

## 4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### POLICY FOUNDATION

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan is reviewed every 8 years. It is currently undergoing a series of updates and is scheduled for adoption in 2016. The Comprehensive Plan provides broad guidance for Whatcom County activities.

Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan was developed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (GMA) Planning Goals (RCW 36.70.020). Under GMA, goals were adopted to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations of those counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040. The following GMA planning goals pertain to parks, recreation and open space and are used exclusively for the purpose of guiding the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations:

#### Open Space and Recreation

Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.

#### Environment

Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

#### Historic Preservation

Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance

The following Whatcom County County-Wide Planning Policies (Adopted April 1993 and revised 3/11/97 & 1/25/05) are taken from the County's Comprehensive Plan and pertain to parks and recreation:

#### **H. Open Space/Greenbelt Corridors**

1. Adequate open space is vital to the quality of life and sense of place in Whatcom County. The county, cities, Port of Bellingham, and other appropriate jurisdictions should coordinate protection of linked greenbelts, within and between Urban Growth Areas, parks, and open space to protect wildlife corridors and to enhance recreational opportunities, public access and trail development.
2. The county and the cities shall plan for greenbelts and open space in their Comprehensive Planning processes and coordinate with each other. Open space systems should include lands which contain natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural and scenic resources. With increased residential densities, jurisdictions also should ensure provision of adequate neighborhood parks and play areas within safe bicycling and walking distance for children.
3. The county and the cities shall encourage, to the extent it is feasible, separation of Urban Growth Areas through planning, zoning, development regulations, open space purchase, conservation easements and other mechanisms which may be appropriate. Also, an array of incentives such as density bonuses, design flexibility and transferable development rights shall be offered to affected land owners.

4. The County and Cities should work cooperatively to protect and restore stream corridors within Urban Growth Areas that support anadromous fish.

## **J. County-Wide Transportation Facilities and Strategies**

7. Priorities shall be established and expenditures coordinated for county-wide bicycle and trail corridors. Bicycle and pedestrian-specific trails and other facilities shall be included during project planning and review. Coordinated corridors and cost sharing should be explored among all responsible and interested parties.

## **L. Impact Fees**

1. The county and the cities are encouraged to adopt fair and reasonable impact and/or mitigation fee ordinances to ensure that new growth pays its fair share of the cost of capital facilities, such as transportation improvements, parks, and schools.

Within the Comprehensive plan there are chapters which include goals, objectives, and associated policies that apply to park, recreation and open space activities. These include but are not limited to the following:

**Goal 4F: Achieve level of service targets for park and recreational facilities identified in this chapter and which support objectives and priorities identified in the *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan*, in the *Natural Heritage Plan*, and in this plan.**

**Policy 4F-1:** Seek non-capital opportunities to acquire, enhance and maintain park lands, trails, and other recreational facilities.

**Policy 4F-2:** Include acquisition and development costs in the six-year CIP for future trails projects.

**Policy 4F-3:** Develop a recreational facilities program that achieves and maintains the level of service for athletic fields and courts, trails, and support facilities for shoreline access, picnicking, and camping without adding to capital costs.

**Policy 4F-4:** Place a high priority on improvements to existing county recreational sites and facilities and using them to their full potential, including those outlined in the *Whatcom County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space Plan*, before investing capital in the acquisition and development of new facilities.

**Policy 4F-5:** Continue to provide centers for use by senior citizens and others.

**Goal 4G: Establish levels of service for roads, parks, corrections, and administrative services.**

**Policy 4G-2:** Adopt the following level of service standards for park facilities:

- Developed Parks: 9.6 acres per 1,000 population
- Trails: 0.60 of a mile per 1,000 population
- Activity Centers: five centers per 100,000 population

**Goal 4K: Consider alternative funding sources to assure levels of service adopted in the plan.**

**Policy 4K-1:** After all other financing options have been exhausted, consider the use of bonded indebtedness to finance major capital investments in infrastructure.

**Policy 4K-2:** Identify and promote public private partnerships to provide and enhance the provision of necessary services.

**Goal 4L: Ensure that capital facilities provide protection for threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species.**

**Policy 4L-1:** Fish and wildlife habitat should be carefully considered when selecting projects for the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program.

**Goal 6M: Promote bicycle and pedestrian travel by systematically providing safe and convenient routes and facilities where feasible.**

**Policy 6M-1:** Encourage safe and efficient bikeways that link populated areas of the county with travel destinations.

**Policy 6M-2:** Recognize public safety, education and law enforcement as integral to the development of bicycle transportation opportunities in Whatcom County.

**Policy 6M-4:** Identify needed rights-of-way for bicycles.

**Policy 6M-5:** Include internal pedestrian circulation systems as well as links to external systems in development projects.

**Policy 6M-6:** Develop a system of off-road trail networks for non-motorized transportation to link population centers, employment centers and recreation areas.

**Policy 6M-8:** Implement as a priority the goals, policies and recommendations of the latest Whatcom County Bicycle Plan.

**Goal 7E: Enhance the economic trade, tourism and industrial siting advantages of the county's location adjacent to the Canadian border.**

**Policy 7E-1:** Support attractions for Canadians and other visitors so they will remain in the community longer and distribute their spending throughout the community. Some of the examples would include support for such items as the following:

- Events such as the "Ski to Sea" race and festival.
- The Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Mount Baker Theater, other historic and cultural centers, and community revitalization efforts.
- Parks and open spaces.
- The Bellingham Festival of Music.
- The Mount Baker outdoor recreation area.
- Farmers markets and other natural resource based activities.
- Projects, events and activities of unincorporated areas such as Point Roberts, Birch Bay and East County.

**Goal 7G: Coordinate economic development with environmental, resource, and other comprehensive land use and open space policies and measures to enhance the community's overall quality of life.**

**Policy 7G-1:** Recognize the natural environment as a major asset and manage environmental resources accordingly.

**Policy 7G-3:** Provide support to Whatcom County's tourist industry to maintain and enhance a balance between the economic benefits of tourism and the local quality of life.

**Goal 7H: To promote economic diversity, continue to support the resource industries as significant elements of the local economy including the employment base.**

**Policy 7H-2:** Work with other agencies and groups to improve the condition of the fishery resource, including habitat maintenance and enhancement, especially for habitats utilized by threatened and endangered fish species.

**Policy 7H-7:** Encourage growth of tourism and recreational activities and businesses that provide for diversity of the natural resource industry, provided that they comply with the countywide planning policies, and preserve the rural character of the area.

**Goal 7K: Enable a geographic balance for economic growth within the capacities of the county's natural resources, natural systems, public services, and public facilities.**

**Policy 7K-4:** Consider establishing more resource and tourism based recreational, commercial, and industrial uses to create economic opportunity in the rural areas of the county.

**Goal 8D: Reduce land use conflicts between Whatcom County's agriculture and non-agricultural landowners.**

**Policy 8D-9:** Encourage low intensity recreational activities which sustain and are compatible with agricultural uses.

**Goal 8I: Ensure that forest practices avoid adverse impacts to the habitat of threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species.**

**Policy 8I-1:** Ensure that adequate riparian buffers are maintained along rivers and streams.

**Policy 8I-2:** Minimize sedimentation to rivers and streams.

**\* Note: Policy 9A - 10N Pending approval "Recommended by Parks & Recreation Commission for Inclusion"**

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

**Policy 9A-1:** Because the cities currently provide the highly developed urban parks, the County's role should be to provide rural regional 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 important although they must have 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.

**Policy 9A-4:** All parks must be designed to create a minimal impact upon surrounding property and to the site itself.

**Policy 9A-5:** Day use parks should be designed with one entrance and control point so that entrance fees can be charged.

**Policy 9A-6:** If possible, regional parks should be located on an existing or proposed trail route.

**Policy 9A-7:** The parks should be designed to accommodate a range of age groups, accessibility and interests.

**Policy 9A-8:** The County should only accept sites that meet the above standards.

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

**Policy 9B-1:** All the policy statements and design standards for regional parks should also apply to multi-use camping parks.

**Policy 9B-2:** Because camping parks will attract many non-county residents, they should be recognized for their tourism value but at the same time county residents should not subsidize the cost of camping.

**Policy 9B-3:** A wide variety of camping types should be offered including primitive sites, tent sites, full-service RV sites and group camping areas.

**Policy 9B-4:** The camping areas should be physically separated from the other parts of the park with the ability to be closed off during winter months.

**Policy 9B-5:** Most large camping areas should be designed to a high standard with full-service hookups, flush toilets and rest rooms, showers, laundry and other support facilities.

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

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

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

**Policy 9C-2:** 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.

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

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

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

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

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

**Policy 9C-8:** Hiking trails should reach areas of natural beauty with the purpose of permitting the hiker to seek areas of solitude and get away from the built environment.

**Policy 9C-9:** Equestrian trails should be accessible most of the year. Some equestrian trails should be close-in to the urban areas.

**Policy 9C-10:** Adequate parking, signage, trash receptacles, and toilet facilities should be provided at all major trailheads.

**Policy 9C-11:** Where public funds are used to construct or maintain dikes, levees or revetments, public access should be encouraged for trail purposes, where appropriate.

**Policy 9C-12:** Water trails for non-motorized boats should be identified with provisions made for parking, launching areas, and places of interest along the water route where boats can land.

**Policy 9C-13:** Work toward partnering with other agencies and the public to accomplish recreational goals.

**Policy 9C-14:** Investigate multi-solutions that will accommodate several county goals, such as recreation, water retention, and flood prevention measures, utilizing a similar piece of property.

**Policy 9C-15:** Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails and other transportation rights of way is encouraged when not in conflict with goals to protect wildlife, public health and safety.

**Policy 9C-16:** Implement the goals, policies and recommendations of the latest Whatcom County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan that are consistent with this plan and within the County's fiscal capabilities.

**Policy 9C-17:** Promote the integration of trails within subdivisions, planned unit developments and other development proposals that provide internal circulation and connect to nearby recreational opportunities.

**Policy 9C-18:** Acquisition of and planning for trail corridors should be encouraged 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.

**Policy 9C-19:** Continue to update the trails inventory to identify all designated and non-designated trails in the county.

**Policy 9C-20:** Continue to support the County's long range parks and recreation vision of developing a county-wide trail network, while respecting 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 for trail corridor connection 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 pursue an alternative route to link these points.

**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 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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.

**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 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 for cultural arts 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.
- Goal 9I:** As economically feasible, continue to implement the Whatcom County Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space (CPROS Plan) goals and policies through adoption of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Policy 9I-1:** Continue to monitor park and recreation service needs throughout the county and encourage others to provide the identified service needs.
- Policy 9I-2:** Develop facilities and areas that will be particularly attractive to Whatcom County residents.
- Policy 9I-3:** Develop and maintain facilities at a high standard. These standards should be established in accordance with the Whatcom County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Open Space (CPROS Plan) and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.
- Policy 9I-4:** Design and develop recreation facilities for low maintenance.
- Policy 9I-5:** In keeping with policies in other chapters of this plan, consider strategies for ensuring the provision of community parks in accordance with appropriate standards. In the residential UGAs not associated with cities and in Rural Communities mechanisms are needed for acquisition, development and subsequent maintenance and operations. Community Associations and Park Districts are options to be explored.
- Policy 9I-6:** Continue to plan for full utilization of existing senior/community centers and explore partnerships to help absorb future need.
- Policy 9I-7:** Continue to identify and develop major planning initiatives identified in the CPROS Plan.
- Policy 9I-8:** Develop strategies to acquire land currently leased for the Plantation Rifle Range and a buffer around the rifle range
- Policy 9I-9:** Galbraith/Lookout Mt. - Develop and implement a plan to acquire Rights of Way for trail corridors and purchase of additional park acreage, along with pursuit of formal usage agreements with private land owners, to preserve the recreational value for residents and tourists.
- Policy 9I-10:** Stewart Mt. - Negotiate with current landowner to obtain formal usage agreements for access to logging trails, to open public access corridors between Lake Whatcom recreation areas and the South Fork Valley.
- Goal 9J: Develop a stronger financial base for recreational services.**
- Policy 9J-1:** Design future recreation facilities and areas with the ability to charge user fees.

**Policy 9J-2:** Explore new 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.

The following 2008 adopted Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan goals, objectives and actions have been updated and revised for this plan:

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES REVISED**

Whatcom County has undertaken a modified strategic approach to regional or countywide services where Whatcom County assumes responsibility for functions no other agency or organization can provide, and helps coordinate or support those functions and activities that have other viable sponsors and partners. For example:

### **Coordinating activities:**

Whatcom County provides central information and coordination services for open space, trail, park facilities and recreational programs on a countywide basis.

### **Planning and development assistance:**

Whatcom County will provide planning and development assistance when:

- there are no other designated agencies or organization who can,
- the activity involves siting controversies or environmental consequences that may not be equitably resolved otherwise within the Whatcom County urban growth or community planning areas, or
- proposed developments will be within city urban growth areas and thus potentially annexed into corporate limits but currently subject to Whatcom County authority.

### **Development, operation and maintenance:**

Whatcom County will develop, operate and maintain open space, trails, or park facilities and recreational programs when:

- the facility will have broad benefits for a large proportion of the countywide population and financed using resident approved methods,
- facility development and operating costs will be recaptured from direct charges of the populations who use the facility, or
- facility development and operating costs will be compensated in some manner through inter-local agreements with the using agency, area or benefiting user group, particularly where the demands will originate from a regional service requirement, or

- the facility will generate economic benefits for the area, or
- the site or facility has intrinsic value apart from traditional operation and maintenance needs, like a passive natural area or wetland preservation.

The following goals and objectives are based on a strategic approach to regional or countywide services, an analysis of existing open space, trail, park, and recreation conditions, and the results of workshop planning sessions and surveys.

## **PRESERVES AND OPEN SPACE**

### **Goal:**

Provide protection for a diversified system of significant and critical habitats and environmental areas that protect threatened species, watersheds, migration corridors, forestlands, tidelands, open spaces and scenic areas.

### **Objectives:**

Assume a major responsibility for the planning, coordination, and preservation of unique environmental areas, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, open spaces, agricultural lands, forestlands, and scenic areas.

Work with all other public and private agencies, particularly the cities, Port of Bellingham, Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation, and Whatcom County and Lummi Island Land Trusts, among others, to create an effective approach to the following regional conservation issues and proposals.

### **Wildlife habitat**

- Identify and conserve critical wildlife habitat including nesting sites, foraging areas, and migration corridors within or adjacent to natural areas, open spaces, and the developing urban areas – such as the Terrell Creek Heron Colony and Tennant Lake Wildlife Area.
- Preserve sensitive habitat sites that support threatened species and urban wildlife habitat - including the saltwater shorelines of Birch, Lummi and Bellingham Bays, Drayton Harbor, and Chuckanut Bay, and the freshwater shorelines of Silver Lake, Lake Whatcom and Lake Samish, and the Nooksack and Lummi Rivers.

### **Natural areas**

- Preserve and protect significant environmental features including unique wetlands, open spaces, woodlands, shorelines, waterfronts and other characteristics that support wildlife and reflect Whatcom County's resource heritage – especially including the valleys of the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Nooksack River.
- Provide public access to environmentally sensitive areas and sites that are especially unique to Whatcom County – especially including Drayton Harbor, Bellingham Bay, Chuckanut Bay, and Lummi and Portage Islands.

### **Forestlands**

- Identify and protect forest resources in Whatcom County – including public and private forestlands that can provide productive timber and other wood products. Develop and utilize protective forest resource zoning districts and designations, special tax incentives, public land ownership and management, and other measures to preserve this valuable resource.

- b: Identify and conserve forest cover and the scenic attributes woodlands provide between rural and urban land uses especially including the viewscapes along the Interstate 5/Lake Samish and SR-9 corridors and between the Twin Sisters and Chuckanut Mountains (North Cascades Corridor)
- c: Identify and preserve prime examples of heritage forestlands in Whatcom County – such as the old growth forests in and around Canyon Lake Community Forest and the extensive woodlands on Chuckanut, Lookout and Stewart and Sumas Mountains.

**Farmlands**

- a: Identify and protect agricultural resources in Whatcom County including lands and soils that can provide productive crop, livestock, and other agricultural products. Develop and utilize protective farm resource zoning districts and designations, special tax incentives, development rights, public land ownership and management, and other measures to preserve this valuable resource.
- b: Identify and conserve farmlands and the scenic attributes agriculture provides between rural and urban land uses – especially including the rural farm landscapes in the valleys around Lynden, Sumas, and Nooksack.
- c: Identify and preserve prime examples of heritage farmsteads in Whatcom County – such as the Hovander and Nessel Farms.

**Open spaces**

- a: Define and establish a system of open space corridors or separators to provide definition between natural areas and urban land uses within Whatcom County’s emerging urban centers especially including the Nooksack River corridor and delta, and the Interstate 5 and Lake Samish corridor.
- b: Increase natural area and open space linkages within the developing urban areas - particularly along the current and former UP, NP, BN&SF, BB&BC, and BB&E Railroad corridors.

**Urban growth preserves and set-asides:**

- a: Cooperate with other public and private agencies, and with private landowners to set-aside land and resources necessary to provide high quality, convenient open space, trail, and park facilities before the most suitable sites are lost to development – particularly the lands around Stewart, Lookout, and Chuckanut Mountains.
- b: Preserve unique environmental features or areas in future land developments and increase public use and access. Cooperate with other public and private agencies, and with private landowners to set aside unique features or areas as publicly accessible resources – including lands adjacent to Birch Bay State Park, Semiahmoo Spit, Bellingham Airport, and Larrabee State Park.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

**Goal:**

Assume a major responsibility for the planning, coordination, and preservation of unique archaeological, historical, cultural, scenic, and man-made places, sites, landmarks, and vistas.

**Objectives:**

Work with all other public and private agencies, particularly the cities, Port of Bellingham, Lummi Nation, Whatcom County and Lummi Island Land Trusts, Whatcom County and Washington State Historical Societies, among others, to create an effective approach to the following regional resource conservation issues and proposals.

### **Historical features and interests:**

- a: Identify, preserve, and enhance Whatcom County's multicultural heritage, traditions, and cultural features including historical sites, buildings, artworks, views, and monuments within park sites and historical districts.
- b: Identify and incorporate significant historical and cultural lands, sites, artifacts, and facilities into the open space, trail, and park system to preserve these interests and provide a balanced social experience – especially including important Native American, railroad, mining, logging, and shipping sites and places of interest.
- c: Work with Washington State and Whatcom County Historical Societies, and other archaeological and cultural groups to incorporate historical and cultural activities into park developments and recreational programs.

### **Manmade environments and features**

- a: Incorporate interesting manmade environments, structures, activities, and areas into the open space, trail, and park system to preserve these features and provide a balanced recreational experience – especially including Military Road and Guide Meridian, the UP, NP, BB&BC, BB&E Railroads and Interurban Trolley, Steamer and Mosquito Fleet landings, and sawmills and mines.
- b: Work with property and facility owners to increase public access and utilization of these special sites and features.

## **TRAILS, GREENWAYS AND SCENIC BYWAYS**

### **Goal:**

Plan, develop and operate a system of on and off-road regional trails. Regional trail facilities may include fresh and saltwater trails, off-road hike, bike, and horse trails, on-road bicycle touring routes and scenic drives, and cross-country ski and snowmobile trails that are directly related to environmental resources that are of most interest to county residents.

### **Objectives:**

Work with all other public and private agencies, particularly the cities, Port of Bellingham, Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation, Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, US Forest Service, and National Park Service, to develop and maintain the following integrated system of regional trails.

### **Water trails – non-motorized craft**

- a: Incorporate and extend the Cascade Marine Trail, a saltwater trail network for hand-carry or car-top craft including canoes and kayaks, extending from British Columbia and through Puget Sound, with launch sites into Drayton Harbor, Birch, Lummi, Bellingham, and Chuckanut Bays, with access to Lummi and Portage Islands.
- b: Develop a freshwater trail network for hand-carry or car-top craft including launch sites for canoes and kayaks that extends the length of the Nooksack River from Maple Falls and Deming to Bellingham Bay, and Lake Whatcom.
- c: Designate appropriate bad weather pull ins and overnight camping locations along the major saltwater trail routes – including Lighthouse Marine Park, Semiahmoo Spit, Birch Bay State Park, Cherry Point, Lummi and Portage Islands, and Larrabee State Park, among others. Designate overnight camping locations along the major freshwater route on the Nooksack River - including Deming, Nugent's Corner River Access, Lynden, Hovander Homestead Park, among others, and along the shoreline of Lake Whatcom.

d: Develop and operate canoe, kayak, crew, and other non-motorized craft instruction, rental, and storage facilities at major freshwater locations – including Silver and Samish Lakes and Lake Whatcom.

**On-road rural and scenic byways – vehicles and bicycle touring**

- a: Identify a countywide system of rural and backcountry scenic driving routes and byways that access and highlight the scenic, environmental, farmland, and historical attributes of Whatcom County – especially including Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay, Lummi Island and Bellingham Bay, Chuckanut, Lake Samish, and Lake Whatcom Drives, South Pass Road, SR-9 and the Mount Baker Highway. Integrate the countywide system with other state and federal byways through the North Cascades, Skagit and Island Counties.
- b: Develop a series of roadside rest stops, viewpoints, interpretive exhibits, and byway signage systems that integrate the scenic routes with specific historical, cultural, environmental, and scenic points of interest – such as Semiahmoo Spit in Drayton Harbor, Sandy Point in Lummi Bay, Lummi Island and Chuckanut Island in Chuckanut Bay, among others.
- c: Integrate byway routes and points of interest to access parks, public facilities, museums and historical sites, and business districts – especially in Blaine, Ferndale, Bellingham, Lynden, Nooksack, Sumas, Kendall, and the Mount Baker Highway.
- d: For bicycle touring enthusiasts, designate appropriate overnight bicycle camping locations along the major routes and byways – such as Lighthouse Marine Park, Hovander Homestead Park, Silver Lake Park, Birch Bay State Park, and Larrabee State Park, among others.

**Off-road trail systems**

- a: Create a comprehensive system of off-road hike, bike, and horse trails that access scenic, environmental, historical, and open space attributes of Whatcom County – especially including the Nooksack River, original UP, NP, BB&BC, BB&E railroad corridors, old logging and mining roads, and where appropriate, within the road rights-of way, as well as across cooperating private properties where appropriate.
- b: Develop a series of trailheads, trailside rest stops, viewpoints, interpretive exhibits, and trail signage systems that integrate the off-road hike, bike, and horse trails with specific historical, cultural, environmental, and scenic points of interest – such as former steam boat landings, fish traps, sawmills, mining sites, farmsteads, railroads, and roads, among others.
- c: Integrate continuous off-road trail corridors and local spur or loop routes with parks, public facilities, museums and historical sites, and business districts in cities.
- d: For overnight trail users, develop appropriate overnight camping locations along the major trail corridors – such as Hovander Homestead Park, Silver Lake Park, Birch Bay State Park, and Larrabee State Park, among others.
- e: Furnish off-road trails with appropriate supporting trailhead improvements that include interpretive and directory signage systems, rest stops, restrooms, parking and loading areas, water, and other services.
- f: Where appropriate, locate trailheads at or in conjunction with park sites, schools, and other community facilities to increase local area access to countywide trail systems and reduce duplication of supporting improvements.
- g: Where appropriate, install telephones, emergency call boxes, or other means by which trail users can summon fire, emergency aid, police, and other safety and security personnel should the need arise.

h: Develop trail improvements of a design and development standard that is easy to maintain and access by maintenance, security, and other appropriate personnel, equipment, and vehicles.

### **Winter trails**

a: Designate a system of appropriate winter cross-country skiing and snowmobiling trails that access safe and secure back roads, trail corridors, parks, and public and private lands in Whatcom County – including Black Mountain Ranch, Canyon Lake, and Skookum Creek. Link the county winter trails system with the more extensive winter trails networks designated on US Forest Service and National Park Service lands in the Mount Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest and North Cascades National Park.

### **Off-road vehicle and ATV**

a: Identify, and when and where appropriate, provide coordination for off-road motorcycle, ATV, and 4-wheel drive vehicle riding courses, trails, and areas in Whatcom County.

## **REGIONAL PARKS AND WATER ACCESS**

### **Goal:**

Plan, develop, manage and operate a system of Regional Parks. These facilities may include resource-oriented activities including fishing sites, boat access ramps, swimming beaches, picnicking areas, and campgrounds that are directly related to environmental and historical resources that are of countywide interest to residents.

### **Objectives:**

Work with all other public and private agencies, particularly the Port of Bellingham, Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife and Natural Resources, Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, US Forest Service, and National Park Service, to develop and operate the following appropriate resource park facilities.

### **Waterfront access and facilities**

a: Acquire and develop additional salt and freshwater shoreline access for waterfront fishing, beachcombing, wading, swimming, and other related recreational activities and pursuits – especially including sites on Drayton Harbor, Birch, Lummi, and Bellingham Bays, Silver Lake, Lake Whatcom, Lake Samish, and the Nooksack River.

b: Develop a mixture of salt and freshwater non-motorized and powerboat access opportunities – especially including additional sites and improvements to existing properties on Drayton Harbor, Lummi Island, Birch and Bellingham Bays, Lake Whatcom and Samish, and the Nooksack River.

### **Picnicking and day-use activities**

a: Acquire and develop additional countywide picnic sites, shelters, and day-use group picnic grounds and camps at major resource parks and along major off-road trail corridors throughout Whatcom County – especially including sites on Point Roberts, Semiahmoo Spit, Birch Bay, Cherry Point, Lummi Island, Lake Whatcom and Samish, South Pass, and at intervals along the Nooksack River including Hovander Homestead Park.

### **Campgrounds and retreats**

a: Acquire and develop a countywide system of tent, recreational vehicle, yurt, cabin, lodge, and retreat facilities at major resource parks and along major off-road trail corridors throughout Whatcom County – especially including sites on Point Roberts, Cherry Point, Lakes Whatcom and Samish, Acme, and at intervals along the Nooksack River.

## **SPECIAL USE AREAS AND FACILITIES**

### **Goal:**

Assist with the planning of special use areas such as athletic parks, community centers. These facilities may include competitive soccer, softball, and baseball, rugby and La Crosse fields, meeting and activity centers and special enterprises that are of countywide interest.

### **Objectives:**

Help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies cities, school and park districts, nonprofits and sports leagues and commissions. Such coordination will seek to site and sponsor development of major competitive outdoor athletic facilities, centers and facilities for all age and skill groups within reasonable geographic service areas of major population centers.

### **Athletic fields**

a: Identify and help plan a network of sites that can be developed (such as soccer, softball, and baseball fields) that meet the highest quality competitive practice and playing standards and requirements for all age groups, skill levels, and recreational interests – including new possible sites at Bay Horizon Park, East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, Ferndale and Mt Baker Highway/Nooksack.

### **Community centers**

- a: Designate a network of multipurpose community centers that can be developed to provide arts and crafts, music, video, classroom instruction, meeting facilities, eating and health care, daycare, latch key, and other spaces for all age groups including preschool, youth, teens, and seniors on a year-round basis.
- b: Support the continued development and diversification by the Whatcom County school districts and other organizations of special meeting, assembly, and other community facilities that provide general support to school age populations and the community-at-large at elementary, middle, and high schools within Whatcom County urban growth and community planning areas.
- c: Develop special outdoor cultural and performing arts facilities that enhance and expand music, dance, drama, cultural and historical interpretations, and other audience and participatory opportunities for the county-at-large – including a festival events area at Hovander Homestead Park.

### **Special enterprises**

- a: Where appropriate and economically feasible (self-supporting), designate and support operation of specialized and special interest recreational facilities like canoe and crew houses, equestrian centers, gun ranges, historical museums and exhibits, retreats and conference centers for these interests in the general population.
- b: Where appropriate, initiate joint planning and operating programs with other public and private agencies to determine and provide for special activities like marinas, ATV and off-road vehicle courses, and camping on a regional basis.

## **RECREATIONAL AND INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS**

### **Goal:**

Coordinate, assist, and when feasible, program and operate recreational and interpretive programs and outreach activities of special interest to or benefit for county residents at county park sites and community centers.

### **Objectives:**

Coordinate, promote, and link an integrated recreational program system with other public, non-profit, and for-profit agencies, organizations, and vendors. Such programs may include athletic leagues and



sports, teen and senior age groups, and special populations where these activities are of major interest and benefit to county residents of all ages.

### **Recreational and interpretive programs**

- a: Organize and sponsor the operation of environmental, historical, cultural, and recreational programs providing instruction, volunteerism, and participation in habitat restoration, water-based recreation, trail development and security, interpretation programs, summer and day-camps, maintenance, and other site-specific activities at Whatcom County parks sites and properties.
- b: Create a central access point and clearinghouse for arts and crafts, classroom instruction in music and dance, physical conditioning and health care, meeting facilities, daycare, latch key, and other program activities for all cultural, age, physical and mental capability, and income groups in Whatcom County by all agencies and vendors including the county.
- c: Designate and land bank appropriate sites, and help facilitate development agreements and clearinghouse access to user and league organizations to operate basketball, volleyball, tennis, soccer, baseball, softball, and other instruction and participatory programs for all age, skill level, and income groups in Whatcom County.
- d: Assist historical and cultural societies to develop and display artifacts, reports, and exhibits; and conduct lectures, classes, and other programs that document and develop awareness of Whatcom County's heritage at county park sites and properties.

## **CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAMS**

### **Goal:**

Help facilitate, organize, coordinate, and selectively develop high quality, diversified cultural arts facilities and programs that increase awareness, attendance, and participation opportunities at Whatcom County parks and properties.

### **Objectives:**

#### **Programs**

- a: Support successful collaborations between public agencies, the business community, service groups, schools, arts patrons, and artists that optimally utilize artistic resources and talents at Whatcom County parks and properties.

#### **Artworks**

- a: Where appropriate, incorporate public artworks including paintings, sculptures, exhibits, and other media for indoor and outdoor display to expand resident access and appropriately furnish public places in Whatcom County parks and properties.

## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STANDARDS FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Goal:**

Design and develop facilities that are accessible, safe, and sustainable with life cycle features that account for long-term costs and benefits.

### **Objectives:**

#### **Accessibility**

- a: Design outdoor picnic areas, trails, playgrounds, courts, fields, parking lots, restrooms, and other active and supporting facilities to be accessible to individuals and organized groups of all physical capabilities, skill levels, age groups, income, and activity interests.
- b: Design indoor facility spaces, activity rooms, restrooms, hallways, parking lots, and other active and supporting spaces and improvements to be accessible to individuals and organized groups of all

physical capabilities, skill levels, age groups, income, and activity interests.

#### Maintenance

- a: Design, retrofit, and develop facilities that are of low maintenance and high capacity design to reduce overall facility maintenance and operation requirements and costs.
- b: Where appropriate, incorporate low maintenance materials, settings or other value engineering considerations that reduce care and security requirements, and retain natural conditions and experiences.

#### Security and safety

- a: Implement the provisions and requirements of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and other design and development standards that improve park facility safety and security features for park users, department personnel, and the public-at-large.
- b: Develop and implement safety standards, procedures, and programs that provide proper training and awareness for department personnel.
- c: Define and enforce rules and regulations concerning park activities and operations that protect user groups, department personnel, and the general public-at large.
- d: Where appropriate, use adopt-a-park programs, park watches, park police patrols, technology and other innovative programs that increase safety and security awareness and visibility.

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND COORDINATION**

### **Goal:**

Create effective and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining Whatcom County facilities and programs that accurately distribute costs and benefits to public and private interests.

### **Objectives:**

#### **Finance**

- a: Investigate innovative available methods, such as growth impact fees, land set-a-side or fee-in-lieu-of-donation ordinances, and inter-local agreements, for the financing of facility development, maintenance, and operating needs in order to reduce costs, retain financial flexibility, match user benefits and interests, and increase facility services.
- b: Consider joint ventures with other public and private agencies including the cities, school districts, regional, state, federal, and other public and private agencies including for-profit concessionaires, where feasible and desirable.

#### **Public and private resource coordination**

- a: Create a comprehensive, balanced open space, trail, park, and recreation system that integrates Whatcom County facilities and services with resources available from the cities, school districts, and other regional, state, federal, and private park and recreational lands and facilities in a manner that will best serve and provide for Whatcom County resident interests.
- b: Cooperate with the cities, school districts, regional, state, and federal, and other public and private agencies to avoid duplication, improve facility quality and availability, reduce costs, and represent resident area interests through joint planning and development efforts.

#### **Cost/benefit assessment**

- a: Define existing and proposed land and facility levels-of-service (ELOS PLOS) that differentiate requirements due to population growth impacts versus improved facility standards, regional versus

local nexus of benefit, county versus the combination of city, county, school, and other provider agency efforts in order to effectively plan and program open space, trails, parks, and recreation needs within Whatcom County.

- b: Create effective and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, operating, and maintaining open space, trail, park, and recreational facilities in manners that accurately distribute costs and benefits to public and private user interests - including the application of growth impact fees where new developments impact potential level of-service (ELOS) standards inside urban growth and community planning areas.
- c: Develop and operate recreational programs that serve the broadest needs of the population recovering program and operating costs with a combination of registration fees, user fees, grants, sponsorships, donations, scholarships, volunteer efforts, and the use of general funding.
- d: Where appropriate, provide recreational programs, like equestrian centers, boating facilities, gun ranges, and retreat and conference facilities for those interested groups who are willing to finance the cost through user fees, registration fees, volunteer efforts, or other means and methods.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Goal:**

Develop, train, and support a professional open space, trail, park, and recreation staff that effectively serves Whatcom County in the realization of the above listed goals and objectives.

### **Objectives:**

#### **Personnel**

- a: Employ a diverse, well-trained work force that is motivated to achieve department and countywide goals.
- b: Encourage teamwork through communications, creativity, positive image, risk taking, sharing of resources, and cooperation toward common *goals*.
- c: Where appropriate, provide staff with education, training, technology, equipment and supplies to increase personal productivity, efficiency, and pride.

## **LOCAL PARKS**

### **Goal:**

Recognizing the fact that local parks such as neighborhood and Community parks are primarily the responsibility of the Cities and Park Districts, Whatcom County will continue to assist local and rural communities in the development of these park areas when resources permit.

### **Objectives:**

- a. County will not add any neighborhood parks to its inventory.
- b. Neighborhood and Community parks in the current inventory will be transferred to the cities upon annexation.
- c. County will continue to work with rural communities and UGA's in development of community parks when community sponsorship and cost sharing for development and maintenance is a major component.