

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **LEVEL OF SERVICE**

Levels of service are quantifiable measures of the amount of public facilities that are provided to the community. Typically, measures of levels of service are expressed as ratios of facility capacity to demand. For this plan, level of service is expressed in acres per 1000 population.

### **QUANTIFYING NEED**

A Level of Service analysis has traditionally been included in park and recreation Plans as a useful way to inventory park and recreation facilities and to measure services to specific standards. Historically, a LOS value was calculated for each park and facility category based on population and then compared to a national standard. The practice of quantifying local levels of service to a national standard has not proven to be beneficial or justifiable. Each city, county or state's resources and needs are unique. Planning for parks services must arise from the abilities and goals of each individual jurisdiction. Because of this, the National Recreation and Park Agency has recently ceased publishing their LOS standards. An extensive LOS evaluation was prepared for Skagit County for the 1998 Park Plan based on the previous NRPA standards. For this plan, the SCPR LOS is compared with a compilation of three Washington State Counties. The formula used to determine Skagit County LOS needs is based on the county aggregate. Skagit County will no longer utilize outdated NPRPA standards. In chapter 10, the aggregate LOS is combined with other contributing factors to rank and prioritize projects.

Although LOS standards give an indication as to the degree of facilities and programs comparable Washington State Counties are providing their citizens, there are many other dynamic factors contributing to priorities/need in Skagit County. In this plan, the final project/program recommendations are based on public input, survey results, Staff/Board knowledge of "use patterns" as well as LOS comparisons of other Washington State Counties. In chapters 10 and 11, a combination of these contributory factors are weighed and ultimately ranked as to their overall degree of need. These results, along with current and forecasted population numbers, are used to determine an existing and future need statement.

The Skagit County GMA steering committee forecast an increase of over 3000 people in the unincorporated area by the year 2010. In order to best serve the needs of its citizens, The County must establish a minimum Level of Service standard and plan to maintain this standard as the population grows.

To quantify park and facility needs, Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) made comparisons with other Washington State counties and from these comparisons, developed a level of service standard. It should be noted that the standard for recreation lands applies to County facilities only. Local cities and towns have developed (or should develop) their own LOS standards for recreation lands under their jurisdiction. Table 8.1 shows the LOS of Skagit County as well as the tri-county aggregate. By comparing service levels, Skagit County can determine its deficiencies and project future needs.

**Table 8.1**

**Comparative Level of Service Standards**

(The following data are for selected comparable counties in acres/1000 population)

<b>Park Type/ Park Facility</b>	<b>Snohomish</b>	<b>Spokane</b>	<b>Whatcom</b>	<b>Aggregate Average</b>	<b>Skagit LOS</b>	<b>Skagit Need</b>
Regional Parks	13.08/1000	9.28/1000	8.99/1000	10.45/1000	5.14/1000	5.30/1000
Community Parks	1.47/1000	.77/1000	.12/1000	.79/1000	.47/1000	.32/1000
Neighborhood Parks	.18/1000	0	.06/1000	.08/1000	.01/1000	.07/1000
Open Space	.25/1000	10.47/1000	12.39/1000	7.7/1000	10.3/1000	0
Total Trails	not available	not available	not available	not available	.42/1000	0
Campgrounds	.26/1000	.09/1000	.76/1000	.37/1000	.96/1000	0
Total Park Acreage	14.99/1000	20.52/1000	20.74/1000	18.75/1000	15.95/1000	2.8/1000

Using Skagit County’s current LOS specified in Table 8.1, it is possible to make comparisons to analogous counties in Washington State. For this plan update, the Snohomish, Whatcom, and Spokane (SWS) aggregate LOS was used for in comparison and ultimate ranking of SCPR service levels. Whatcom and Snohomish Counties, two of the counties in the collective LOS, were chosen due to their proximity to Skagit County, as they neighbor us to the north and south respectively. Spokane County was chosen as the third county in the aggregate LOS due to the similarities in services provided, because a distant county comparison gives an outside perspective, and due to the easy accessibility of information. Skagit County LOS standards are based on a population of 105,000 in 2003.

The aggregate method of LOS comparisons more appropriately compares Skagit County with its immediate surroundings. The aggregate LOS is a collection of three state counties combined and averaged into one collective LOS. This allows Skagit County services to be compared to those comprised of the collective (Table 8.1).

From these comparative service levels, Skagit County has arrived at a standard for determining current needs and projecting needs into the next six years. The standard is based deficiencies/sufficiency in relation to the tri-county aggregate average (table 8.2).

**Table 8.2**  
**Park Classification Needs**

<b>Park Classifications</b>	<b>Aggregate Standard (in acres/1000 people)</b>
Regional Parks	10.45 /1000
Community Parks	.77 /1000
Neighborhood	.08 /1000
Open Space & Undeveloped	7.7 /1000
Special Use Park Land	N/A
Total	18.75 /1000

**PARK AND FACILITY NEEDS**

Using the standards identified in tables 8.1 and 8.2, the actual amount of park acreage required for each park type in Skagit County is shown in table 8.3.

**Park Classification Existing Inventory and Need:** Table 8.3 uses the tri-county aggregate LOS standards to forecast Skagit County acreage needs in 2010 based on a projected population of 123,900.

**Table 8.3**  
**Park Classification Inventories**

<b>Park Classifications</b>	<b>Existing Inventory Acres</b>	<b>Year 2010 Demand* Acres</b>	<b>Need 2010 Acres</b>
Regional	540	1295	755
Community	49	95	46
Neighborhood	1	9.9	8.9
Opens Space & Undeveloped	1085	954	0
Total	1675	2354	679

\* Based on a 2010 population of 123,900

**Level of Service for Skagit County:** Table 8.4 provides Skagit County’s current service levels and general definitions in relation to service areas for various “park types”.

**Table 8.4**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Service Area &amp; Size</b>	<b>Skagit County Inventory &amp; LOS</b>
Regional Parks	Areas of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation (e.g. hiking, picnicking, boating, beach activities). Contiguous to or encompassing natural areas.	- Attracts several communities - Attracts use from outside county - Generally larger than community parks	540 Acres 5.14a/1000
Community Parks	Facilities specifically designed to serve community with diverse activities: courts, ball fields, day-use areas, etc.  Usually have on-site parking.  Easily accessed by automobile from more distant neighborhoods. May include natural features.	- Attracts several neighborhoods  - Generally larger than neighborhood parks and smaller than regional parks	49 Acres 0.47a/1000
Neighborhood Parks	All uses designed to serve both passive and active activities for the immediate residential area (ca 5000 people).  Designed for intensive use and accessible/visible from surrounding area.	- Generally attracts within a 5 mile radius  - Generally smaller than community parks	1 Acres 0.01 a/1000
Open Space	Protection and management of natural cultural environment with recreation use as trails and other low impact activities.	- Can be of any size - The service area can vary  Generally attract from throughout the county	1085 Acres 10.3 a/1000
Loop Trails		- No Standard	18.1 Acres .17 mi./1000
Linear Trails		- No Standard	26.3 Acres .25 mi./1000
Campgrounds		- No Standard	145 Acres 1.38 a/1000 101 sites .96 sites/1000

**Table 8.5**

**Demand and Need for Park Facilities**

<b>Regional Parks</b>	
Current Situation (acres/pop.)	5.14/1000
Aggregate LOS (acres/pop.)	10.45/1000
Aggregate acres/105,000	1097 acres
SCPR Existing Acreage/105,000	540 acres
Need/Difference in Acreage (2003)	557 acres
Projected SCPR Need (2010)	755 acres
<b>Community Parks</b>	
Current Situation (acres/pop.)	.45/1000
Aggregate LOS (acres/pop.)	.60/1000
Aggregate acres/105,000	63 acres
SCPR Existing Acreage	49 acres
Need/Difference in Acreage (2003)	14 acres
Projected SCPR Need (2010)	25 acres
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	
Current Situation (acres/pop.)	.01/1000
Aggregate LOS (acres/pop.)	.04/1000
Aggregate acres/105,000	4.2 acres
SCPR Existing Acreage	1 acres
Need/Difference in Acreage (2003)	3.2 acres
Projected SCPR Need (2010)	4.3 acres
<b>Open Space</b>	
Current Situation (acres/pop.)	10.3/1000
Aggregate LOS (acres/pop.)	7.70/1000
Aggregate acres/105,000	808.5 acres
SCPR Existing Acreage	1085 acres
Need/Difference in Acreage (2003)	(276.5) acres
Projected SCPR Need (2010)	0 acres

**SUMMARY OF LEVEL OF SERVICE**

LOS standards are simply a means for making comparisons of service levels of Skagit County to other county recreational providers in Washington State. The comparisons are not the only measure for determining need, as several other criterion play in to factoring the recreational requirements of Skagit County residents. For the purpose of this plan update, the final recommendations on needs will be done by also factoring in information obtained through public input as well as parks staff observation. Public input is in the form of scientifically valid surveys, public meetings, letters from the community, the SCPR Parks Advisory Board, and informal conversations with concerned citizens.

The NPRA standards were used in the 1998 comprehensive plan update. This plan shows only the LOS standards derived from the new Snohomish, Spokane, and Whatcom County (Tri-County) average. Using the new Tri-County LOS standards, Skagit County regional and community park facility needs appear even greater than when using the outdated NPRA LOS standards. Open Space needs show appear to decrease using the new standard. The Open Space needs may change as open space lands become developed. This update shows an overall greater park need when using the new tri-county comparison. This may be attributed to the value people our region place on their parks.