



Skagit County

Community Report



Skagit County Government

Summer 2014



Skagit County's Park and Recreation Department boasts 25 public parks including Howard Miller Steelhead Park.

Parks & Recreation celebrates Golden Anniversary!

We are privileged this year to celebrate Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department's Golden Anniversary!

The county's first Parks and Recreation Board was formed by resolution on August 5, 1964. Among the most dramatic developments in the department's early history was the 1973 decision to begin a six-year capital improvement plan. That plan was built upon a foundation of private donations and a \$500,000 bond request.

Priorities cited in plans of the early Seventies established a common thread of park needs we continue to see in current planning documents.

In the 1972 parks plan, an identified priority was to see more trails and waterfront access. That goal included acquisition and development at Steelhead Park, Friday Creek and the Sauk River. Trail and open space connectivity were also principal themes.

Trails were proposed connecting Fidalgo Island to Deception Pass, from the bridge to the Anacortes Ferry Terminal, a connection that's not quite finished but is actively being pursued. The Cascade Trail was also touted, as well as a north-south link connecting our neighboring counties.

"It's really amazing how many of these past goals have been realized," said department director Brian Adams. "Those achievements are a testament to hard work by a conscientious Parks and Recreational Board and county staff."

"It all adds a bit of intrigue to what accomplishments will appear in the rear view mirror 50 years from now," he continued. "Just think – there are kids growing up in our communities today who will sit on our advisory boards, staff our park crews, and together chart our paths to the future."

Did you know?



The first Skagit County Fair took place in 1898, when N.J. Molstad pulled a couple of Mount Vernon business people aside and created to form the Fair Association. Read more about our wonderful fair, past and present, on page 3.



Skagit County Parks and Recreation has a network of board members, volunteers, and partners who play significant roles in contributing to the success of our parks and activities. That network includes our devoted group of nine Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members. If you're out and about and run into Ralph Rowland, Mike Elde, Mark Dobie, Tim Manns, John Semrau, Liz McNett Crowl, Kevin Loy, Chris Allen or Elizabeth Detillion, consider thanking them for the time they volunteer deliberating parks and recreation issues. (Don't forget Lloyd Brown, who recently stepped down after more than 20 years of service!) See photo and article, page 7.

Shared vision leads to creation of department

The Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department (SCPR) began as a shared vision from a small group of individuals who saw a need for a rural parks system and regionally based recreation programs.

In about 1964, a board made up of several individuals with common recreational aspirations began meeting to discuss what the mission of a rural based department should be. They concluded it was important to establish public parks to showcase the beauty of Skagit County and ensure the parks were open to all.

There was a general fear that as populations increased around recreational lands, homes and privately held lands would begin to wrap around areas previously used for leisure activities.

Within a few years, the early founders of SCPR created the first parks plan. The platform of the plan positioned the compass for the department and produced a vision for the recreational future, including areas outside city boundaries.

Within a short time, the department acquired and built a campground along the Skagit River, a park that would later be named Howard Miller Steelhead Park. When former County Commissioner Wallace Sharpe died in the mid-1970s (Commissioner Sharpe's 24 years of service makes him the longest reigning County Commissioner in our history) his widow donated and dedicated 75 acres of waterfront acreage on Fidalgo Island.

Soon there was a mosaic of parklands and trails throughout greater Skagit County, providing numerous recreational opportunities including fishing, hiking, picnicking, ball sports, as well as numerous playgrounds for the youngsters.

SCPR continues to benefit from a citizen board that helps keep the department on task, taking pains to ensure that the park goals of the early visionaries are being actively pursued.



Skagit's natural beauty drew parks/rec director even as a boy

Parks and Recreation Director Brian Adams was captivated at an early age by the natural beauty of this northern Puget Sound alcove, exploring the local parklands from an early age.

In the course of his life he has "hung his hat" in several Skagit communities. Adams was born in Sedro-Woolley and raised in Anacortes. Today he lives on five acres on South Fidalgo Island, commuting each day to the office in Mount Vernon.

In fact, it was an outdoor adventure, Skagit style, that set Adams on the path to marriage.

He met his wife while hiking at Little Cranberry Lake, and soon after the two were hiking the trails of Sharpe Park, picnicking at Pomona Park, and exploring every nook and cranny – from the shores of Guemes to the upper reaches of the Skagit River – lands and facilities he is now responsible for managing.

To look at Adams' resume, the role of managing parks seems a natural fit. But this career move started out in the private sector in the foundry business, sandcasting bronze plaques, buckles, sculptures, and replica parts for businesses and artists across the United States and beyond.

After starting a family and building a new home, Adams decided it was time to follow his passion and educational training to get established in the parks profession. He started in the field when he began his parks career with the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, essentially building trails and supervising summer maintenance crews. After five years working for Anacortes he landed a job with Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR), the department he now directs.

Adams credits the success of the department to the contributions of numerous people, including the four directors who preceded him. There has also been a changing board of park and recreation advisory members who worked long and hard to



Skagit County's Park and Recreation Department Director Brian Adams (left) presents a service pin to Ranger Kyle Penninger.

create a vision and build an inventory of lands.

In addition, countless employees and volunteers have been steadfastly dedicated to ensuring a robust parks system consisting of 25 parks, a highly successful recreational program, and a regional fair that has provided more than 100 years of entertainment in the Valley (see page 3).

As parks director, Adams points out that he has had the good fortune to manage and maintain some of the lands he once roamed as a kid – a job that couldn't be done without the help of an incredible staff and a cadre of dedicated volunteers.

"It takes a village to steward the parks system," said Adams, "and we have had some great villagers tending to this mission, including the current group of nine Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members (see page 7).

"This department is also fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers who have spent thousands of hours doing work in our parks and recreation programs."

Hats off to all of you who make our parks a better place to recreate. SCPR couldn't do it without you!



Excitement of county fair begins on August 6!

There is no horsing around when it comes to our staff putting together an action packed county fair! At 10 a.m. sharp on Wednesday, August 6, we will swing open the gates and let the first fervent 2014 fairgoers charge in.

Although the fair always features fresh opportunities for visitors, it also builds on a storied history of entertainment at the Skagit County Fairgrounds.

In addition to homegrown talent Knut Bell headlining a non-stop parade of entertainers on the SICBA Main Stage, the entertainment that will be broadcast throughout the grounds is worth much more than the price of admission.

Animals of all shapes and sizes

Barns will bust at the seams with pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, horses, cows, ponies, dogs, and cats, all competing for their shot at the domesticated animal kingdom's version of the Super Bowl to bring home "top-dog" honors.

Hometown competition

On Thursday we bring the youth of Skagit County together to compete in a variety of ways. Wear your hometown colors as you cheer on the young competitors!

Don't miss out on the food

If we haven't struck a chord with the promise of fun animals and non-stop entertainment, maybe you're a connoisseur of the legendary tastes of the fair – rib sticking BBQ, mounds of curly fries, or even deep fried sponge cake!

Carnival excitement, 'magic in the fair'

Eat heartily before taking a spin on the cup-and-saucer or one of the other many carnival rides. Or take aim, pitching softballs into wicker wash tubs, with a chance to take home an oversized stuffed gorilla.

With all the sights, sounds, and aromas tickling at your senses as you meander your way through the grounds, we're positive you'll find yourself believing what scores of others have said for more than 100 years: "There's magic in the fair!"



Miscellaneous scenes from the Skagit County Fair, opening this year on August 6.



Fair dates back to 1898

The first Skagit County Fair took place in 1898, when N.J. Moldstad pulled a couple of fellow Mount Vernon businessmen aside to form the Fair Association.

The first county fair was a four day event in October, at a time when the entire population of Skagit County was less than 14,000. The fair was on rocky grounds on many occasions, especially during the Depression and WWII, when several annual fairs were cancelled.

Uncertain times put our modern fairs in jeopardy as well, but with the determination of staff, the leadership of County Commissioners, and strong community support we have forged forward to put this historical event on firm footing.

A special thank you to all the volunteers and sponsors whose efforts move this traditional American fair forward. We couldn't do it without you!





There are 25 parks under County umbrella

Skagit County Parks and Recreation manages 25 parks spanning the distance of 60 miles, from Young's Park on Guemes Island to Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport.

The popularity of these parks is at an all-time high. For example, Howard Miller Steelhead Park has tripled in visitation in the past seven years, surpassing 190,000 visitors in 2013.

Parks throughout Skagit County continue to be in greater demand with each year as the population grows and recreational areas become less accessible.



Howard Miller Steelhead Park is one of the first parks Skagit County Parks and Recreation developed for public use.

The park is located in a place traditionally used by the railroad as a hub for loading and unloading timber and other resources. It also was home to the local ferry service, a place for local residents to cross the Skagit River on the way to their farms, timberlands, or homes.

The Skagit River has always been a popular place to live and recreate, so transforming the site into a park was a natural fit.

Since its establishment in the early seventies the park has become a popular place to watch the eagles in the winter, walk the trails, camp, launch boats and take rafting trips.

The camping cabins have been a very popular addition to the park, filling up on most weekends.

There are also several parks on the west side of Skagit County, where you can enjoy hikes with expansive water views.

So take a hike – whether on the berm trails of Northern State Recreation Area or along the craggy bluffs of Sharpe Park. A host of opportunities await.



Howard Miller Steelhead Park

Parks and Recreation employees 'do the work so you can play'

Although our office location has changed recently, our service is unwavering – we're always ready and available to meet your recreational needs.

Our friendly and very capable staff has shifted buildings, landing near the Board of County Commissioner headquarters off of Continental Place.

We're located in "Ada Beane" just south of the administration building.

If you seek to sign up for activities such as SWISH basketball, inquire about fairground rentals, or simply grab the latest leisure guide, come on by and we'll set you up.

Pauli Mickelson, Tony Tewalt, and Aric Gaither are at your service, ready to provide you with the information and assistance you deserve.

Our dedicated field staff is keep-



Skagit County Park and Recreation Department staff members (l. to r.) Dave Barber, Aric Gaither, Tony Tewalt, Brian Adams, Erik Rantschler, Kyle Penninger, Pauli Mickelson, Scott Perry, Chad Butterfield, Ambrose Maldonado, Mike McCutchin, Katie Horton. Not pictured: Rusty Reagan.

ing your parks and programs in tip-top shape. Fields staffers Mike McCutchin, Dave Barber, Erik Rantschler, Scott Perry, Rusty Regan, Kyle Penninger and Chad

Butterfield are working hard toward the goal of making your park experience the best it can be.

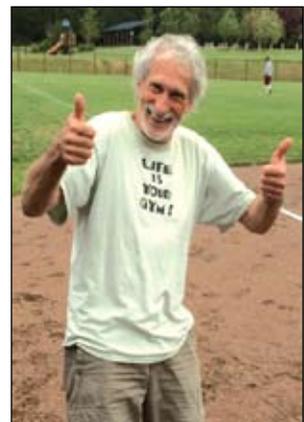
We do the work so you can play!



Recreation programs scheduled over all seasons, from triathlon to team sports and youth camps

Skagit County Parks and Recreation transitions from a long fall and winter period of all indoor activities to offer some outdoor sports leagues, special events and youth camps in the spring and summer.

Recreation Manager Tony Tewalt notes that youth basketball remains a popular spring/summer activity, with leagues offered for high school teams in preparation of the 2014-2015 school seasons. Basketball leagues finished up in June and July.



Our most popular outdoor recreation activity for adults remains our adult softball leagues. We recently completed our spring softball league, with the late season Indian Summer Softball League scheduled August 4-8.

High school girls are currently enjoying their own Summer fastpitch league. We also hosted

the Clear Lake Triathlon on July 12, with Iron Person and Team divisions for adults, as well as a shorter youth event.

Several camps have already been held this early summer, with a second session of the popular Youth Fitness Boot Camp (July 28-August 21) and the Junior Golf Camp (August 18-28) upcoming.

There's still time to participate in a Skagit County Parks and Recreation activity this summer. We invite you to enjoy the double benefits of exercise and an opportunity to spend more time outdoors.



Parks and Recreation programs contribute year-round to keeping athletes of all ages happy and healthy. From baseball and fastpitch softball to basketball and track, our recreation menu is full! See the county website for details.





Skagit County Parks and Recreation Facilities Guide



Skagit River



Padilla Bay



Forest trail



Swinomish Channel

Allen Community Park 9101 Avon Allen Rd., Bow	17 acres																	
Big Rock Park 15050 SR 9, Mount Vernon	13 acres																	
Cascade Trail 24700 SR 20, Sedro-Woolley	23 miles																	
Centennial Trail HWY 9, South of Lake McMurray	5 miles																	
Clear Lake Beach 12925 South Front St., Clear Lake	1 acre																	
Cleveland Park 1401 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon	1 acre																	
Conway Boat Launch (day use only) Below South Fork Bridge, Conway	3 acres																	
Conway Park 18445 Spruce St., Conway	4 acres																	
Donovan Park 3494 Friday Creek Rd., Burlington	3 acres																	
Fraily Mountain Park Adjacent DNR Forest Lands unincorporated SE Skagit Co.	400 acres																	
Grandy Lake Campground 43200 Baker Lake Rd., Concrete	22 acres																	
Howard Miller Steelhead Park 52804 Rockport Park Rd., Rockport	97 acres																	
Northern State Recreation Area Helmick Rd., Sedro Woolley	726 acres																	
Padilla Bay Shore Trail 11404 BayView-Edison Rd., Mount Vernon	2.1 miles																	
Pomona Grange Park & Interpretive Trail 5625 Old HWY 99 North Rd., Burlington	15 acres																	
Presentin Park 60060 SR 20, Marblemount	55 acres																	
Samish Island Park 10836 Halloran Rd., Samish Island	2 acres																	
Sauk Campground 54569 Concrete-Sauk Valley Rd., Concrete	30 acres																	
School House Park 5554 Edens Rd., Guemes Island	4 acres																	
Sharpe Park - Montgomery Duban Headlands 14692 Rosario Rd., Anacortes	112 acres																	
Skagit Valley Playfields 2700 Martin Rd., Mount Vernon	30 acres																	
Squires Lake Park & Trail Old HWY 99 North Rd., Between South Lake Samish & Alger	4 miles																	
Swinomish Channel Boat Launch SR 20 under Berentson Bridge, Mount Vernon	3 acres																	
Young's Park 4243 Guemes Island Rd., Guemes Island	13 acres																	

www.skagitparksfoundation.org

- Restrooms
- Bike Trails
- Fishing
- Nature Area
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Picnic Shelter
- Frisbee Golf
- ADA Accessible
- Horse Trails
- Boat Launch
- Hiking Trails
- Baseball
- BBQ Barbeque
- Reservations
- Organically Maintained
- Leash Pets
- Swim Area
- Picnic Area
- Camping
- Basketball
- Playground
- Showers



County Parks Advisory Board members (l. to r.) Chris Allen, Tim Manns, Elizabeth Detillion, Mike Elde, Director Brian Adams, John Semrau, Liz McNett Crowl, Mark Dobie. Not pictured: Ralph Rowland and Kevin Loy.

Parks Board draws on volunteer talent

Our Parks and Recreation Advisory Board is made up of passionate park supporters, an incredibly dedicated and functional group of volunteers working to achieve the recreational interests of those residing in (as well as those visiting) Skagit County.

Representing District 1 of Skagit County are Board Members Ralph Rowland, Mark Dobie, and Mike Elde.

District 2 Board Members include John Semrau,

Liz McNett Crowl, and Tim Manns.

Rounding out the board are the three members from District 3: Chris Allen, Kevin Loy, and Elizabeth Detillion.

These nine board members meet the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in The Copper Room of the Continental Building. Come by to visit, comment and convey your visions. Your grassroots involvement may help lead to great things. Let's make our golden anniversary a special one!

Commissioners extend thanks to partners

Partnerships are a vital element of streamlined Skagit County Parks and Recreation programs and facility support.

A few of the partnerships that have been particularly helpful include: The Skagit Land Trust, The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, The Washington Conservation District, and The Washington Trails Association.

In addition to external partners, members of the Parks and Recreation staff have developed a close working relationship with other Skagit County

departments including Facilities, Public Works, the Sheriff's Department, the Assessor's Department, Cooperative Extension, GIS, Skagit 21 and Planning and Development.

"It's good to have so many 'go-to' people within these organizations ready to help in any way they can," said Skagit County Board of Commissioners Chairman Ron Wesen. "The partnerships we have put together – plus a wonderful army of volunteers – have been instrumental in leveraging our time, funds, and resources.



John Semrau (center) was joined by his family for a gathering that included recognition of his many years of volunteer service to the Skagit County Parks Board.

Board leader Semrau marks 27 years of service as volunteer, advisor

As the Skagit County Parks Board celebrates its 50th anniversary, Parks Board Chairperson John Semrau marks his 27th year serving as an Advisory Board member.

Semrau has an incredible amount of institutional knowledge, a virtual data base that comes in handy when county staff or fellow board members have questions about our past.

Semrau's "day job" is his own engineering firm, which makes him conveniently accessible to Director of Parks and Recreation Director Brian Adams.

"I look routinely to John to help me guide through the permitting gauntlet for larger projects," said Adams. "He knows the general timelines and helps me navigate through what can sometimes be a very complex permitting process, especially when we are required to bring an issue to the hearing examiner. His expertise helps create vital efficiencies. I can't imagine not having John as the board's lead Sherpa."



Miscellaneous news items from Skagit County

Fair volunteers needed

Volunteers are critical in the operation of the fair and other fairgrounds events. On average, there are 80+ four-hour volunteer shifts that are worked during the fair.



We are always looking for fair enthusiasts to volunteer in a variety of ways, serving in promotion, planning, parking, and a variety of other capacities.

The Skagit County Fair Advisory Committee consists of Bill Wigner, Rebecca Quam, Kelly Moldstad, Margaret Olson, Mary Roper and

Randy Brown. This committee meets with fair staff 7-8 times per year to discuss miscellaneous issues.

Please call 336-9414 to find ways in which you can help with the 2014 fair.

Clean Water Program

Skagit County commissioners recently approved a five-year reauthorization of the Clean Water Program, established in 2005 to address pollution in local waters.

The Clean Water Program (CWP) was created to address pollution in shellfish growing areas, and to reduce non-point sources of pollution in Samish and Skagit River watersheds.

Commissioners approved reauthorization of the CWP following a public hearing. For more information see the 2013 CWP Annual Report at skagitcounty.net/Departments/PublicWorks/CleanWater.

Ferry drydock in September

The Board of Skagit County Commissioners awarded a Guemes ferry haulout and maintenance contract to Foss Maritime Company last month. Among items in the contract are hull cleaning and painting, replacement of hydraulic and oil

lines for main engines and outdrives, reconditioning and reinstalling of propellers, replacement of seals in outdrives, piping modifications and steel renewal in the engine rooms, painting of the house and car deck.



The ferry will be drydocked in Seattle from September 24 through October 14, 2014. Arrow Launch Services will provide passenger-only service during the haulout period.

who have participated in discussions. It also draws on research and analysis conducted by county planning staff with the help of two project consultants.

“TDR is a tool that can help a jurisdiction implement its growth and conservation goals,” said senior planner Kirk Johnson, who manages the TDR project for the county. “It uses the economic engine of new growth to conserve from development lands that provide benefits to the community, such as working farms and forest lands.”

iMap voted best in state

Those who take advantage of the popular iMap application on the Skagit County government website now share the distinction of utilizing the best online interactive map in Washington State.

Voters at a spring meeting of the Washington State Chapter of URISA (a geographic information systems organization) named the custom Skagit County iMap as “Best Online Interactive Map,” with criteria including “clear, effective design.”

iMap, which was released in its second version last January 28, was created primarily by Janice Baird, Brian Young and John Holmes of the Skagit County GIS and IS departments. More than 300 GIS professionals attended the conference.

Development rights report

Skagit County Planning and Development Services recently released a report, “Skagit County Transfer of Development Rights: Project Findings and Program Recommendations,” which reflects two years of work with a citizen advisory committee.

The report is available on the Skagit County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) project website at: www.skagitcounty.net/tdr.

This document provides a comprehensive overview of TDR programs and methods and their potential use. It reflects the diverse views and opinions of TDR Advisory Committee members and others

Pioneer Picnic

110 Years!

11:15 a.m.

Thursday, Aug. 7
Pioneer Park near
the Rainbow Bridge
in La Conner
Lunch, program
\$12



Skagit County Government

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Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Questions or comments? Contact information below:

Tel: (360) 336-9300

Email: commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us



Ken Dahlstedt



Sharon Dillon



Ron Wesen

The Board of Commissioners generally meets each Monday and Tuesday for regularly scheduled agenda items. Agendas are available on the website in the “Agenda” section, or you can listen to a recorded agenda for the upcoming week by calling (360) 419-7600.

www.skagitcounty.net