obtain formal usage agreements for access to logging trails, to~~  
22 | ~~open public access corridors between Lake Whatcom recreation areas and the~~  
23 | ~~South Fork Valley.~~

**GOAL 9J-1: Develop a stronger financial base for recreational services by:**

Note: Goal 9J-1 above and Policies 9J-1 – Policy 9J-5 below were previous Action Items.

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

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

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

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

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

Reason for Change: The following action items either converted to new policies or deleted if duplicative of existing policies.

**Preservation of Natural Areas**

- ~~17. Complete the inventory and study of Recreation Resource Management Areas in accordance with policies under goal 9(F).~~
- ~~18. Make it advantageous to land developers and landowners to dedicate land for public use.~~
- ~~19. Develop design standards that provide for the integration of open space and recreation opportunities within subdivisions, planned unit developments and other development proposals.~~
- ~~20. Create alternative revenue sources and develop mechanisms to earmark funds to help pay for the acquisition, maintenance and operation of parks, open space and shoreline access.~~
- ~~21. Develop mechanisms for land banking of public open space.~~
- ~~22. Prime open space, and river corridors and natural areas should be designated and prioritized for future acquisition. River corridors will be evaluated for increased wetland/water storage areas for flood mitigation and fish and wildlife habitat and potential secondary use for reservoirs as park and open space attractions.~~
- ~~23. Develop specific implementation strategies for those elements of the Natural Heritage Plan that are appropriate, beneficial, consistent with this plan and within the County's fiscal capabilities. Review the Natural Heritage Plan annually and incorporate appropriate items in the Capital Facilities planning for parks and recreation in future years.~~
- ~~24. Continue the partnerships with other organizations, groups, or individuals consistent with the goals identified in the Natural Heritage Plan for Whatcom County.~~

**Trails**

- ~~25. Incorporate existing and proposed trails into a comprehensive and integrated system of looped and interconnected trails which give users a wide choice of routes and environments.~~
- ~~26. Continue to update the trails inventory to identify all designated and non-designated trails in the county.~~

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

1 | ~~provide internal circulation and connect to nearby commercial and activity~~  
2 | ~~centers, and recreational opportunities.~~

3  
4  
5 | **Funding**

6  
7 | ~~Develop a stronger financial base for recreational services by:~~

8  
9 | ~~39. Designing future recreation facilities and areas with the ability to charge user~~  
10 | ~~fees.~~

11  
12 | ~~40. Investigating new innovative methods of financing facility development,~~  
13 | ~~maintenance, and operating needs.~~

14  
15 | ~~41. Considering joint ventures with private clubs, public agencies, commercial~~  
16 | ~~operations and other groups to build and maintain facilities.~~

17  
18 | ~~42. Providing facilities that will encourage tourism.~~

19  
20 | ~~43. Where timber needs to be removed due to disease, windfall or for park~~  
21 | ~~facility improvements, timber shall be harvested and sold using best~~  
22 | ~~management practices.~~

23  
24 | ~~44. Consider the establishment of park impact fees based on the Growth~~  
25 | ~~Management Act.~~