

2022



# Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan



Skagit County Parks and Recreation  
1730 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

SKAGIT COUNTY  
  
*Parks and Recreation*

April 2022

BCC- #0222003



## **An Ordinance Adopting the 2021 Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Map, and Development Regulations**

**Whereas** the Growth Management Act requires the County to have a process for receiving suggestions for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan policies, Comprehensive Plan map, and development regulations;

**Whereas** the Growth Management Act allows amendment of the Comprehensive Plan only once per year, and this action constitutes that amendment;

**Whereas** the County received proposals from the public by the last business day in July deadline established by SCC 14.08.030;

**Whereas** the County issued public notice on April 15, 2021, and received public comment, and the Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on May 3, 2021;

**Whereas**, on May 11, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners established the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendment docket through Resolution R20210084, which included the following twelve proposals:

- PL19-0419 Nielsen Brothers Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Map Amendment
- LR20-02 Small Scale Business Zone Use Amendment
- LR20-04 Fully Contained Communities
- LR20-05 Public Notice Amendment for Mineral Resource Extraction Areas
- LR20-07 Accessory Dwelling Unit Code Amendment
- LR21-02 Clarify CaRD Land Divisions and the "Reserve" Function
- LR21-04 Agricultural Processing Facilities in the Bayview Ridge-Light Industrial zone
- **C21-1 2020 Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan**
- C21-2 SEPA Determination Review Timing
- C21-3 Hamilton Zoning & Comprehensive Plan updates
- C21-4 Reduced Front Setback to Include Class 19 roads
- C21-5 Pre-application requirement

**Whereas**, the Board of County Commissioners in Resolution R20220010 deferred LR20-04, the Fully Contained Communities proposal, pending approval by the Growth Management Act Steering

Committee of any relevant Countywide Planning Policies, population allocation or other necessary approvals as required by the 2002 Framework Agreement;

**Whereas** the County issued notice on December 23, 2021, and received public comment, and the Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 11, 2022, and separately deliberated and issued a Recorded Motion on June 23, 2020 (**Attachment 1**);

**Whereas** the Planning Commission recommended approval of the following docketed amendments: PL19-0419, LR20-02, LR21-04, C21-1, C21-3, C21-4, C21-5;

**Whereas** the Planning Commission recommended denial of LR20-07, Accessory Dwelling Unit Code Amendment, as proposed and instead recommended the Board of County Commissioners direct Planning and Development Services to increase the Accessory Dwelling Unit size to a maximum of 1,200 square feet and remove the condition that the dwelling unit is limited to 50% of the primary residential unit;

**Whereas** the Planning Commission recommended denial of LR20-05, LR21-02, C21-2;

**Whereas** the Board of County Commissioners has reviewed the public comments and the Planning Commission's Recorded Motion for the 2021 docket;

Whereas the Board of County Commissioners deliberated in a public work session on March 28, 2022, April 18, 2022 and received additional information related to LR20-05, and LR20-07.

**Now Therefore Be It Ordained by the Board of County Commissioners:**

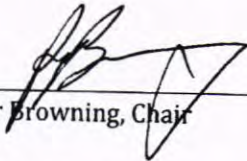
- Section 1. Items PL19-0419, LR20-02, LR21-04, C21-1, C21-3, C21-4, C21-5 are approved as shown in the Planning Commission's Recorded Motion (Attachment 1), as amended in Attachment 2.
- Section 2. Items LR21-02, C21-2 are denied consistent with Planning Commission's Recorded Motion (Attachment 1).
- Section 3. Item LR20-05 Public Notice Amendment for Mineral Resource Extraction Areas is approved as amended in Attachment 3.
- Section 4. Item LR20-07, Accessory Dwelling Unit Code Amendment is approved as amended in indicated in Attachment 2.

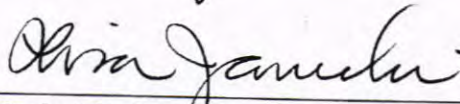


Witness Our Hands and the Official Seal of Our Office this 25 day of April, 2022.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

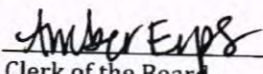


  
Peter Browning, Chair

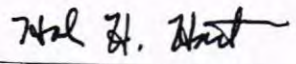
  
Lisa Janicki, Commissioner

  
Ron Wesen, Commissioner

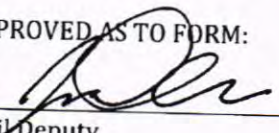
ATTEST:

  
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

  
Hal Hart, Director  
Planning & Development Services

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Civil Deputy  
Skagit County Prosecutor's Office



# Table of Contents

---

Acknowledgements	iv
Executive Summary	vi
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1-1
Chapter 2 – Community Profile	2-1
Chapter 3 – Existing Recreational Facilities	3-1
Chapter 4 – Existing Operations	4-1
Chapter 5 – Goals and Objectives	5-1
Chapter 6 – Surveys and Public Meetings	6-1
Chapter 7 – Level of Service Analysis	7-1
Chapter 8 – Use Patterns	8-1
Chapter 9 – Analysis of Needs	9-1
Chapter 10 – Recommendations	10-1
Chapter 11 – Implementation Strategy	11-1
Appendix A – Open House Comments	AA-1
Appendix B – Public Input Survey Results	BB-1

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Skagit County would like to acknowledge all of those individuals who gave their time and energy to developing this Comprehensive Plan.

### PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE

Brian Adams, SCPR Director

Marie Henry, SCPR Administrative Manager

Tony Tewalt, SCPR Recreation Manager

Tim Manns, SCPR PRAB Member

John Semrau, SCPR PRAB Member

Patrik Dylan, eccosDesign LLC, Consultant

### COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Greg Francioch	Anacortes	District 1
Jose Riefkohl	Anacortes	District 1
Vacant	Vacant	District 1
Adriana Suarez	Mount Vernon	District 2
John Semrau	Mount Vernon	District 2
Tim Manns	Mount Vernon	District 2
Chris Allen	Sedro-Woolley	District 3
Kevin Loy	Sedro-Woolley	District 3
Elizabeth Detillion	Sedro-Woolley	District 3

### PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Brian Adams	Director
Marie Henry	Administrative and Projects Manager
Tony Tewalt	Recreation Manager
Wanda Jacobs	Staff Assistant
Jose Riefkohl	Project Management Assistant
Mike McCutchin	West County Lead
Rusty Regan	East County Lead
Dave Barber	Parks Maintenance
Erik Rantschler	Parks Maintenance
Scott Perry	Parks Maintenance
Greg Adams	Ranger/Parks Maintenance
Mark Lucas	Parks Maintenance
Patrick O'Brien	Parks Maintenance
Aric Gaither	Fair Manager
Holly Moxley	Parks Maintenance



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS CONTINUED

### SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Lisa Janicki	Commissioner	District 3
Peter Browning	Commissioner	District 2
Ron Wesen	Commissioner	District 1

### SKAGIT COUNT ADMINISTRATOR

Trisha Logue

### SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Seat	District	Commissioner
1	1	Kathy Mitchell
2	1	Vincent Henley
3	1	Mark Knutzen
4	2	Amy Hughes
5	2	Joe Woodmansee
6	2	Tim Raschko
7	3	Tammy Candler
8	3	Jen Hutchison
9	3	Martha Rose

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Skagit County Parks and Recreation Plan updates the 2013 plan. It is intended to lay the groundwork for the future of the County park system. The plan inventories existing parks and identifies current and future park needs. It explores potential park development and/or improvements and prioritizes strategies to meet a level of service (LOS) which fits the needs of County residents. The plan also describes existing and potential funding sources that will be needed to meet project needs and maintain park facilities and recreation services. In addition, the plan sets forth several goals and objectives to help guide county staff and elected officials in implementing the park plan.

The plan establishes project priority by analyzing: **1) LOS standards**, which provide service levels from other Washington State Counties and provide guidance in establishing LOS standards in Skagit County; **2) Public Input - Survey and Open Houses**, which provides direct and fundamental information from those who use facilities and programs in Skagit County and indicate facility or program need; **3) Use Patterns**, Review of the Statewide Recreation and Conservation Plan which provides information on statewide trends in recreation and from those who oversee facilities and programs in Skagit County and indicate facility or program need; **4) Other Factors**, which provide a category for integrating other input that should be factored into analysis.

Skagit County grew at an annual rate of about 1.1% and grew by about 7% between 2013 and 2021. Future projections indicate similar growth may occur during the next 25 years. As a growing rural community with higher densities, there will be an increase in the need for parks and recreational facilities. The changing pattern of projected growth may require that the County's priorities and strategies related to the growth of park and recreation facilities will need to adapt in several ways. As a county parks provider, it's important we anticipate site specific population trends and locate our facilities centrally.

The parks plan includes a discussion of sources available to fund the maintenance and expansion of the County parks system; a system that must meet the growing needs of an increasingly urbanized area. These sources should include a variety of grants, tax revenues, user fees, mitigation fees, state, federal, and private sources. While the plan makes general recommendations regarding specific funding options, it assumes that most existing sources will continue to be available. Other potential sources will allow the County to be flexible and consider future funding options as circumstances evolve. The park plan builds upon historical data to ensure that assumptions regarding projected facility and program needs are realistic.



The park plan contains an inventory of county facilities: parks, recreation, open space areas, trails, and related sites. The inventory is supplemented by a description of other facilities available to County residents; specifically, sites and facilities owned or controlled by state or federal agencies, as well as sites owned by municipalities and school districts. Inventories provide the quantity of facilities but provide no real information as to the condition of the facilities. Inventories on their own aren't sufficient for making adequate comparisons and determining need.

The "level of service" standards used for this plan are derived from an average of three Washington State counties. The counties used for comparison are Whatcom, Snohomish, and Spokane and are aggregated into what is referenced as the "Tri-County Aggregate." Level of Service (LOS) standards are often derived by the number and size of facilities without accounting for the facility conditions. The condition of facilities becomes important for making proper comparisons in service levels. It is one of the reasons SCPR incorporates other factors into the equation when determining priorities.

Use patterns can be analyzed in a variety of ways. Lack of facility space, a shortage of campsites, or an overrun trail system may lead SCPR staff and/or Parks Board members to easily conclude needs are not being met. In other cases, the analysis may be more complex. For example, the fact that a facility is being used under capacity may lead some to believe the needs are being sufficiently met. Whereas, the real reason the facility is being under used may be the facility needs maintenance, in need of expansion, or in some other way may be inadequate. In other situations, there may be a surplus of baseball fields on the west side of the county but a shortage on the east side, even though the LOS standards indicate there are enough fields county-wide. Because of all these variables, it becomes necessary for SCPR Staff/Board to look at every facility and/or program "site specifically" to determine if in fact the needs of the community are being met. This level of analysis is handled in the category of "Other Factors."

The focus of this Comprehensive Plan Update is to chart the course for the Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department for the next six years. The update will also allow continued SCPR eligibility for Recreational Conservation Office (RCO) grants. A high priority of the plan update is to make sure adequate public facilities are maintained and that a consistent level of park and recreational services are being provided. Although challenges may force County Parks and Recreation to deviate slightly from the charted course as outlined in chapter #10, our goal of providing for the people of Skagit County persists. With determination, we are committed to ensuring you have beautiful places to visit and an abundance of places to recreate.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*It is the mission of the Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department to provide high quality recreational services, facilities and parks to our customers and the citizens of Skagit County. This is exemplified through professional staff, cost effectiveness, community leadership and customer service.*

A strong park and recreation system is essential for a thriving community. Outdoor recreation benefits us as individuals, as well as society as a whole—both mentally and physically. Studies by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) confirm that communities rich in park and recreational activities have less crime, decreased health care and insurance costs, less heart disease, stronger economies, and a healthier environment.

The residents of Skagit County have long valued the beautiful region in which they live. Whether walking the dog at Northern State Recreation Area, playing pickle ball at the new YMCA, or enjoying a picnic at Steelhead Park, our engagement with the natural environment and our neighbors and community in recreational activities is intrinsically valuable. Skagit County residents a wide variety of ways to immerse themselves in a region rich with parks and recreation opportunities.

But there are other benefits as well! Areas with rich park and recreation opportunities enjoy greater benefits from the activities they are engaged in, including the following:

- ***Controlling Weight.***
- ***Reducing blood pressure.***
- ***Decreasing risk for type 2 diabetes, heart attack, and colon cancer.***
- ***Reducing symptoms associated with depression and anxiety.***
- ***Easing arthritis pain and disability.***
- ***Preventing osteoporosis and improving balance.***

Here in Skagit County, we are blessed with a wide variety of outdoor recreation settings—from western Fidalgo and Guemes Island, the wild and scenic rivers, and our eastern alpine cascade meadows—the greater Skagit region is an unrivaled haven of the Pacific Northwest. Countywide, a variety of agencies provide the conduit for accessing our unique geographical oasis. Skagit County Parks and Recreation, with 2400 acres of park land and hundreds of



thousands of annual participation hours in its parks and programs, is a key provider in helping to ensure the availability of passive and active recreational opportunities to people of all ages.

This Park and Recreation Plan update is the primary document for addressing the need for public access to natural areas, providing services to newly established sub areas, and meeting the park and recreational needs of County residents. The park and recreation plan is Skagit County's foundation for the park system of the future. It reflects the changes in both supply and demand for parks since the previous comprehensive plan update (2013). Our primary focus for the next six years is to maintain and improve the recreational infrastructure we currently have, while establishing project priorities for the next six years or more, as depicted in the needs analysis chapter of this comprehensive plan update.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

This plan will redefine policies and establish a sense of direction for Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) to follow in serving the recreational needs of its residents. The update fulfills grant funding eligibility requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), while establishing goals and objectives which will provide SCPR with central project priorities. The plan provides direction for SCPR in regard to property acquisition, park development, capital improvement planning, and programs for the next six years.

The elements contained in this plan include:

- **An assessment of the community's population and setting**
- **An exploration of existing parks, open space areas and trail facilities**
- **An analysis of existing department operations**
- **An evaluation of recreation and facility needs**
- **Recommendations for the acquisition and development of parks, open space and trail systems**
- **Recommendations related to management, administration, and other aspects of providing park and recreation services**
- **Recommendations for funding and implementing the plan**

### **PLAN ORGANIZATION**



The plan establishes project priority by analyzing: **1) Level of Standards (LOS)**, which describe service levels from other Washington State Counties and provide guidance in establishing LOS standards in Skagit County; **2) Public Input - Survey and Open Houses**, which provides direct and fundamental information from those who use facilities and programs in Skagit County and indicate facility or program need; **3) Use Patterns**, which provides trends in recreation as reported from those who oversee facilities and programs in Skagit County and indicate facility or program need; **4) Other Factors**, which provides other input that should be factored into analysis as well as integrating the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

The initial step was to gather public input by holding “*open house forums*” throughout all regions of the County. The meetings served as a forum for listening to the concerns and desires of County residents. In addition, a survey was developed and distributed electronically to help the public communicate their park needs.

The “*level of service*” standards used for this plan are derived from an average of three Washington State Counties. The counties used for comparison are Whatcom, Snohomish, and Spokane. Level of Service (LOS) standards are often derived by the number and size of facilities without accounting for the facility conditions. The condition of facilities becomes important for making proper comparisons in service levels. It is one of the reasons SCPR is incorporating other factors into the equation when determining priorities.

The household survey results and LOS standards combine to give SCPR Staff a greater comprehension as to the recreational needs of Skagit County residents. They offer an objective method for SCPR to better distinguish the needs of Skagit County residents and aid SCPR in formulating plans to better serve County residents. Although the opinion survey and LOS standards provide the greatest means of understanding resident needs, there are many variables these methods have difficulty in accounting for. To fully account for the missing information, knowledge from those using or overseeing the programs is needed. This “*use pattern*” information will be combined with additional public input to more adequately decipher County residents’ priorities.



### **Public Involvement**

Public participation in this type of study is critical because local needs vary, depending upon the values local residents place on their region. As a result, public involvement in the planning process was essential and was gathered through various means.

### **Key Mechanisms**

Skagit County Parks receives input from the general public. The flow of input comes in many forms including, but not limited to **Surveys, Public Meetings, and SCPR Staff Input**. In addition there are other arenas such as :

#### **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board:**

Skagit County Parks and Recreation has a 9-member advisory board which meets monthly. The Board reviews acquisitions, makes policy recommendations, develop master plans, and provide input into development projects. Over the next six years, the Park Board will continue to provide a sounding board for the public to provide input about a variety of park issues.

#### **Site Master Plan Processes:**

Park sites with significant development opportunities are typically subjected to a master plan process. This process incorporates input from a variety of park users, neighbors, and the general public in developing the future vision for a given park. As such, it is a good vehicle for residents to express their park interests.

#### **Local User Groups:**

Skagit County Parks and Recreation staff has contact with their clientele on a daily basis. This contact provides a forum for staff to receive recurring advice, criticism, comments, assessment, analysis, and/or praise from park users. Letters, electronic mail, phone calls, and other types of correspondence come in regularly. This information is often presented and discussed at SCPR staff meetings. This informal type of feedback from the public is taken in earnest and is another piece of the formula which contributes to everyday decisions and long range planning.

## CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

Skagit County is located in the northwestern part of Washington, stretching from Puget Sound to the crest of the Cascade Mountains (Figure 2.1). It is bordered by Whatcom County to the north, Okanogan and Chelan Counties to the east, and Snohomish County to the south.

Rectangular in shape, the County covers about 1,735 square miles and measures about 24 miles from north to south, and 95 miles from east to west. The City of Mount Vernon serves as its County Seat.



**Figure 2.1 Regional Location**

Interstate 5 travels north and south, through the County, providing direct and easy linkage to Vancouver, BC to the north, and the Seattle metropolitan area to the south. State Highway 20 (North Cascades Highway) provides west and east linkage through Skagit County. It also provides a major tourist route as it bisects Interstate 5 as visitors travel towards Anacortes and the San Juan Islands to the west or the North Cascades National Park to the east. The east-west configuration of Skagit County is unusually long, with driving distance from Deception Pass (southwest edge of County) to the eastern border measuring 115 miles. Driving distances from Mount Vernon to other destinations are listed in Table 2.1.



**Table 2.1: Distances from Mount Vernon**

City	Distance
Anacortes, WA	21 miles
Marblemount, WA	46 miles
Bellingham, WA	30 miles
Seattle, WA	60 miles
Vancouver B.C.	75 miles
Tacoma, WA	92 miles
Winthrop, WA	132 miles
Yakima, WA	193 miles
Portland, OR	225 miles
Spokane, WA	334 miles

Burlington-Northern Railroad utilizes several rail lines in Skagit County for commercial commerce, while Amtrak uses many of the same routes for travel. A large portion of the east-west route is rail-banked and used as a non-motorized transportation route. The Port of Anacortes boasts a natural deep water port, ideally situated for shipping to the Pacific Rim, Canada, and Alaska. Located midway between Seattle and Vancouver they have excellent access to inland transportation. The Port also operates the Anacortes Airport, a small, one-runway facility. The Skagit Regional Airport contains three runways and is located in Burlington. The airport is an important hub for moving people throughout the San Juan Islands. There is also a small airport in Concrete. Most county residents still travel to Bellingham, Everett, Sea-Tac, and Vancouver for most air travel.

## **NATURAL FEATURES**

Moving from west to east in Skagit County, one encounters the leeward islands of the San Juan Archipelago, the broad delta and floodplain of the Skagit River, an extensive valley punctuated by intermittent hills, rolling foothills on up to the glaciated peaks of the North Cascade Mountains. Elevations range from sea level along Skagit County's tidal border, to just over 9,000 feet at the peak of Mount Logan in North Cascades National Park.



The Skagit River is the largest river in the County, and the second-largest in the State. Originating in Manning Provincial Park, British Columbia, it flows about 90 miles through the County to its outlet at Fir Island, just south of Mount Vernon. Major tributaries to the Skagit River include the Cascade, Sauk, Suiattle, and Baker Rivers (Figure 2.2). Approximately 160 miles (almost 35,000 acres) of the Skagit, Sauk, Cascade, Illabot Creek and Suiattle Rivers are included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Other notable rivers in the County include portions of the Samish and Nooksack. Major lakes include Shannon, Cavanaugh, Big, Clear, McMurray, Campbell, Heart and Erie. There are also numerous sloughs throughout the valley, including Wiley and Swinomish. Numerous wetlands adorn the county, along with the waters of Puget Sound including the salt water bodies Padilla, Burros, Similk and Skagit Bays.



**Figure 2.2 Major Waters of the Region**

Though land conversions have occurred over the last century and a half, Skagit County's landscape remains rich habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including deer, elk, bear, mountain goats, cougar, and numerous birds and small mammals. Species of interest in the County include the Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Marbles Murrelet, Trumpeter Swan, Orca Whale and many more. Anadromous fish species include Chinook, Coho, Sockeye, Silver and Chum Salmon, as well as Shad and Steelhead. Resident fish species include several trout species, bass, perch,



crappie, sturgeon, catfish, and whitefish. Grizzly bear and Gray Wolf are known to inhabit areas of the Cascades.

Western Skagit County's climate is typical of the Puget Sound Trough. Located in the rain shadows of the Olympic Mountains, the county receives a rainfall average of 32 inches per year, less than most other western Washington counties. The average annual minimum temperature is slightly over 40 degrees; the average maximum is about 60 degrees. Summer temperatures typically average 65 to 75 degrees. Marine air moderates temperature extremes in the west portion of the county, with the effect decreasing to the east. Precipitation is lowest in the Fidalgo Island region and increases in the eastern portion of Skagit County.

## HISTORY

Prior to historical settlement, eleven Native American groups inhabited the area now known as Skagit County. These groups included the Chobahabish, Kikialius, Nooquachamish, Mesekwigulise, Sbaleoch, Misskaiwhwa, Sahkumehhu, Noowhatah, Squinahmish, Swinomish, and Samish. Descendants of these groups have a very significant presence in Skagit County today. The area making up Skagit County was formerly a part of Whatcom County. Skagit became its own county in 1883.

The first non-native people to the area built a small number of cabins on Fidalgo Island in 1858. Settlement spread to the head of Fidalgo Bay, with diking opening the tidal flats to farming. The first trading post was established in the LaConner area in 1867. By 1870, the lower Skagit Valley was seeing the beginnings of full-scale settlement. In 1874, monthly steamboat services began between Seattle and "Skagit City".

In 1890, there was speculation that the Fidalgo Island town of Anacortes would become a terminus for a transcontinental railroad. The conjecture generated a growth boom which increased the town's population from 200 on January 1st to 2000 by mid-March. Although Anacortes never became a terminus, it nevertheless was soon bustling with shingle mills, fish



plants, lumber mills, and a box factory. By 1903, there were four shingle mills, and three sawmills. Sloan's Shipyard on Guemes Island built ships during World War I and employed 600 people in the spring of 1917.

Settlement of the area near and above what we know now as Mount Vernon was limited due to two large log jams on the Skagit River. In 1874, dismantling of the log jams began, opening up portions of the channel to navigation. Ten years later, the channel was fully cleared. Soon the City of Mount Vernon was founded and supported by the local timber industry. By 1889, steamboat service had expanded to no less than 15 boats, which ran between Seattle and Mount Vernon. In 1891, the Great Northern Railway was extended to Mount Vernon.

With navigation of the upper Skagit River possible, timber harvest and mining increased, and settlement expanded into the upriver area. The towns of Sedro (a Spanish reference to the large cedars in the area) and Woolley (named after the founder of a lumber mill) merged to form the city of Sedro-Woolley. By this time, the old growth fir and cedar were being cut and sold at a furious pace and the new town flourished.

An 1882 logging camp was the first development in the Burlington area with several shingle mills soon to follow. By 1891, the railway through the area made Burlington a center of transportation. Lyman was settled in the early 1870's with a lumber mill and shingle mill being its earliest employers. Coal and iron deposits brought Hamilton's first residents, and the lumber industry turned it into an early 1900's boom town, with over 2000 inhabitants.

In 1909, Concrete was founded (yes, named for its principal product), and boasted a cigar factory, stores, theater and confectionery. Concrete boasted the State's largest cement plant until it's closing in 1968. The Superior Cement Plant supplied almost half of the cement for the Grand Coulee Dam, as well as materials for other nearby dams.

Rockport was founded in 1901 and served as the terminus of the rail line from Anacortes. It was a popular stop-over during the construction of Diablo and Ross Dams. Marblemount began



as a tent saloon (and later trading post) during the gold rush of the 1890's. Many miners came upstream by canoe to prospect along the Skagit River and the mountains above the Cascade River. Silver devaluation brought an end to that era for the community.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

According to the US Census, county and state population, growth rates have fluxuated. Growth in Skagit County has in large outpaced state-wide growth (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Historical Population Growth, 1980 - 2018**

Area	1980	1990	Percent Change (1980-1990)	2000	2010	Percent Change (2000-2010)	2018	Percent Change (2010-2018)
WA State	4,132,253	4,866,692	18%	5,894,121	6,724,540	14%	7,530,552	12%
Skagit County	64,138	79,555	24%	102,979	116,901	14%	125,619	7.5%
Anacortes	9,013	11,451	27%	14,557	15,778	8%	16,953	7%
Burlington	3,894	4,349	12%	6,757	8,388	24%	8,783	5%
Concrete	592	735	24%	790	705	-11%	729	3%
Hamilton	283	228	-19%	309	301	-3%	309	3%
LaConner	660	656	-1%	761	891	17%	939	5%
Lyman	285	275	-4%	409	438	7%	468	7%
Mount Vernon	13,009	17,647	36%	26,232	31,743	21%	35,051	10%
Sedro Woolley	6,110	6,031	-1%	8,658	10,540	21%	11,838	12%
Total (Cities)	33,846	41,372	22%	58,473	68,784	18%	75,070	9%

The US Census provides information for areas within counties, called subdivisions. Skagit County has been divided into many such areas, 8 of which are shown in Figure 2.3.



Average household income in Skagit County was about \$54,000 in 2010 and \$56,000 in 2018. Average national household income in 2018 is about \$59,000. State and National household incomes increased annually since the local recession in the 1980's, but then declined with the national average in 2008 corresponding with the "Great Recession".

Age distributions are important because age is a major determinant of recreation interests and levels of participation within a county. In general, as a population ages, relative participation in active or competitive recreation activities declines. Overall, youth (younger than 18) tend to participate more frequently than any other age group, and tend to favor more strenuous and competitive activities, relative to other age groups. Young adults (ages 18 to 34) are also active, and form the core of adult competitive sports.

Adults (ages 35 - 64), on the other hand, appear to have less time to devote to recreational activities. They tend to maintain their homes and jobs more. Recreational time is at a premium and often limited to weekends and occasional evenings.

The senior population (age 65 and over) has more available time for recreation. As a group, they tend to favor more passive activities, such as walking, gardening, picnicking, boating, and swimming.



As shown in Table 2.3, Skagit County has a decrease in the younger demographic over the last 10 years, while the population of those 45 and over is increasing. The median age in Skagit County was 38 in 2000, 37 in 2010, and 41 in 2018.

**Table 2.3: Age Distribution in Skagit County, 2000 - 2017**

	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age	of People	of Total	of People	of Total	of People	Of Total
Group	2000	2000	2009	2009	2017	2017
Under 20	30,099	29.2%	32,059	27%	30,584	24%
20 - 44	33,573	32.6%	44,183	37.6%	44,038	35%
45 - 59	20,036	19.5%	14,744	12.4%	16,818	13%
60 and over	19,271	18.7%	27,347	23%	34,179	28%

As shown in Table 2.4 below, Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in Skagit County.

**Table 2.4: Ethnic Distribution in Skagit County, 2010-2017**

Ethnic Group	Number of People 2010	Percent of Total 2010***	Number of People 2017	Percent of Total 2017***
TOTAL	115,231		121,100	
White	102,410	89%	105,866	87%
Black	1,734	1.5%	1,763	1.4%
Asian and Pacific Islander	3,392	3%	5,069	4.2%
Native American/Alaskan Native	3,578	2%	3,929	3.2%
Hispanic Origin (Can be of any race)	17,995	15.6%	21,851	18%

\*\*\*totals do not equal 100% as race was reported alone or in combination with one or more other races

Source: [factfinder.census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov)

Despite recent economic diversification, Skagit County's economy remains heavily resource dependent, with primary sectors being agriculture and food processing, lumber and wood products, oil refining, tourism, retail, and marine-related industries (fishing, processing, boat building and repair). The unemployment rate was over 15 percent from 1981-1987, but has remained less than 10 percent since. The 1995 jobless rate was 8.9 percent; in 2000 it was 6.8 percent, and 9 percent in 2011. In May of 2018, the Skagit County unemployment rate was at

5.0% with the State rate hovering at 4.7%. Historically, the Skagit County unemployment rate has generally been slightly higher than the Washington State average.

## **POPULATION GROWTH**

In most communities, one of the primary elements affecting recreation demand is population growth. Table 2.5 shows county population for the year 2010 and forecasts through 2035. As shown, population growth is expected to remain near its current rates. In relative terms, Skagit County is expected to grow at a much higher annual rate than the State of Washington. State-wide growth is projected to grow at an approximate annual increase of 1.1 percent between 2010 and 2020, with projected County growth averaging above 2 percent. The Skagit County population is expected to grow at roughly twice the rate of the State during the next 12 years.

**Table 2.5 Population and Projected Increases**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Average Annual Increase</b>
2018	125,619	--
2020	130,600	2%
2025	144,200	2%
2030	159,300	2%
2035	178,800	2%



## CHAPTER 3: EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

*Parks and recreation bring people together, connecting them with nature, their community, and each other.*

Parks provide an important framework for the community. Our parks, open spaces, and recreation programs help us in maintaining a full and meaningful life, keeping us healthy, reducing our stress, and promoting positive social interactions. Participating in leisure activities and enjoying nature provide us with a way to alleviate life's stressors.

### SCPR PARKS

Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) owns and/or manages 2235 acres of parkland, both developed and undeveloped. SCPR managed parklands provide opportunities for active recreation, lands for leisure activities, facilities for events and habitat for wildlife. They range from small neighborhood parks to large areas of open space, representing the many unique recreational opportunities available to the citizens of Skagit County and its visitors.

**Table 3.1**  
**Summary of Park and Recreation Areas in Skagit County**  
**Skagit County**

(source: SC UGA Open Space Plan, B-47)

Agency	Acres
Cities and Towns within Skagit County:	3,799
Skagit County Park System	2,235
State of Washington	18,602
National Forests/Parks:	555,200
Other Agencies	473
Total	580,158

## PARK ADDITIONS SINCE 2013 PLAN

Since the last plan, SCPR has worked to add to the existing park inventory in a meaningful and sustainable manner. The following facilities were either added or expanded.

Centennial Trail	9 acres
Pressentin Park - (added to existing)	6 acres
Tursi Trail	2.5 acres
Padilla Bay Shore Trail	1 acres

In addition, Skagit County has completed these projects since 2013:

**Northern State Recreation Area:** We have paved the Helmick Road parking lot and improved trails. Grants have been acquired to bring in waterlines, septic systems, create a mile of ADA trail, add a restroom, and build the Veterans Plaza.

**Centennial Trail:** All properties have been acquired to connect Big Rock to Clear Lake. The plans are being engineered and permits are being obtained to place two miles of trail.

**Sares Bluff Trailhead:** The trails have been expanded to include a southern loop trail. The Washington Trails Association has made improvements to the trails and a connection to Rosario Beach is being sought.

**Clear Lake Beach Park:** The park has been completely renovated with a new bathroom, expanded lawn area, and improved fencing.

**Skagit Playfields:** All fields have new drainage, dugouts, backstops, fencing, and bleachers. The parking lot will need to be chip-sealed and restriped.

**Howard Miller Steelhead Park:** The infrastructure of the park is being updated to meet the growing demands of the park users.

**Evergreen Trail:** The Tursi Trail was completed in 2016 allowing us to complete the longest reigning project in our comprehensive plan.

**Cleveland Park:** The playground equipment was updated to be ADA compliant and safer for all users.



## **PARK CLASSIFICATIONS**

SCPR park land is classified by the way it serves its users, which may include size, service area and type of use. Tables 3.2 through 3.5 list all Skagit County parklands, by various classifications. The initial classification is based upon park size and service area. These categories are as follows:

- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Open Space and Undeveloped Parks
- Special Use

The parks quick guides for each park classification can be found on the following pages.

## SCPR REGIONAL PARKS

Regional Parks are generally larger sites that offer a variety of unique features or recreational experiences that serve the entire county population and beyond. These may include one-of-a-kind natural, cultural, or historic features, water access, or a concentration of facilities that can accommodate large-scale events. Regional parks and associated amenities are listed in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: SCPR Regional Parks**

<b>Regional Parks Quick Guide</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Ball Fields</b>	<b>Barbecues</b>	<b>Boat Launch</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Courts</b>	<b>Fishing</b>	<b>Nature Area</b>	<b>Picnicking</b>	<b>Picnic Shelter</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Restrooms</b>	<b>Showers</b>	<b>Soccer</b>	<b>Hiking/Jogging</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>Reservations</b>
Burlington-Sedro-Woolley Trail	7	sc							x							x	x	
Cascade Trail (23 mi.)	301	sc							x	x			x			x		
Centennial Trail	81	sc							x									
Conway Park	7	sc	x		x			x	x			x				x		
Grandy Lake	22	sc			x	x		x	x	x			x					
Howard Miller Steelhead Park	110	sc		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Northern State Recreation Area	726	sc						x	x	x	x		x			x		
Padilla Bay Shore Trail (4 mi.)	11	Sc /p							x	x			x			x	x	
Pomona Grange & Trail	17	sc		x					x	x			x			x	x	x
Samish Beach Access	2	p							x									
Sauk Park	30	sc				x		x	x	x			x			x		
Skagit Valley Playfields	30	p	x	x			x		x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Swinomish Boat Launch	3	p		x	x			x	x	x			x				x	
Young's Park	13	sc		x				x	x	x			x				x	

sc = Skagit County Owned

p = Partnership - property is owned and/or maintained by Skagit County and an additional agency



## SCPR COMMUNITY PARKS

Community Parks are generally bigger than Neighborhood Parks, and smaller than regional parks. They can host a larger number and type of ball fields, facilities and a variety of activities such as open space, swimming, BBQs and picnic areas for larger gatherings. Passive recreational development includes boardwalks, nature trails, picnicking facilities, shelters, park benches, picnic tables, environmental, cultural or historical interpretive facilities, and parking. Natural areas include streams, wetlands, forestlands, or a unique natural feature.

SCPR Community parks and associated amenities are listed on table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Community Parks**

<b>Community Parks Quick Guide</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Ball Fields</b>	<b>Barbecues</b>	<b>Boat Launch</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Courts</b>	<b>Fishing</b>	<b>Nature Area</b>	<b>Picnicking</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Restrooms</b>	<b>Showers</b>	<b>Soccer</b>	<b>Hiking/Jogging</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>Reservations</b>
Allen Community Park	17	p	x									x		x			
Donovan Park	3	sc		x				x	x	x	x	x				x	
Campbell Lake Boat Launch	3	p			x			x	x	x		x					
Tursi Trail	2.5	sc							x	x					x		
Clear Lake Beach Park	1	sc		x			x	x	x	x	x	x				x	
Lake Erie Boat Launch	1	p			x			x	x	x		x					
Schoolhouse Park-Guemes	4	sc	x	x			x		x	x	x	x		x			
Samish Island Park	2	sc	x	x			x		x	x		x				x	

sc = Skagit County Owned

p = Partnership - property is owned/maintained by Skagit County and an additional agency

## SCPR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood Parks are generally small, pedestrian oriented and situated to serve residents of an immediate area. Recreational activities may include both passive and active uses. Active uses may include basketball, tennis or playgrounds. Passive uses include open areas. Age appropriate needs of the surrounding neighborhood, such as play equipment, should be emphasized at a neighborhood park.

Skagit County recognizes the provision of neighborhood parks ultimately being the responsibility of local cities. Skagit County does not foresee adding to the one neighborhood park currently within its jurisdiction. Table 3.4 shows the neighborhood park affiliated with SCPR.

**Table 3.4**  
**Neighborhood Parks**

<b>Neighborhood Parks Quick Guide</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Ball Fields</b>	<b>Barbecues</b>	<b>Boat Launch</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Courts</b>	<b>Fishing</b>	<b>Nature Area</b>	<b>Picnicking</b>	<b>Picnic Shelter</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Restrooms</b>	<b>Showers</b>	<b>Soccer</b>	<b>Hiking/Jogging</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>Reservations</b>
Cleveland Park	1	sc					x			x		x					X	

sc = Skagit County Owned

p = Partnership - property is owned/maintained by Skagit County and an additional agency



## SCPR OPEN SPACE

Open Space Parks and Undeveloped Parks are identified as available for passive outdoor recreation, offering trails for viewing, parking and other limited improvements. Open space and undeveloped parks often allow for passive recreation opportunities in the form of sightseeing, picture taking, picnicking, beachcombing and other activities. Open space parks may also feature natural or conservation areas. They may also function as a greenbelt or view shed with no public access.

**Table 3.5: Open Space & Undeveloped Parks**

<b>Open Space &amp; Undeveloped Parks Quick Guide</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Barbecues</b>	<b>Boat Launch</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Courts</b>	<b>Fishing</b>	<b>Nature Area</b>	<b>Picnicking</b>	<b>Picnic Shelter</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Restrooms</b>	<b>Hiking/Jogging</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>Reservations</b>
Big Rock (Hoag Memorial Park)	13	sc						x							
Cascade Park	41	sc						x							
Frailey Mountain Park	400	sc					x	x	x				x		
Ann Wolford Park	33	sc					x	x	x						
Pilchuck Forest Trail	81	sc						x					x		
Pressentin	54	sc						x	x	x			x		
Centennial Corridor	45	sc						x							
Rexville Rock Overlook Park	.5	sc						x							
Sharpe Park/Montgomery-Duban Headlands	115	sc	x				x	x	x			x	x		
Squires Lake Park and Trail	57	Sc /p						x	x			x	x		

sc = Skagit County Owned

p = Partnership - property is owned/maintained by Skagit County and an additional agency

## SPECIAL USE PARKS OR FACILITIES

These park lands are acquired to provide for park activities that have specific needs that may or may not be compatible with typical park use. Examples include land acquired for development as a golf course, off-road vehicle facilities, or for regional events. The Skagit County Fairgrounds is a good example of a Special-Use Facility. The facility is used for special events, including the Skagit Fair, SICBA Home Show, MS Bike Ride, Master Gardener Plant Sale, and many other community occasions and gatherings.

Special Use Facilities Quick Guide	Acres	Ownership	Ball Fields	Barbecues	Boat Launch	Camping	Courts	Fishing	Nature Area	Picnicking	Picnic Shelter	Playground	Restrooms	Showers	Soccer	Hiking/Jogging	ADA	Reservations
Fairgrounds	20	sc								X			X				X	X

## EXISTING PARK INVENTORY

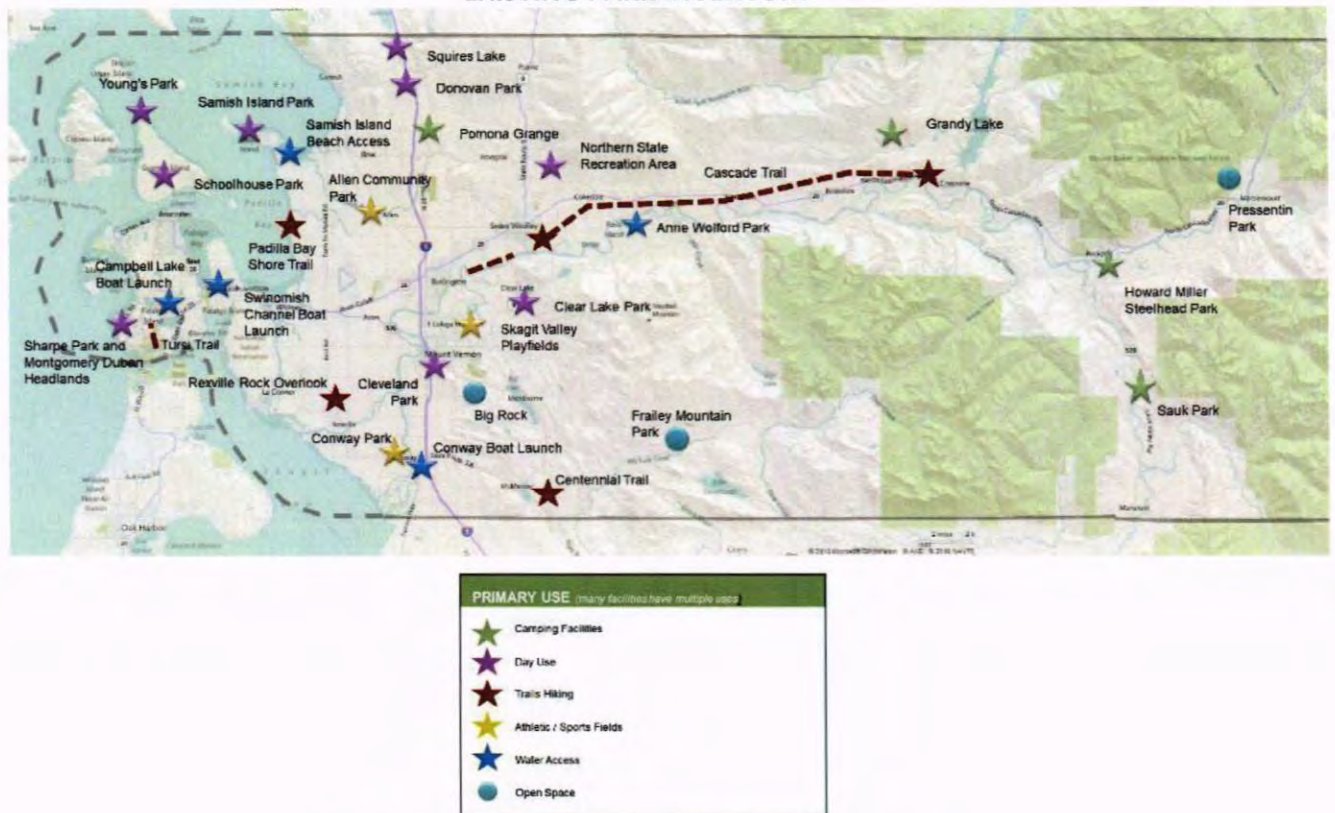


Figure 3.1: Park Locations in Skagit County



## SCPR'S REGIONAL PARKS

---

### **Burlington to Sedro-Woolley Trail**

Three miles of hiking/jogging trail covering 7 park acres. This linear trail divides Highway 20 and the Burlington Northern Railway and provides for recreational and non-motorized transportation. Portions of the trail are asphalted. Completing the connection to the Cascade Trail is a goal of both Skagit County and the Sedro-Woolley Parks and Recreation Departments.



---

### **Campbell Lake Boat Launch**

This 3 acre site contains a boat launch, parking, vault restroom facility and day-use area. The park is part of a partnership between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and SCPR. The WDFW maintains the boat launch, parking area and vault toilet, while SCPR mows the grass and empties the garbage. Permits have been obtained to replace the launch, pave the parking area, and add a day-use shelter.



---

### **Cascade Trail**

This rails to trails conservancy project is 22.5 miles of multi-use trail that parallels the scenic State Route 20 corridor, connecting Sedro-Woolley and Concrete. Hiking, biking, and equestrian use are permitted on the path. The trail is open year-round, meandering along the Skagit River and through the farmlands. Viewpoints along the way provide for wildlife viewing opportunities. Trail amenities include portable toilets at trailheads and rest areas. The trail encompasses 300 acres of land.



---

### **Centennial Trail**

The Centennial Trail is a regional trail system intended to eventually connect Snohomish and Whatcom County. Unlike the Cascade Trail, which is in a rails-to-trails conservancy as per federal legislation, this property has been purchased outright by the county. Skagit PUD and SCPR are partnering on a project to extend a waterline and create three miles of trail. In all, the trail system is contained along 81 acres of county parkland.





---

**Donovan Park**

This site is 3 acres large and is located on Friday Creek, in the Alger area. It is very popular with local communities, especially in the summer months. The park includes a picnic area, barbeques, a playground, vault toilet, and parking.



---

**Grandy Lake Park**

This primitive camping site is located off Baker Lake Road about five miles northwest of Highway 20. It is enjoyed by hunters, anglers, picnickers, and campers. Camping is seasonal. A group camp can be reserved. The Scott Paper Timber Company donated this 22-acre site on December 18, 1979, to be used solely for public recreational purposes.



---

**Howard Miller Steelhead Park**

This 110-acre campground and natural area is at the doorstep of the Cascade Mountains in Rockport. The park has a historical display of the old Rockport ferry, homestead cabin, and dug-out canoe. Bird watching, rafting, and fishing are very popular activities in and around the park. Steelhead park has a substantial shelter for entertaining large gatherings. Facilities include: 7 Tent sites, 54 full hook-up sites, 2 Adirondacks, 2 camping cabins, 3 restrooms (two have showers), a clubhouse, a seasonal interpretive center, and a waste station. Most of the park is open space lands with nature trails.



---

**Lake Erie Boat Launch**

This site is 1 acre. It has a boat launch, parking area, vault toilet, and bankside fishing. The park is part of a partnership between the WDFW and SCPR. The WDFW maintains the boat launch and lake, while SCPR provides turf management and waste removal services.





---

**Northern State Recreation Area**

Northern State Recreation Area is a 726 acre park northeast of Sedro- Woolley. In 2001, a Masterplan was created for long-range goals of trails, ball fields, campground, equestrian center, environmental education and interpretation sites, and a restored alluvial fan as sediment storage and salmon habitat. In 2018 the construction of Veterans Park as NSRA was begun with the installation of utilities and a picnic shelter. Natural resources on the site include Hansen Creek with associated wetlands and tributaries and Red Creek. Over 500 acres of the site will remain undeveloped to support wildlife.



---

**Padilla Bay Shore Trail**

This 15-acre site includes a 2.2-mile interpretive trail from Bay View along the dikes of Padilla Bay. Limited to hiking, biking, and non-motorized vehicles. There are portable toilets and ADA access. Parking is located at the North and South trailheads. This park property has a co-management agreement among SCPR, Dike District 13, and the Department of Ecology. Hunting is allowed from the trail.



---

**Pomona Grange Park**

A 17-acre park bordered by Friday Creek and the state fish hatchery, this park is used as an outdoor classroom for students. There is an interpretive nature trail, portable toilets, living roof kiosk, picnic shelter, BBQ, and picnic tables.



---

**Samish Island Beach Access**

The Beach Access on Wharf Street is very popular during the summer months for accessing shellfish beds, especially during minus tides. This site has become increasingly well known among birders as a place to see a variety of wintering marine bird species, including some that are fairly rare. The parking is limited and access is by a marine-grade stairway. Park visitors are asked to respect the neighboring properties.





---

**Sauk Park**

A primitive 30-acre overnight camping park (May 1 - Oct 31). There are magnificent views, fishing, natural areas, a picnic area, hiking and portable toilets, as well as Sauk River frontage.



---

**Skagit Valley Playfields**

This 25 acre park in the backyard of Skagit Valley Community College has 4 softball fields, a senior league baseball field, one soccer field, BBQ's, picnicking, picnic shelter, playground, restrooms, concessions building, jogging/hiking trail, and ADA access.



---

**Twin Bridges Boat Launch**

This 3 acre park is located below the twin bridges on SR 20. It is a popular launching point for crabbing, fishing, gunk-holing, or island hopping. The park has a picnic area, restrooms, a large parking area, a dock and two boat ramps. The dike across the channel is being promoted for use as a birding trail. The dike along the channel's west side interfaces with Tribal farmlands and is a prime viewing area for waterfowl, including Snow Geese and Trumpeter Swans.



---

**Young's Park**

This park is located at the northern shoreline of Guemes Island, off Guemes Island Road. It is a 13-acre day-use waterfront park with BBQ's, a nature area, picnicking, saltwater access, a seasonal restroom, ADA access, a trail, and a kayak launch. The San Juan Islands and Mount Baker can be viewed from the Northeast side of the park.





## SCPR'S COMMUNITY PARKS

### Allen Park

This park is situated on school property and is located on a triangular parcel between Chuckanut Road and Avon-Allen Road. The site is maintained in partnership with the Burlington School District. It includes primitive youth softball fields, youth baseball fields, soccer fields, two parking areas and a portable restroom. The field also provides a practice facility for lacrosse.



### Clear Lake Beach Park

Clear Lake Beach is open year-round. Park amenities include a fishing pier, BBQ grills, picnic shelter, playground, and restrooms. The lake boasts a diversity of fish, including Rainbow and Cut-Throat Trout, Largemouth Bass, Yellow Perch, and Catfish. It's a popular place for splashing and sunbathing during the warm summer months.



### Conway Park & Conway Ball Fields

This park is located adjacent to the bridge over the South Fork of the Skagit River near Conway. It has 3 acres of Little League ball fields on the South Fork Skagit River frontage, a boat launch, fishing, a picnic area and a seasonal restroom. The boat launch is very popular during fall salmon migrations. It is the furthest downstream maintained boat launch with parking available on the South Fork of the Skagit River.



### Schoolhouse Park

This park is located near the intersection of Guemes Island Road and Eden's Road. A former school site, Skagit County took ownership in 1978. It contains an ADA accessible playground, a picnic shelter, tennis court, youth baseball field, grass volleyball court, basketball court, a Philip McCracken sculpture, parking, and an outdoor stage.



### Samish Island Playground

This rural park is located off Halloran Road just west of Roney Road on Samish Island. The land was donated to the County by the Samish Island Community Club, whose members constructed the improvements. The site includes a playground, tennis court, basketball hoops, restroom building, picnic tables, and multi-purpose field.





## SCPR'S NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

### Cleveland Park

This 1-acre park consists of a full length basketball court, picnicking area, and a playground. The park provides parking for large events at the fairgrounds and a place for the neighboring guests from the senior center to enjoy the outdoors.



## SCPR'S OPEN SPACE & UNDEVELOPED PARKS

### Big Rock: Richard M. Hoag Memorial Open Space Park

Approximately 13-acres of rocky hilltop amid surrounding lowlands. There are beautiful 360 degree views from the top. The property desperately needs safe and reliable access which we are actively pursuing with the Skagit Land Trust. To the native Noo-quah-chamish people this rock pinnacle was of special significance and legend.



### Cascade River Park

The forest of this park was harvested more than twenty years ago. The land is bisected by the Cascade River and could be an important place for trails and river access in the future. The riverfront parcel is comprised of 40-acres of natural area parkland. The land was replanted and is regenerating nicely.



### Frailey Mountain Park

This park is 400 acres in size and was acquired for use as a shooting and training range. The open space lands are surrounded by DNR lands and are managed under the condition of recreational use.



### Tursi Trail

The Tursi Trail concept arose from a long-time vision of connecting Deception Pass with the Anacortes Community Forestlands. In partnership with the Skagit Land Trust, the vision has come to fruition. The access easements and trails were completed in 2016. The trail meanders past an old mine shaft, the largest tree on Fidalgo Island, and incredible vistas.





---

**Pilchuck Forest**

This 81-acre property was managed as timberland before being donated to Skagit County. The property through the lower basin is primarily deciduous with tall cottonwood, numerous willow and alder, and along the upper terrace, scattered evergreens. A portion of the Centennial trail corridor meanders through the property. This is prime mitigation property as it has significant wetland function and value.



---

**Pressentin Park**

This park is located off Highway 20, near Marblemount. The site is 40-acres and includes wooded areas, large open terraces, Skagit River frontage, and Highway 20 access. Pressentin has a network of meandering trails and is a popular destination for watching wildlife. Free parking is available at the Shell station nearby.



---

**Rexville Rock Overlook**

This is a .5 acre rock outcrop overlooking the fertile Skagit Valley farmlands. It is currently undeveloped. The view of surrounding farmlands and Cascade Mountains would make for a picnic location. There is adequate area for a small parking area, trail, and viewing platform.



---

**Sharpe Park /Montgomery-Duban Headlands**

A loop trail of 2 ½ miles throughout 115 acres of natural open space featuring excellent wildlife and scenic viewing opportunities as it meanders along an open wetland and on to a rocky bluff. The park contains a picnic area, benches, hiking, and toilets.



---

**Squires Lake Park**

A 57 acre day-use hiking trail wrapping around Squires Lake. The park is managed through a greater partnership agreement with Whatcom County Parks and Recreation. There are hiking trails, respites, foot bridges, and wetlands.



---

**Ann Wolford Park**

This 33-acre County park was the result of a partnership between Skagit Land Trust and Skagit County. Located just west of Lyman, this property along the Skagit River protects important existing salmon habitat and provides recreational river access to our community.





## **COUNTYWIDE RECREATION FACILITIES INVENTORY**

The countywide recreational facilities inventory includes facilities managed by private, city, county, and state organizations. Most of the facilities reside within city and county owned parklands.

### **Senior Baseball Fields:**

Senior baseball fields are regulation in size (90' base paths). In Skagit County, the senior baseball programs are managed by several organizations. SCPR manages the American Legion Tournaments. Organizations managing programs include Skagit Valley College, the local high school, Junior and Senior American Legion, Babe Ruth, Sandy Koufax, and Senior Little League. Currently, there is a total of 12 Senior Baseball Fields.

### **Youth Baseball Fields:**

Youth baseball fields are little league sized (60' base paths). In Skagit County, there are several organizations involved in youth baseball. These include four Little League groups (South Skagit, Burlington-Edison, Sedro-Woolley, and Anacortes) and the YMCA. SCPR manages the summer baseball camps. Many of the inventoried fields are nothing more than playgrounds with a chain link backstop.

Currently, there is a total of 53 Youth Baseball Fields.

### **Softball Fields:**

The softball program in Skagit County is managed by several organizations. This includes but is not limited to Skagit County Parks and Recreation, Skagit Valley College, the local high schools' fast pitch teams, the City of Mount Vernon, and private tournament providers.

Currently, there is a total of 25 Softball Fields, 7 of which are available to adults.

### **Adult/Junior Soccer Fields**

The soccer program in Skagit County is managed by several Youth Soccer organizations. This includes but is not limited to Skagit Valley College and the local high schools' teams, Skagit County, City of Anacortes, City of Burlington, and private groups.

Currently, there is a total of 40 Adult/Junior Soccer Fields.



**Youth Soccer Fields:**

The youth soccer program in Skagit County is managed by several youth soccer organizations. This includes but is not limited to the local high schools, Skagit County, City of Anacortes and private groups.

Currently, there is a total of 33 Youth Soccer Fields.

**Football Fields:**

The football fields in the county are being maintained and provided primarily by the city school districts.

Currently, there is a total of 11 Football Fields.

**Day Use/Group Picnic Areas:**

Description: There are 20 group picnic areas in Skagit County. Excluded in this inventory are individual picnic units. Individual picnic sites are difficult to inventory and can be added to almost any park or recreation area. Group picnic areas, on the other hand, are a larger investment and require more land than a traditional picnic unit. There has been expressed interest in having picnic shelters of various sizes at most Skagit County Parks.

Currently, there is a total of 20 Day Use/Group Picnic Shelters.

**Public Swimming Pools:**

There are two indoor swimming pools in Skagit County. In Anacortes, the Fidalgo Pool and Fitness Center operates year-round and is dependent on a special levy voted on by Fidalgo Island residents every six years. In Mount Vernon, the YMCA provides swimming opportunities at their facility.

Year-round swimming opportunities are limited to 2 Public Swimming Pools.

**Outdoor Swimming Areas:**

Skagit County no longer provides for sanctioned swimming at Clear Lake. Numerous lakes throughout the county present unsanctioned summer swimming opportunities for people who choose to swim at their own risk.

**Boat Launches:**

There are at least 8 saltwater ramps, 9 river ramps, and 18 lake ramps available to Skagit County residents.

Currently, there are a total of at least 35 boat ramps owned and managed by a variety of agencies.

**Public Shoreline:**

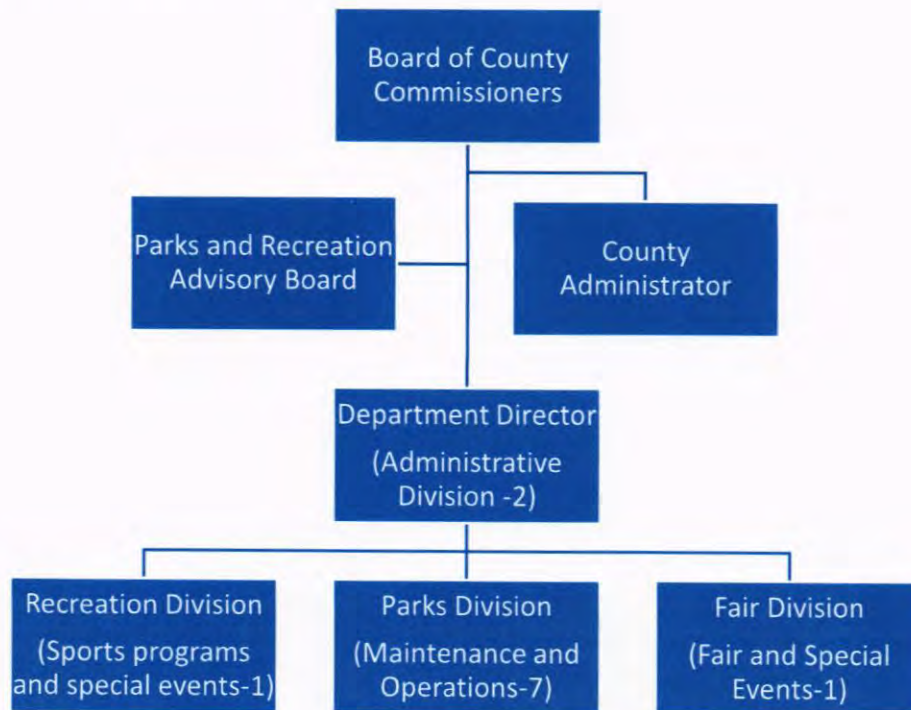
There are 17 locations for saltwater shoreline access in Skagit County, some of which are only available by boat. There are 7 locations to access lake shorelines, and at least 7 areas to access streams.

Currently, there is a total of at least 30 shoreline access points on Skagit County waters.



## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Parks and Recreation Department is outlined below:



**Figure 4.1: Parks, Recreation and Fair Structural Chart and number of full time employees**  
**Parks and Recreation Department**

Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department (SCPR) currently employs 11 full-time employees. This is a significant decrease from staff levels prior to the 2009 recession. The 2003 comprehensive plan indicates a peak of 21 full time employees in the parks and recreation division, with 2 additional full-time employees staffing the Fairgrounds. In addition to fulltime staff, there are generally a dozen part-time employees assisting operations during the summer months. SCPR supplements full-time and part-time staff with over 250 contracted employees over the course of a calendar year. Contract employees are responsible for temporary functions, including refereeing basketball, umpiring baseball, staffing events, and assisting programs.

#### **ADMINISTRATION SERVICES**

The Administration Division is responsible for overseeing personnel, purchasing, contract administration, budget and the management and supervision of the other divisions. This division is also involved with planning, acquisition, design, development, special projects, grant preparation, and coordination of capital projects.

#### **PARKS DIVISION**

The Parks Division is responsible for the operation and maintenance of existing County Park and Recreation facilities. The Division is also responsible for the purchase and upkeep of maintenance materials, equipment and vehicles, fee collection at county park sites and park security.

#### **RECREATION DIVISION**

The Recreation Division manages the County's recreation program, including youth and adult sports leagues and tournaments, youth skills camps, and other activities. SCPR uses every available facility in the area for their athletic activities, including courts at the Skagit Valley College, local school district gyms, the YMCA, and various other private and public facilities. Programs offered operate on a balanced budget without any reliance on the general fund. That is, program fees entirely offset all program expenses. In some cases, adult programs recover revenue above operating costs and help subsidize youth programs which may not have full cost recovery.

#### **FAIR DIVISION**

The Fair Division manages the fairground activities. In addition to the annual County Fair, there are other events, including those managed by outside entities. Fair staff hosts two "barn market" type events and as lessors, oversees the annual Home Show, MS Bike Ride, Garden Sale, and other events. The Fair ran a 150k-200k deficit annually prior to 2010. The Fairground budget has been unsubsidized since 2010 and has created a substantial cash reserve that is being used to renovate/replace buildings and rebuild failing infrastructure.



### OPERATING BUDGET FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

The gross expenditure for park and recreation services averaged approximately 1.80 percent of the County's overall budget prior to the 2009 recession and dropped to 1.06 percent by 2019. To put this in some context this budget number is compared to Whatcom, Snohomish and Spokane counties. Whatcom and Snohomish are referenced as they are adjacent to the north and south of Skagit County, while Spokane County is used as it is a mixture of urban and rural communities similar to Skagit. By comparison to other counties that provide park and recreation services, Skagit County has a smaller percentage of funds dedicated to this purpose. For example, for 2019 the Snohomish County Parks and Recreation Department budget represented 4.6 percent of the overall Snohomish County expenditures. The Whatcom County Parks and Recreation department represented 1.8 percent of that county's overall expenditures, and the Spokane County Parks and Recreation budget represented 1.4 percent of its county's total expenditures. For 2019, these three county park budgets average 3.7 percent of their overall county expenditures compared with Skagit County's 1.1 percent. That being noted, some rural counties have chosen not to fund a parks and recreation department. Unlike public health and law enforcement, Washington State law does not consider parks and recreation an essential service.

**Table 4.1: Parks Operating Budget to Total County Expenditures - 2019**

Area	2019 Park and Rec Expenditures	2019 County Expenditures	Percentage of Park Expenditures to County Expenditures
Spokane County	\$2,586,994	\$184,058,315	1.4 %
Snohomish County	\$44,990,292	\$983,128,172	4.6 %
Whatcom County	\$4,383,264	\$243,653,253	1.8 %
<b>Tri-County Average</b>	<b>17,320,183</b>	<b>470,279,913</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
<b>Skagit County</b>	<b>\$1,737,081</b>	<b>\$163,689,906</b>	<b>1.1 %</b>

### COST OF PARK AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES

Another means of analyzing an agency's level of park and recreation services is to compare operating costs on a per capita basis. The gross cost per capital is the total cost of the services divided by the number of persons in the service area. However, this is not necessarily the true cost to the taxpayer, because it does not reflect the net cost after revenue is deducted. Both costs are shown below for Skagit County in 2019. This assumes a 2019 county population of 125,690 persons. Table 4.2 shows gross expenses going up by 4.3 percent per year but net expense only increasing by 2.9 percent. This is due to revenue increases outpacing expenses.

**Table 4.2: Parks and Recreation Cost Per Capita - 2010 - 2019**

<u>Item</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>Yearly Percent Change</u> <u>2010-2019</u>
Gross Expenses	\$1,212,806	\$1,737,081	+2.6%
Net Expenses (after program fees, campground revenue and other income)	\$717,702	\$920,548	+1.5%

**Table 4.3: Park Revenue Comparison - 2010 and 2019**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>Percent Change</u> <u>2010-2019</u>
Swinomish Launch	\$26,095	\$26,654	+2.1%
HMSP	\$169,154	\$244,981	44.8%
Fairgrounds	\$344,006	\$ 491,180	42.8%
Grandy Lake	\$10,068.	\$18,967	88.4%
Sauk Park	\$4,515	\$6,562	45.4%
Recreation	\$317,198	\$540,158	70.3%
<b>TOTAL (All Activities)</b>	<b>\$860,979</b>	<b>\$1,328,502</b>	<b>+54.3%</b>



### RECREATION PARTICIPATION

Skagit County offers a wide range of recreation activities, using its own buildings as well as school and college facilities. The tables below (4.4 and 4.5) summarize recreation participation levels and revenues generated. The numbers represent participant hours," meaning one person participating in one activity in hours. For example, one person participating in an activity for 4 hours equals 4 participant hours.

**Table 4.4: Recreation Participation Hours Comparison - 2010 - 2019**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>Percent Change</u> <u>2010-2019</u>
Adult Leagues	169,737	128,198	-24%
Youth Leagues	114,670	225,457	+97%
Tournaments	54,931	59,327	+8.0%
Special Events	8,392	0	N/A
Youth Camps	9,718	7,567	-22%
<b>TOTAL (All Activities)</b>	<b>357,448</b>	<b>420,549</b>	<b>+18%</b>

**Table 4.5: Recreation Revenue Comparison - 2010 and 2019**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>Percent Change</u> <u>2010-2019</u>
Adult Leagues	\$118,816	\$ 87,140	-27%
Youth Leagues	\$98,672	\$196,410	+99%
Tournaments	\$43,945	\$ 48,885	+11%
Special Events	\$13,986	0	NA
Youth Camps	\$21,596	\$16,175	-25%
<b>TOTAL (All Activities)</b>	<b>\$297,015</b>	<b>\$348,610.00</b>	<b>+17.0%</b>

### **SUMMARY**

Participation in recreation programs and activities since 2010 has increased by 18 percent while revenues have increased approximately 17 percent. Revenues for recreational activities continue to slightly outpace expenditures.

No general fund dollars are used to subsidize the recreation division. Informal polls taken by the Washington Recreation and Parks Association indicate no other recreation department across Washington State touts this accomplishment.

Skagit County Parks and Recreation's overall expenses for the department remain below the 2008 pre-recession level and have increased by about 3 percent per year since 2010.

The Fair division also remains unsubsidized since 2010.



## **CHAPTER 5: S CPR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

It is the mission of Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department to provide high quality recreational services, park facilities, and open spaces to our residents and visitors of Skagit County. This is exemplified through community leadership, customer service and professional staff.

#### **A. Vision and Overall Goal:**

- Provide a wide variety of well organized, cost effective, community enriching, and valued recreation programs for all Skagit area residents.
- Develop, renovate, and acquire a system of parks, recreational facilities, and natural areas that are attractive, safe, functional, and accessible to citizens and visitors of Skagit County.

#### **B. Priority Goals:**

Skagit County residents value the many benefits of parks and recreation. It is important for the public to connect with the outdoors and our natural environment, while providing for passive and active recreation activities for our community. This is done by acquiring, maintaining, and/or preserving a network of parks that provide diverse recreational opportunities for all residents.

### **ADMINISTRATION DIVISION GOALS**

*Provide the support and leadership necessary for all staff to conduct excellent work within the Parks, Recreation & Fair missions.*

#### **Director Objectives:**

- Create and facilitate a unified department whereby all divisions (Parks, Recreation, and Fair) are linked through a central mission of the Parks and Recreation department.
- Empower and lead department personnel to achieve professional success.
- Listen and respond to the needs and concerns of the community as it relates to Parks and Recreation issues.
- To ensure financial integrity of the department that encourages fiscal discipline.

- Seek and create departmental efficiency by pursuing additional funding sources.
- Promote a vision of the Parks and Recreation department to meet the needs and interests of our community.
- Encourage community support through positive and responsive image of the Skagit County Parks and Recreation department.

**Administrative Management Objectives:**

- Ensure successful facilitation of division goals and expectations.
- Maintain quality control in all aspects of the Department.
- Provide support, guidance and staff development for division personnel.
- Develop and maintain protocols and procedures necessary to meet County government directives and public expectations.
- Develop and maintain new programs and events in response to department goals.

**Administrative Services Objectives:**

- Provide professional and accessible customer service to the public and in a professional, competent and timely manner.
- Adhere to county procedures and protocol in performing day to day support functions that include but are not limited to customer service, registration, scheduling, payroll, purchasing, and community coordination.

**PROJECTS AND PLANNING GOALS**

*Develop, renovate, and acquire a system of parks, trails, recreational facilities, and natural areas that are attractive, safe, functional, and accessible to all residents of Skagit County.*

**Project Planning Objectives:**

- Work with citizens to clearly identify opportunities for improvements and new facilities.
- Develop multi-year plans that can be realistically implemented and funded.
- Incorporate community input throughout project development and planning.
- Identify regional standards and trends in recreation for consideration in park planning.
- Engage in ongoing dialogue with city, state, and federal government to insure a coordination of policy plans, goals, and objectives.



**Project Implementation:**

- Complete capital projects in a timely manner and within budget and scope.
- Use parks operation staff where feasible to provide project cost saving.
- Help sustain local economic interests by not duplicating services that are being met by the private sector.

**Community Relations:**

- Communicate with the community on the status of current and projected projects.
- Work with community partners to facilitate project ownership, and possible cost savings.

**Project Funding:**

- Identify and secure grant sources for acquisition and park development.
- Work with private, non-profit, and public partners to share cost and use of facilities.
- Establish consistent revenue stream for project development and maintaining facilities/programs.

**RECREATION DIVISION GOALS**

*Provide safe and affordable community recreation programs that offer indoor and outdoor, active and passive recreational opportunities for all residents. Be both visionary and responsive in developing new programs and identifying community recreation needs. Work with parks division to develop and enhance recreation facilities for community use.*

**Recreation Division Objectives:**

- Increase the participation hours in recreational programs.
- Expand revenue generating programs.
- Increase revenue opportunities i.e. donations, fees, and grants as market allows.
- Form partnerships with other agencies and/or non-profits where feasible to assure the needs of Skagit County residents are being met.
- Seek opportunities to meet indoor recreation gym space

## **PARK FINANCE GOAL**

*Develop financing strategies to address the need for regional and community park acquisition, development, maintenance, and stewardship.*

### **Park Finance Objectives:**

- Develop a GMA-based impact mitigation fee ordinance.
- Continue to seek voluntary park impact fees from new developments.
- Explore funding partnerships with public and private sources to assist in efforts for park acquisition, development, programs and maintenance.
- Work with non-profits to promote shared investments in park acquisition and development.
- Work with the community to develop a new Parks, Recreation, and Fair Foundation to help support the department's objectives.
- Seek funding for new facilities and improvements to existing facilities through a variety of fund sources including capital reserves, real estate excise tax, grants, contributions, bonds, and/or levies.
- Consolidate services with educational institutions and other community park providers.

## **TRAIL DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

*Provide a multi-use regional trail system, which connects to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems.*

### **Trail Development Objectives:**

- Work with other county, state, and city parks to establish links and connecting trails.
- Provide trails for pedestrians (including, where feasible, access for persons with disabilities), bicyclists, equestrians, and other trail users.
- Provide for linkages of population centers, community facilities, workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, recreation areas, open space and cultural/historical areas.
- Coordinate with other agencies to ensure a comprehensive approach to trail planning.
- Separate recreational trails from motorized vehicle traffic where feasible.
- Create a management policy for SCPR operated trails.



- Coordinate with regional planners to insure trail connectivity.

### **NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS**

*Recognize Skagit County Parks has significant value as a natural habitat in addition to supporting public recreation. The existence of this habitat and the opportunity to visit it are in themselves public benefits. Skagit County Parks & Recreation will promote preservation of natural areas to provide appropriate public access, offer environmental education opportunities, conserve open space, and protect fish, wildlife and native plant habitat and corridors. The department will also protect park infrastructure and visitors from foreseeable hazards.*

#### **Wildlife Habitat and Public Objectives:**

- Promote acquisition, preservation and responsible stewardship of wildlife habitat on Skagit County park lands.
- Incorporate potential fish and wildlife habitat enhancements into park site development and redevelopment, where possible. For example, where increased wildlife use is compatible with site objectives, incorporate native plantings, non-structural bank stabilization methods, access controls, removal of barriers to fish passage, invasive plant removal, and other measures to enhance habitat.
- Work with county natural resource employees to address fish and wildlife habitat concerns.
- Where relevant, coordinate with Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to develop and operate Department lands and facilities in accordance with management recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats and Species.
- Restore critical habitat for Chinook Salmon for aiding in the stabilization and recovery of the resident orca whale populations.
- Cooperate with public and private efforts to identify and acquire key habitat parcels that help to preserve critical corridors, protect habitat for sensitive species, and showcase the natural diversity of Skagit County.
- Coordinate trail planning and development with the appropriate agencies to ensure that the impact of trail corridors to wildlife habitat is appropriately mitigated and, where possible, ensure that trail corridors support safe wildlife movement as well as recreation by people.
- When building trail connections, Skagit County should always take into consideration the need for simultaneously providing enough corridors for supporting the movement of wildlife.

- Encourage partnerships with public and private organizations to assist in monitoring and researching impacts on sensitive county park lands and in implementing solutions to minimize these impacts.

#### **Environmental Education Objectives:**

- Utilize parklands, facilities, and programs to promote environmental education and encourage park visitors to become stewards of Skagit County's natural resources.
- Provide improvements at County parks, recreational open space areas, and trails to support environmental education such as viewing blinds, interpretive signs, and access controls that encourage non-obtrusive wildlife viewing, exploration, and self-guided learning.
- Maximize access to educational opportunities by providing accessible facilities.
- Support partnerships with environmental education organizations to provide programs at outdoor classrooms and other appropriate gathering places in Skagit County parks.
- Ensure that education and viewing areas at SCPR facilities are sized to accommodate class groups, and design parking areas to accommodate at least one small school bus or three passenger vans.
- Include information on ecological processes, wildlife, habitat, non-obtrusive viewing, and conservation efforts at facilities.

#### **Managing Natural Hazards Objectives:**

- Work with appropriate agencies and other county departments to maintain a hazard mitigation plan for Skagit County park properties, including but not limited to fire risk and hazard tree assessment.
- Work with the Department of Natural Resources and local fire districts to coordinate fire suppression strategies for county park properties in or near at-risk urban-rural interface areas.
- Work with local fire marshals to ensure campground infrastructure meets code and that seasonal fire restrictions are implemented.



## **OPEN SPACE GOAL**

*Conserve Open Space corridors within and between urbanizing areas to define communities, provide recreation, and protect habitat.*

### **Open Space Objectives:**

- Participate with other county, state, federal, and non-profit agencies to develop a vision for habitat and open space corridors within urbanizing areas (inside or outside of UGA's) for use in planning, regulating, and developing livable communities.
- Coordinate planning efforts and initiate projects that meet multiple objectives, such as urban area greenway planning, transportation planning (including non-motorized), and storm water facility planning.
- Coordinate with partners to insure open space objectives are being met.
- Recognize in park planning the importance of open space lands to the aesthetic appeal and environmental value.

## **WATER ACCESS GOAL**

*Provide opportunities for water access and activities throughout the County.*

### **Water Access Objectives:**

- Identify future sites and partnerships to acquire additional salt water access sites along the Salish Sea.
- Identify future opportunities for appropriate lakefront water activities at new park sites.
- Evaluate opportunities to develop new sites or redevelop existing parks to expand water dependent activities at appropriate locations.
- Designate, maintain and promote aquatic trail opportunities and recreational experiences for users of kayaks, canoes, inflatable boats, pleasure boats, and small-non-motorized watercraft.
- Develop a plan to assess river access needs on the Skagit River, utilizing partnerships with other agencies and providers.
- Acknowledge that the residents of Skagit County consistently rank waterfront connectivity as a primary need by working to increase access for all types of water.

### **SPECIAL USE GOALS**

*Provide facilities or dedicated use areas for single-use, indoor, emergent and/or specialized recreational uses, where feasible.*

#### **Special Use Objectives:**

- Inventory and analyze developed parks and undeveloped park land for the feasibility of providing off leash dog areas.
- Support opportunities for indoor recreation.
- Identify opportunities to generate revenue through special use recreational facilities and programs.
- Work with planners to address code conflicts that encumber the ability to provide a sanctioned and accessible recreational shooting facility.
- As zoning and development expands in the south Mount Vernon area, consider options for expanding and evolving the fairgrounds into a parklike facility with greater access to the community.

### **CULTURAL/HISTORICAL GOALS**

*Promote the cultural and historic resources of Skagit County through parks and programs.*

#### **Cultural Historical Objectives:**

- Work with communities, tribes and historical organizations to identify culturally and historically significant landscapes appropriate for inclusion into the Skagit County park system.
- Use site history and culture to create development themes and interpretive materials within existing SCPR operated parks.
- Highlight the historical significance of the Northern State Recreational Area (NSRA) from the various groups that have used the park over time, including native wildlife, the Tribes, hospital patients, hospital farm-workers, and recreationalists.
- Reference landscape architectural firm Olmstead Bros. plans and site designs for NSRA to ensure the components of their vision is preserved and carried forward.



## **ATHLETIC FACILITY GOALS**

*Provide youth and adult athletic facilities throughout the county.*

### **Athletic Facility Objectives:**

- Pursue partnerships with local cities, school districts, special service districts and qualified nonprofit organizations to provide local youth and adult athletic facilities.
- Identify opportunities for partnerships with local school districts for the capital construction and maintenance of youth athletic facilities at local schools that can also be used by all residents.
- All partnerships shall ensure that open public access will be provided to land and facilities in public ownership. Limitations on public access, however, may be placed upon the facility subject to design considerations, and/or preferential scheduling of the organization involved.
- Partner with the local college to ensure adequate facilities are made available for youth sports. College athletic programs for young adults should be supported solely by the college.

## **ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

*Acquire and develop parks, recreation facilities and open space areas to meet the needs of the public within available resources.*

### **Acquisition and Development Objectives:**

- Coordinate and cooperate with both public and private sector interests to further park and recreation opportunities.
- Coordinate park planning and land acquisition efforts across jurisdictional boundaries and consider existing and planned infrastructure, population served, environmental constraints, and available resources.
- Work with non-profit recreation providers to enhance the quality and quantity of available recreation facilities.
- Make acquisition and development of water property for parks, trails, and open space a high priority.
- Acquire and develop regional parks and secure open space in rural areas as opportunities to meet the other goals set forth in this plan.

- Assure the acquisition of parkland for community parks, water access and trails in Urban Growth Areas and rural subareas.
- Ensure new sites respond to community's needs and/or demands, and are unique and/or are part of linked open spaces.
- Consider acquisition which provides habitat and/or recreation connectivity.
- Acquire lands and place them into open space reserves until they can be adapted to fit future uses.
- Find a dedicated funding source for acquiring parklands and forestlands.



## **CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY AND PUBLIC MEETINGS**

There are several tools we use to acquire input from the public. It is our goal to obtain information from a wide sample of residents and not just rely on those who are more vocal than the County as a whole. This chapter contains the summaries of comments we obtained through our interface with the public.

Identifying recreation needs is a difficult task because every region is different and community values vary according to many internal factors. Identifying recreation needs is the process of the comparing the supply of existing facilities and programs against the demand for facilities and programs by residents. In Skagit County, it is somewhat more complicated because the region also attracts significant users who live beyond the County boundary. Two of the sources of information used to quantify community desires and establish program and facility priorities were a month-long public input survey and a series of community workshop meetings. A detailed data table of the input from the countywide public meetings and the public input survey is found in appendices of this Comprehensive Plan.

### **SUMMARY OF THE 2018 HOUSEHOLD PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY**

For the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update, Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) prepared a public input survey that was delivered via the internet. This survey was open for the entire month of November 2018. The overall goal of the study was to provide SCPR with estimates of residents' preferences for parks and recreation facilities development and priorities for future planning. This survey was open to all residents of the county and was advertised in the following ways

1. Two press-releases and subsequent public service announcements in the Skagit Valley Herald;
2. An invitation was sent to the entire customer database of the Parks Department;
3. A link listing on the Skagit County splash page as well as the Parks Dept splash page;
4. An invitation was sent to all city planning departments and all city parks departments;
5. An invitation was sent to Parks Advisory Board for re-distribution to other user groups;
6. The survey was advertised during the public meetings held in 2018;
7. The survey was advertised on TV channel Skagit 21.
8. The survey was mentioned on local radio stations KSVR, KAPS, and KBRC.

At the conclusion, 806 households completed the survey. Once a household (computer) had completed the survey, software allowed the survey to be modified but not taken a second time. This placed some sidebars on attempts to complete more than one survey.

It is acknowledged that the public input survey is limited as use for representative data because participation was self-selecting. This sampling of self-chosen participating households was just another tool utilized for obtaining input from the public. It is an augmentation of all other means of obtaining the public's recreational needs.

## 2018 PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY FINDINGS

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS:

Most people who participated in the opinion survey were from Skagit County. As is often the case with public input, the senior population participated in a greater proportion than the general population. It is interesting to note that 51% of respondents were age 50 or older. See the demographic summary below.

**Table 6.1**  
**Demographics**  
**N= 806 HOUSEHOLDS**

Age		Children at home	
17 or younger	0%	Yes	54%
18-20	2%	No	46%
21-29	7%		
30-39	21%	<b>Residency</b>	
40-49	20%	Resident of Skagit County	94 %
50-59	19%		
60 or older	20%		
70 or older	12%		



### Park Usage:

Nearly all (93%) of the respondents reported their household had used a park facility in the past 12 months. Of those, 30% reported they use a park on a weekly basis and 86% use a park at least monthly. (Figure 6.1)

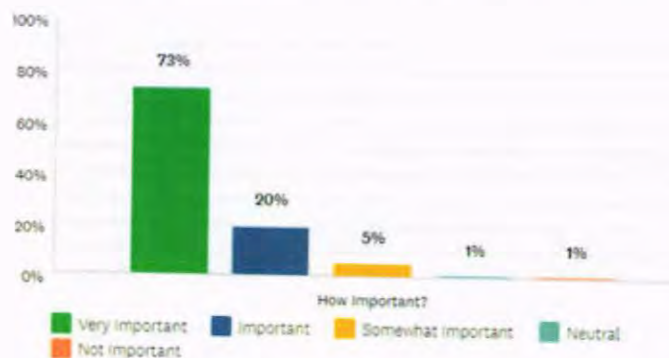
**Figure 6.1**  
**Frequency of Park Use**



Of those who do not use Parks and Recreation Services (7%), the most prevalent reasons were that (1) busy/more important things to do, (2) activities at parks are not conducive to older or disabled users with limited mobility, (3) county parks are not close to where they live. (See Comments in Appendix 3).

Nearly all respondents (93%) ranked Parks and Recreation Services as Important or Very Important to maintaining the quality of life in our community (Figure 6.2).

**Figure 6.2**  
**Importance of Parks and Recreation Services**



### Ranked Priorities

Respondents were asked to RATE the importance or UN-importance of different programs and facilities to determine what was perceived as important. The table below reports the percentage of respondents that said the following activities or facilities were very important or somewhat important.

**Table 6.2**  
**Importance of Facilities and Programs**

<b>Facilities/Programs</b>	<b>Very or Somewhat Important</b>
Parks (General)	94%
Trails and Pathways	91 %
Open Space or Natural Areas	88 %
Public Beach / Water Access	85 %
Children's Play Equipment / Playground	81 %
Sports Fields	73 %
Community Events	69 %
Camping (car/ tent / bike)	67%
Sports Courts	65 %
Swimming Pool or Aquatic Center	62 %
Exercise/Fitness	61 %
Boat Launch Area	60 %
Gym Space	56 %
Dog Parks	51 %
Small Boat Facility	47 %
Mountain Bike Skills Area	45 %
Camping (RV areas)	43 %
Shooting Range	29 %
Disc Golf	25 %



Residents were then asked to RANK the top three priorities from the list above. These results are summarized in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3**  
**RANKED Importance of Facilities and Programs**

<b>Facilities/Programs</b>	
1. Trails and Pathways	HIGHEST
2. Open Space or Natural Areas	
3. Public Beach / Water Access	
4. Sports Fields	
5. Parks (general)	
6. Children's Play Equipment / Playground	
7. Pool (swimming or aquatic facility)	
8. Community Events	
9. Sports Courts	
10. Gym Space	
11. Camping (car/ tent / bike)	
12. Mountain Bike Skills Area	
13. Dog Parks	
14. Boat Launch Areas	
15. Shooting Range	
16. RV Camping	
17. Exercise Fitness Area	
18. Disc Golf	
19. Other	
20. Small boat facility	LOWEST

The most important facility in the 'other' category was 'pickle ball courts' mentioned 9 times.

It was anticipated that trails, sports fields, and sports courts would be important to the community so each of these areas had a follow up question regarding prioritized preferences.

### Trail Type Priorities

**Table 6.4**  
**RANKED Trail Type Priorities**  
**N=652 Households**

<b>Facilities/Programs</b>	<b>Number of respondents listing as top category</b>
1. Nature Trail	500
2. Regional Linear Trails	407
3. Waterfront Trails	360
4. Soft Surface Walking Trails	318
5. Hardened or ADA compliant Trails	157
6. Mountain Bike Trails	154
7. Sidewalks	134
8. Horse Trails	97
9. Motorized Trails	81
10. Other	17

### Sports Fields Priorities

**Table 6.5**  
**RANKED Sports Field Priorities**  
**N=498 Households**

<b>Facilities/Programs</b>	<b>Number of respondents listing as top category</b>
1. Soccer	355
2. General Open Field Space	353
3. Baseball	250
4. Softball	195
5. Football	115
6. Lacrosse	52
7. Other	44



## Sports Court Priorities

**Table 6.6**  
**RANKED Sports Court Priorities**  
**N=473 Households**

<b>Facilities/Programs</b>	<b>Number of respondents listing as top category</b>
1. Basketball	355
2. General Open Gym Space	318
3. Tennis	240
4. Volleyball	206
5. Pickle Ball	165
6. Other	22

### **Community Satisfaction:**

Another important factor queried in the survey was satisfaction with the current parks system. In general, the community appears satisfied with the conditions and activities of the parks in Skagit County. Of the five largest facilities managed by Skagit County, the Skagit Playfields, which is heavily used, is at the top. At the bottom is Clear Lake Beach Park.

This area of the public input survey garnered a lot of individual comments that are summarized in Appendix A3.

**Table 6.7**  
**Existing Park Satisfaction**  
**N=366-436 Households**

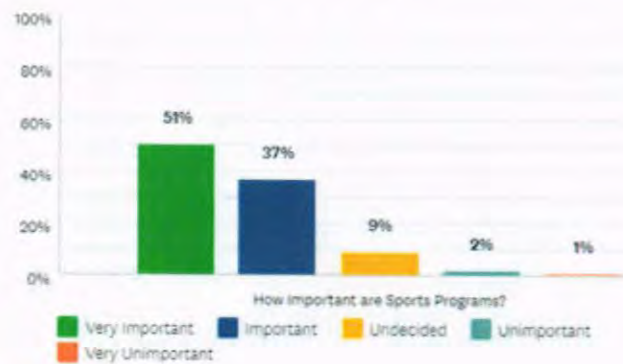
<b>Location</b>	<b>Very Satisfied/Satisfied with Activities</b>	<b>Very Satisfied/Satisfied with Condition</b>
Skagit Playfields at SVC	72%	73%
Howard Miller Steelhead Park	60%	65%
Cascade Trail	64%	65%
Northern State Rec Area in SW	57%	55%
Clear Lake Beach Park	43%	40%

### Recreation Programs:

Beyond facilities, interest in sports and recreation programs was surveyed. Most residents (88%) feel these programs are important.

**Figure 2.3**  
**Recreation Programs**

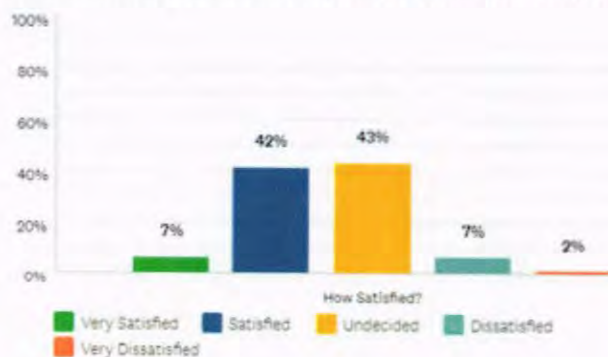
**How important do you feel sports programs to youth and adults alike, are to quality of life**



The follow-up question related to satisfaction with the selection of recreation activities offered by SCPR. There is greater satisfaction than not, but the greatest response is neutral or undecided.

**Figure 2.4**  
**Sports Programs Satisfaction**

**How satisfied are you with the selection of sports programs currently offered by SCPR?**





There was an open-ended text follow-up question asking people what types of sport programs they would like to see more of. Table 6.8 shows the most requested program offerings.

**Table 6.8**  
**Open Ended Requested Offerings**  
 Only suggestions with 5 or greater responses are listed  
 N=190 households

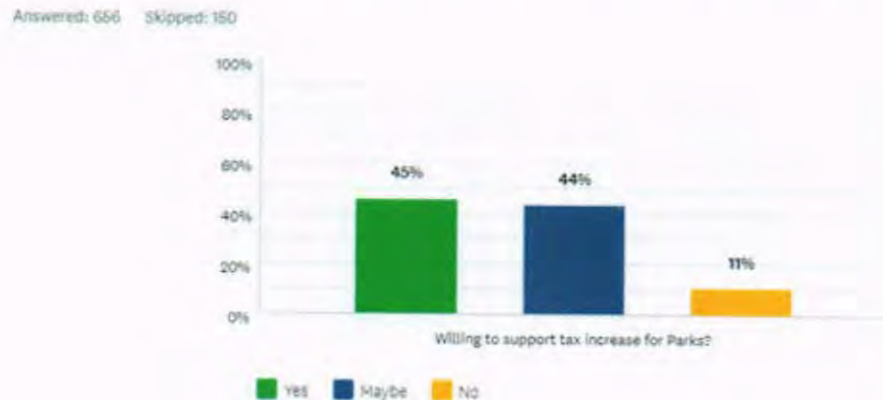
classes, sport programs and enrichment activities	Number times of requested
Pickleball	34
Low Impact Activities (hiking, yoga, fitness, walking)	18
Basketball	15
Volleyball	10
Tennis	14
Baseball	11
Disc Golf	9
Cycling/biking	7
Swimming	7
softball	7

#### **Park Funding:**

Understanding how to pay for any increase in level of service is an important component in considering any desire for more park facilities. This survey asked respondents to consider a tax increase in the form of a levy. In other words, are people willing to “back their respective responses with their money.” The data may have significant value if Skagit County residents ever decided to form a taxing district to support parks.

**Figure 2.3**  
**Park Funding**

**Some communities have chosen to tax themselves to increase the number of parks and recreation in their community. Would you support increased taxes or levies to support expansion of parks or park facilities, or maintenance and replacement of park infrastructure in Skagit County?**



#### **PUBLIC MEETINGS/PUBLIC COMMENT**

Four public meetings were held in the County during the Plan Update process for the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update. These meetings were multi-purpose: to inform people of what the existing system consists of at this time, to provide an overview of the activities of the past 6 years, (including improvements, program changes and acquisitions), and to hear issues, concerns and feedback on the services provided.

The meetings were held “open house” style with a series of boards placed around the room where participants could see a listing of facilities within a various ‘park type’ (IE campgrounds OR trails OR sports fields, etc.). At each of these stations, participants were given the chance to ask any specific questions and comment about the type of facilities they preferred. Prompts were asked in different ways to allow participants to talk both about their “likes” and dislikes. “For example, prompts included questions such as: “What I like about ‘Campgrounds’ in the parks system is....” Or “What I would like to see different about ‘Campgrounds’ in the park system is...”. Participants were also welcome to register their open comments and a fair amount of people contributed with suggestions, comments, and/or support of park facilities, events, and offerings.

A number of those attending were there to promote a specific concern or recommend a specific interest be met. For example, Veterans Park advocates attended the meeting in Sedro-Woolley to promote



their interest in seeing a park devoted to accommodating their needs. Meeting participants in Rockport showed a focused interest in enhancing Howard Miller Steelhead Park. The complete list of comments can be found in the appendices.

**Table 6.9**  
**Open House Comment Summary on Facilities**

<b>Facility or Use</b>	<b>What I like most...</b>	<b>What I would like to see different...</b>
Open Space/Natural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhances walking experience</li> <li>• Appreciate NSRA as OS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more</li> <li>• Connect to trails</li> <li>• Add parking where there is none</li> </ul>
Linear Parks and Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of appreciation for trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire links/connections between trails (largest comment)</li> <li>• Many trails are too steep</li> <li>• Add more at NSRA</li> <li>• More natural trails</li> <li>• More bike trails</li> <li>• Partner for maintenance</li> <li>• Partner for development</li> <li>• Develop Centennial Trail in Skagit</li> <li>• Concern about safety</li> <li>• Add trails where they make the most sense; avoid 'double' trails.</li> </ul>
Sports Leagues / Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Lake triathlon appreciated</li> <li>• Programs appreciated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Soccer fields</li> <li>• More for seniors</li> </ul>
Day Use and Neighborhood Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pomona interpretive great</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more inclusive ADA elements</li> <li>• Edison and Bow do not have enough</li> <li>• Outdoor classrooms</li> <li>• Add historical info</li> <li>• Build Veterans park</li> </ul>
Athletic Fields / Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More for youth</li> <li>• SVP well maintained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upriver past Concrete needs these type of facilities</li> </ul>
Water Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bathrooms at water access points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more shoreline access</li> <li>• Add more launch areas</li> <li>• Kayak launch at Pressentin</li> </ul>
Campgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMSP great</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More closer to where people live</li> <li>• More at parks that already have them</li> <li>• HMSP has enough</li> <li>• Coin shower needed</li> </ul>
OTHER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with other agencies for many things</li> <li>• Add more online info</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER 7 - LEVEL OF SERVICE**

Level of service standards are a quantifiable planning tool used in defining the minimum number of desired parks and facilities based on the needs and expectations of the community.

Level of Service (LOS) analysis has traditionally been included in park and recreation plans as a useful way to inventory park and recreation facilities and to measure services against specific standards. Historically, a LOS value was published by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) for each park and facility category based on population and then local amounts were compared to this national standard. The practice of comparing quantified local levels of service to a national standard has not proven to be beneficial or justifiable, as each city, county or state's needs are unique to their specific values and resources. As such, planning for parks and recreation amenities and services must arise from the capacity and goals of each respective jurisdiction. The National Recreation and Park Agency ceased publishing a national LOS for setting local standards more than two decades ago.

For this plan, the SCPR LOS is compared with a compilation of three Washington State Counties, including Whatcom, Snohomish, and Spokane, otherwise referred to as the "tri-county average". 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 due to available data, having both urban/rural communities, and due to the similarities in services provided.

The average LOS levels are a part of the overall formula used for building our analysis and ranking/prioritizing projects.

LOS standards are often derived from the number and size of facilities without accounting for the facility conditions. The condition of facilities becomes important for making accurate comparisons in service levels. Because of the potential for imperfections in the LOS comparison, Skagit County also uses a variety of other measurements for evaluating community needs and establishing park priorities.

### **QUANTIFYING NEED THROUGH LOS**



To quantify park and facility needs, Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) made comparisons with three 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 7.1 shows the LOS of Skagit County as well as the tri-county average. By comparing service levels, Skagit County can determine its deficiencies and project future needs.

**Table 7.1 - 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 LOS</b>	<b>Spokane LOS</b>	<b>Whatcom LOS*</b>	<b>Tri-County Average</b>	<b>Skagit LOS</b>	<b>Skagit Difference</b>
Regional Parks	7.17	6.72	<u>15.55</u>	<u>9.81</u>	9.68	-.13
Community Parks	1.03	.49	.11	.54	.26	-.28
Neighborhood Parks	.43	0	.04	.16	.01	-.15
Open Space	3.27	16.06	<u>55.86</u>	<u>25.06</u>	6.44	-18.62
Campgrounds (# site/1000)	.58	.07	.56	.40	.86	0
Total Park Acreage	26.34	23.26	74.02	42.21	17.25	-24.96

\*lookout mtn & Lake Whatcom moved from Regional Park to Open Space for better comparison

Using Skagit County's current LOS specified in Table 7.1, it is possible to make comparisons to analogous counties in Washington State. Skagit County LOS standards are based on a population of 130,700 in 2020.

## PARK AND FACILITY NEEDS

From these comparisons in service levels, Skagit County has arrived at a standard for determining current needs and projecting future needs for the next six years. The standard is based on deficiencies/sufficiency in relation to the aggregate county average. The baseline standard is summarized in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2 -  
Park Classification  
Tri-County Average LOS Standard 2020**

<b>Park Classifications</b>	<b>Tri-County Average (in acres/1000 people)</b>
Regional Parks	9.81
Community Parks	.54
Neighborhood	.16
Open Space & Undeveloped	25.06
Total	42.21

Using the standards identified in tables 7.2, the actual amount of park acreage required for each park type in Skagit County is shown in table 7.3.

**Park Classification Existing Inventory and Need:** Table 7.3 uses the tri-county average LOS to forecast Skagit County acreage needs in 2026 with a projected population of 140,000 in order to meet the average LOS.

**Table 7.3**

	<b>Existing Inventory</b>	<b>Year 2026 Demand*</b>
<b>Park Classifications</b>	<b>Existing Acres</b>	<b>Acres (Based on 2020 Tri-County Average LOS)</b>
Regional	1266	1619
Community	56	89
Neighborhood	1	24
Opens Space & Undeveloped	843	3508

\* Based on a 2026 population of 140,000



**Current Level of Service for Skagit County:** Table 7.4 provides Skagit County's current service levels and general definitions in relation to service areas for the various park classifications.

**Table 7.4 - Current LOS for Park Types**

Population 130,700 in 2020

Category	Description	Service Area & Size	Skagit County Inventory & LOS
Regional Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas of natural or ornamental quality</li> <li>• for outdoor recreation</li> <li>• (e.g. hiking, picnicking, boating, beach activities).</li> <li>• Contiguous to or encompassing natural areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracts several communities</li> <li>• Attracts use from outside county</li> <li>• Generally larger than community parks</li> </ul>	1 266 Acres 9.68a/1000
Community Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities specifically designed to serve community with diverse activities: courts, ball fields, day-use areas, etc.</li> <li>• Usually have on-site parking.</li> <li>• Easily accessed by automobile from more distant neighborhoods.</li> <li>• May include natural features.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracts several neighborhoods</li> <li>• Generally larger than neighborhood parks and smaller than regional parks</li> </ul>	34 Acres .26a/1000
Neighborhood Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All uses designed to serve both passive and active activities for the immediate residential area (ca 5000 people).</li> <li>• Designed for intensive use and accessible/visible from surrounding area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, attracts within a 5-mile radius</li> <li>• Generally smaller than community parks</li> </ul>	1 Acres .01 a/1000
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection and management of natural cultural environment with recreation use such as trails and other low impact activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be of any size</li> <li>• The service area can vary</li> <li>• Generally, attract from throughout the county</li> </ul>	843 Acres 6.44 a/1000
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loop trails and liner trails.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Standard</li> </ul>	44.4 Acres .34 a/1000
Campsites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RV or Tent sites available.</li> </ul>		112 sites .86 sites/1000

**Future Level of Service for Skagit County:** Table 7.5 provides the number of acres of park types which Skagit County has, compared to the tri-county average, but then projected six years forward. The difference between this projected amount and current amount is then calculated

**Table 7.5 – Future\* Demand and Need for Park Facilities**

<b>Regional Parks</b>	
Current SCPR LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	9.68
SCPR Existing Acreage	1266 acres
Aggregate LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	9.81
Projected SCPR Need (2026)	1619 acres
Difference in Acreage (2019-2026)	353 acres
<b>Community Parks</b>	
Current SCPR LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	.26
SCPR Existing Acreage	34 acres
Aggregate LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	.54
Projected SCPR Need (2026)	89 acres
Difference in Acreage (2019-2026)	55 acres
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	
Current SCPR LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	.01
SCPR Existing Acreage	1 acre
Aggregate LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	.14
Projected SCPR Need (2026)	17 acres
Difference in Acreage (2019-2026)	16 acres
<b>Open Space</b>	
Current SCPR LOS (acres/ 1000 pop.)	7.12
SCPR Existing Acreage	843 acres
Aggregate LOS (acres/1000 pop.)	25.06
Projected SCPR Need (2026)	3508 acres
Difference in Acreage (2019-2026)	2665 acres

\* Based on a 2026 population of 140,000



**Change in Level of Service for Skagit County:** Table 7.6 looks at changes which have occurred since the last Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. The most significant change is the increase in the amount of Regional Park acreage and decrease in the amount of Open Space. This is explained by the re-categorization of the Northern State Recreation Area as a Regional Park instead of Open Space due to the establishment of a successful disc golf course, installation of water and septic utilities, and the pending development of the Veterans Plaza and trailhead improvements.

**Table 7.6 - LOS change since previous plan**

Park Classifications	Previous Plan	Current Plan	Change in acre
	2010	2020	
	LOS per 1000	LOS per 1000	LOS per 1000
<b>Regional</b>	4.64	9.68	+5.04
<b>Community</b>	0.42	0.26	-0.16
<b>Neighborhood</b>	0.01	0.01	0
<b>Open Space &amp; Undeveloped</b>	13.42	6.44	-6.98

#### SUMMARY OF LEVEL OF SERVICE

LOS standards provide a means of comparing service levels in Skagit County to those in other counties in Washington State. The comparisons are not the only measure for determining need, as several other criteria play into factoring the recreational requirements of Skagit County residents.

For the purpose of this plan update, the final needs analysis will be done by assimilating information obtained through public input as well as observations by parks staff. Public input comes from surveys, public meetings, letters from the community, the SCPR Parks Advisory Board, and informal conversations with concerned residents.

## **CHAPTER 8 - USE PATTERNS**

The household survey results and LOS standards combine to provide Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) Staff a greater understanding of Skagit County residents' recreational needs. Surveys and LOS comparisons provide an objective tool for measuring the needs of Skagit County residents and assist the SCPR team in formulating plans to better serve the people of Skagit County. Although the public opinion survey and the LOS data provide a significant means of understanding community needs, there are many variables these methods have difficulty in accounting for. To fully account for the missing information, knowledge from those using or overseeing the programs is necessary. The *use pattern* information from this chapter will supplement the public input survey and LOS data for building a more comprehensive tool for measuring needs. Use patterns are an essential component in the overall needs analysis.

### **Statewide Use Patterns**

The State of Washington regularly publishes the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan (RCP). This document was previously referred to as the SCORP. This document is described as:

*The Recreation and Conservation Plan for Washington State provides a strategic direction for how local, regional, state, and federal agencies, together with tribal governments, and private and non-profit partners, can assure the effective and adequate provision of outdoor recreation and conservation to meet the needs of Washington State residents. It lays the foundation and context that help guide decisions and determine how to direct limited funding towards the most important park, recreation and conservation needs.*

### **Local Use Patterns**

On a local level, lack of facility space, a shortage of campsites, or an overrun trail system may lead SCPR staff, Parks Board and / or County Commissioners to accurately conclude that specific recreational needs are not being met. In other cases, the analysis may need further exploration. The fact that a facility is being used below capacity may lead some to believe the needs are being sufficiently met. Whereas, the real reason the facility is being underutilized may be because the facility needs maintenance, needs more appropriate equipment, or in some other way failing to meet public need. In other situations, there may be a surplus of baseball fields on the west side of the county but a shortage on the east side, even though the LOS standards indicate there are enough fields county-wide. Because of all these variables, it becomes necessary for SCPR Staff/Board to look at every facility and/or program "site



specifically” to determine if in fact the needs of the community are being met. The SCPR staff along with the advisory board, are in a front seat role for observing facility use, attaining knowledge of the inadequacies and/or deficiencies of the facilities, and in the best position for reaching conclusions and/or making recommendations.

### STATEWIDE RCP USE PATTERNS

The top ten outdoor recreation activities in Washington State remain consistent with previous plans. The most popular outdoor activities emphasize nature, walking, and water access.

**Table 8.1 –RCP Top Outdoor Recreation Activities\***

Walking in a park or trail setting	84%
Visiting Rivers or Streams	66%
Visiting a Beach or Tidepool	60%
Attending an outdoor concert or event	58%
Gathering or collecting things in a natural setting	54%
Day Hiking	53%
Sightseeing at a scenic or wilderness area	51%
Wildlife or Nature viewing	50%
Swimming / wading at a freshwater beach	50%
Driving or Motorcycling for Pleasure	46%

\*2017 RCP Resident Survey Report

Beyond the top ten activities, the following table shows the state wide participation level of activities deemed to have 'high' level of participation defined as greater than 20%

**Table 8.2 –Other Top Outdoor Recreation Activities\***

Bicycling on paved or gravel Trail	20%
Tent camping with a car or motorcycle at a developed campground	22%
Motorboating other than personal watercraft	22%
Biking on road or streets	25%
Off Trail Hiking	25%
Visiting a Nature Interpretive Center	25%
Visiting Wetland	25%
Hiking with Dog	26%
Outdoor Photography	27%
Sightseeing a Public Facility (Dam, lock, fish ladder, bridge, etc.)	27%
Outdoor Cultural or Historical facility	28%
Swimming in an outdoor pool	30%
Swimming / wading at a saltwater beach	36%
Playing in a Park	41%
Family Gathering at a Park	42%
Visiting a zoo, garden, arboretum	42%
Picnicking / BBQ in a Park	46%

\*2017 RCP Resident Survey Report

Beyond the participation levels identified in the Resident Survey, the overall RCP is divided into five sub plans that review specific areas of recreation. These plans include Athletic Facilities, Trails, Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle, and Recreational Boating. These plans are summarized as follows:

#### **Athletic Facilities Use**

Adults and children play sports at a high rate. Overall, almost 2.5 million people play sports in Washington State. Athletic facilities that serve adults and children, rather than facilities designed only for children, will better meet the needs of a variety of age classes.

About 57 percent of children under 18 are involved in one outdoor sport or another. The level of participation is slightly higher than the most recent national study of children's outdoor activities, which



found almost 50 percent of children participate in team sports and 40 percent in individual sports such as golf and tennis.

Forty-eight percent of adults also play sports. Interestingly, adults who have children are more likely to play sports themselves. Forty percent of adults without children participate in outdoor sports compared to 63 percent of adults with children. The most popular adult sports are golf, basketball, ping pong, and soccer (2018-2022 Recreation Conservation Plan).

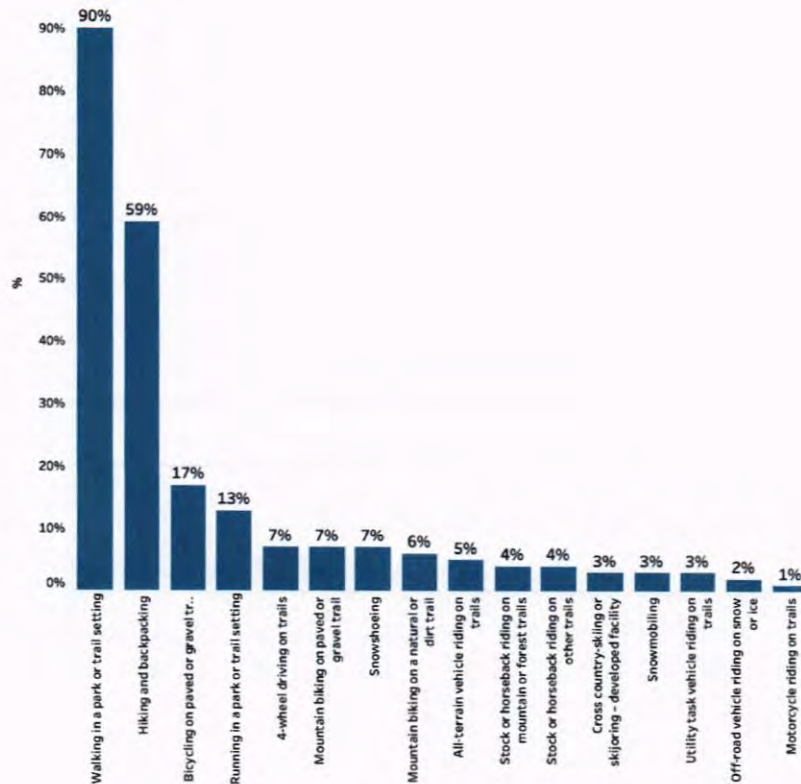
**Table 8.3 - 2018-2022 RCP Percent of Adult Participation of Outdoor Sports**

ACTIVITY	PERCENT
<b>Overall</b>	<b>48%</b>
Golf	17%
Basketball	11%
Mini golf	11%
Ping pong or table tennis	11%
Soccer	9%
Baseball	7%
Football	7%
Tennis	7%
Volleyball	7%
Softball	6%
Disc golf	5%
Kickball	3%
Multi-sport race	3%
Paintball	3%
Dodgeball	2%
Foot golf	2%
Pickleball	2%
Ultimate Frisbee	2%
Lacrosse	1%
Rugby	0%

The 2018-2022 RCP did not compile information on youth in this document due to privacy requirements related to gathering information on minors. Future plans anticipate providing this information.

## Trail Use

The RCP reports trails are particularly popular as they support several types of outdoor recreation. According to the State of Washington 2017 Assessment of Outdoor Recreation Demand Report, walking, hiking, bicycling and running are the most popular types of recreation occurring on trails. See the figure below for a list of all trail related recreation activities.



**Figure 8.1 - Percent of Population who Recreate on Trails  
(2018-2022 RCP)**



### Non-Highway and Off-Road Vehicle Use

The off-road vehicle plan showed high satisfaction with opportunities in this category of recreation.

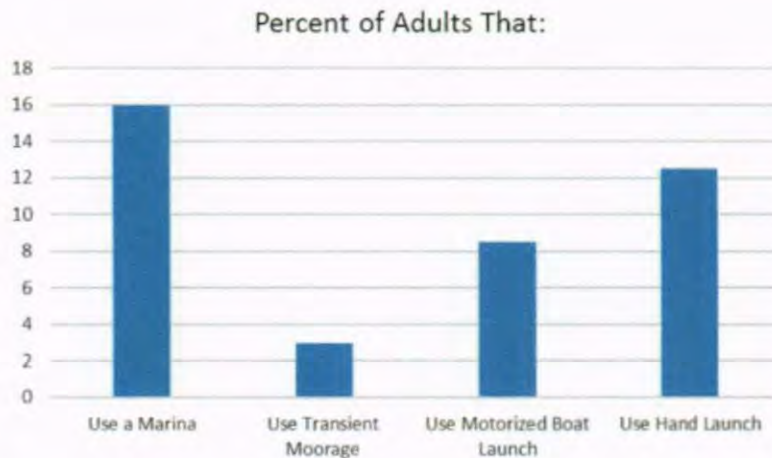
Participation rates are reported as follows:

**Table 8.4 - 2018-2022 RCP Percent of Adult Participation of ORV Activities**

ACTIVITY	PERCENT
<b>Overall</b>	<b>11%</b>
4 wheel drive vehicles on trails	7%
ATV on trails	6%
Snowmobiling	4%
UTVs or side-by-side ATVs on trails	3%
ATV at a developed area	2%
4 wheel drive vehicles at developed area	2%
Motorcycles on trails	2%
Motorcycles at developed area	1%
UTVs or side-by-side ATVs at developed area	1%

### Recreational Boating Use

The recreational boating use plan showed a very high satisfaction rate with regard to boating experience and facilities in the state. Overall there is more motorboating on freshwater than on saltwater, with smaller boats (less than 26 feet) more likely to be on freshwater; while larger boats tend to use fresh and salt water at about the same rate. RCO Estimates that around 23% of Washington's population participated in paddle sports in 2016, up from 12% in 2013. Below is the percent of adults in Washington that use some sort of launch or moorage.



**Figure 8.2 - Percent of Population who Uses Boat Launches or Moorage  
(2018-2022 RCP)**



## **LOCAL USE PATTERNS**

Skagit County started offering organized Recreation programs for the public in 1976. Recreation program growth has been steady since its inception. Since the last comprehensive plan, participation in Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department continues to climb, with youth sports activities experiencing the highest rate of growth. Recreation Programs are fully paid for by the by participant fees.

The Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department breaks down Recreation programs into the following categories – Adult Leagues, Youth Leagues, Tournaments, Special Events and Youth Camps. Skagit County's sports programs have become regional programs i.e. they have regular team participation from adjacent counties, including Snohomish, Whatcom, San Juan and Island counties, as well as Skagit County. The SWISH basketball league has the largest youth participation of any league north of King County.

The seven Skagit County School Districts provide the primary locations for active recreation programs. The Skagit Valley College gym is the most utilized indoor facility for Skagit County active recreation programs, with Skagit Playfields serving as the primary outdoor (softball) facility. In 2019 the Skagit YMCA came online with several elementary school sized basketball courts and these recreation sized courts will be used when possible.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS**

### **Adult Sports Leagues**

Overall, Adult Leagues have remained an important part of Recreation Programs since the Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department's inception. Adult Leagues have the most participants by category and bring in a large portion of the Recreation Division revenue each year. Participation Hours have experienced significant increases since 2013. Adult Leagues such as Adult Softball, Volleyball and Basketball are the backbone of our Recreation Programs and brought in \$371,531 in Program Revenue in 2018. This was a 15% increase from the \$323,727 brought in during 2013.

Each year there are also new dynamics presented to the Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department staff in meeting the needs of participants in Adult Leagues (i.e. an active aging population, lack of adequate facilities, and family oriented activities for participants with children).



**Table 8.5 Adult Sports League Participation**

	2010		2018	
	Participation Teams / Hours	Revenue	Participation Teams / Hours	Revenue
Basketball	25 / 25,250	\$10,700	30 / 30,300	\$13,100
Volleyball	55 / 55,555	\$12,175	60 / 30,300	\$13,500
Softball	89 / 89,890	\$51,185	76 / 30,300	\$43,200

**Youth Sports Leagues**

The Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department runs extensive Youth Leagues that allow participants the opportunity to participate in organized programs at a reasonable price. The Boys & Girls S.W.I.S.H. (Skagit, Whatcom, Island, Snohomish Hoops) League is the largest basketball program in Northwest Washington. This league offers opportunities for both boys and girls in the 4th-8th grades regardless of skill level. The higher costs of select sports has driven families towards the more affordable SWISH league. For many communities, SWISH is replacing school and city basketball leagues.

There are also opportunities for high school aged participants. Skagit County Parks & Recreation runs a Boys Masters Basketball League each school year that caters to high school aged boys that do NOT play on a high school basketball team as well as competitive high school basketball and there is a Girls High School Fastpitch League which has continued to receive strong support from the local community.

**Table 8.6 Youth Sports League Participation**

	2010		2018	
	Participation Teams / Hours	Revenue	Participation Teams / Hours	Revenue
SWISH- boys and girls	150 / 60,000	\$70,870	201 / 78,000	\$149,865
Boys BB Masters	9 / 5,000	\$3,375	4 / 3,500	\$1,760
HS BB Leagues	79 / 36,000	\$34,920	70 / 30,000	\$33,950
Girls Fastpitch	8 / 4,000	\$2,280	9 / 5,000	\$1,950



### **Tournaments**

Skagit County Parks & Recreation offers various tournaments throughout the year for both adult and youth sports programs. Some tournaments are annual events (i.e. Gobblers Classic Volleyball Tournament, Boys & Girls Tulip Basketball Tournament, and Spring Opener Kickball Tournament) while others are seasonal events (i.e. A.S.A. Championship Softball Tournaments) that may change in scope from year to year. Since 2013 there has been an increase in both Participant Hours and Program Revenue with the bulk of the increase associated with growing interest in youth and high school basketball tournaments. Increasing the size of current tournaments or adding additional tournaments is now limited by the availability and size of current facilities.

### **Special Events**

Since 2009 special events run by the recreation division have been eliminated. One new event has been added in 2018 with our new Fall Training Basketball.

### **Youth Sports Camps**

Youth Camps have become less preferred with an increased demand for more leagues with competitive games. Youth camps that focus on the fundamentals, skills, and sportsmanship, are still available during summers, when in the past they were a winter offering as well. Baseball and Softball/Fastpitch Camps that focus on the fundamentals of fielding, hitting and a spin off Pitchers Camp that focuses on the intricacies of pitching mechanics remain popular.

Additional Youth Camps throughout the year involve a Summer Basketball Camps w/ Burlington-Edison High School Boys & Girls teams and a Junior Golf Camp that takes young golfers from the aspects of course etiquette and how to grip a club all the way through to playing a round of golf at the conclusion of camp. Both of these camps are run at facilities not operated by the Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department, which require additional program fees to cover rental costs.



## PASSIVE RECREATION FACILITY USE

*Passive recreational activities involve recreational activities that although may be exertive, don't require a field or court and typically doesn't require the use of a ball. Also includes activities which require less energy, such as walking, picnicking, boating, and wildlife viewing.*

### **Boat Launches and Waterfront Connectivity**

Skagit County provides a number of water access opportunities for recreational connectivity to lakes, rivers, creeks, and The Salish Sea. In addition to County provided access points, the state and local municipalities provide areas to salt and fresh water boat launches, fish, hike, or otherwise enjoy our waterways. The popularity of these access points and the growing popularity of boating reveal a growing shortage of adequate opportunities for watercraft enthusiasts. Adding to the shortage has been the decline in the number of water access points along Skagit County Rivers as Washington State Fish and Wildlife Department have decommissioned many of their Boat launches along the Skagit River.

Lake access is also very important, as the population grows and previously vacant lands are developed. The steady influx of new homes can create a barricade around important waterways, limiting connectivity to areas accessed informally in the past. Developing public access with suitable facilities reduces the pressure on private land, thus protecting property rights. The overall condition of existing boat ramps in Skagit County is moderate. The condition of boat ramps for saltwater access is also moderate. The condition of boat ramps on local rivers is poor. The reason for poor boat launch conditions on our local rivers is partly due to the fact river ramps are much more susceptible to erosion. SCPR with the WDFW are currently partnering on a maintenance improvement to the Campbell Lake Boat Launch.

Skagit County also has a number of road right-of-ways that lead to waterways, which are used for launching kayaks and other small watercraft. These access points are open to the public and cannot be vacated as per Washington State RCW. Despite the protections, many of these access points have been encroached upon by neighboring property owners, who often place landscaping and position large objects in the thoroughfares as barriers. To ensure ongoing access, the County attorneys have had to intervene on the behalf of the public on many occasions.

### **Camp Units**

Skagit County has numerous lake, rivers, and saltwater shoreline areas which attract outdoor recreational enthusiasts. Numerous agencies in Skagit County provide overnight camping which provide for these recreationalists. Also, pre-prepared camping units such as camping cabins and yurts are becoming increasingly popular throughout the Pacific Northwest. Skagit County has two Adirondack style cabins, two traditional cabins within its inventory at Howard Miller Steelhead Park and these are



rented continuously through the summer. The Rockport area of the North Cascades Scenic Corridor is served adequately while shortages persist along the majority of the corridor. There is a great need for a campground on Lake Shannon. The overall condition of County campgrounds is fair to excellent depending on the site. SCPR campgrounds at Sauk River and Grandy Lake have been recently upgraded, although they are still very primitive. Steelhead Park is up to capacity during the summer months and there is a need for additional overnight opportunities in the area. A primitive walk-in campground is proposed for Pressentin Park in Marblemount. Bike Route 10 is along the park and bicyclists would benefit greatly by a respite before their long journey over the Cascade Pass.

### **Group Picnic Areas**

Group picnic areas are needed throughout our community and regional parks. The public has emphasized the need for covered facilities with cooking capabilities. Skagit County provides covered picnic shelters at the Skagit Playfields, Northern State Recreation Area, Pomona Grange Park, Clear Lake Beach, Steelhead Park, Schoolhouse Park and Pressentin Park. Picnic shelters provide recreationists with a shaded place to sit, eat and/or relax while using the park facilities. They also provide a gathering place for families, informal office parties, and visiting with friends. With the growing health risks of extended exposure to the sun, picnic shelters are becoming more of an assumed feature in parks. Donovan Park hosts a lot of family activities and is used to capacity by a diverse demographic during the summer months. The Latino community has called on many occasions in their pursuit of a shelter with cooking capabilities. Culturally, large park gatherings places are very popular with the growing diverse demographic in Skagit County.

### **Public Shoreline**

Skagit County shares a shoreline with the surrounding Puget Sound waters, is bisected by splendid valley rivers, and is peppered with a multitude of lakes. These waters characterize Skagit County as a unique and beautiful place. The enjoyment of County waters is crucial to its residents. Private landholdings continue to be developed and residents are finding fewer places to recreate along the shorelines.

### **Recreation Trails**

Trails continue to be the most requested recreational need in Skagit County. County residents are interested in loop, destination, and linear type trails. While numerous trails exist throughout the county, residents covet trail systems within walking distances of their homes. Even though trails are prevalent throughout many of the neighboring counties, the number and mileage is inadequately inventoried and accurate comparisons are difficult. Residents of the county continue to ask for trails that connect regional trail systems. Linear trail systems such as the Centennial and Tursi trails have missing links and the acquisition of land or easements will be necessary to see them for completion. Recent development projects on the Centennial Trail in Snohomish County is elevating pressure on Skagit County to continue acquiring and developing a north/south separated paved path for recreation and non-motorized transportation. Because of their popularity and lower cost per use, SCPR will



continue to provide trails when opportunities arise. Motorized trails are currently being provided for at an adequate level. If Walker Valley trail closures become a normal occurrence, there will be renewed pressure to accommodate off-road needs. The DNR is better equipped for addressing motorized trail needs in Skagit County.

#### **Environmental/Interpretive Learning Center**

Skagit County is a hub of environmental learning opportunities. Local business is beginning to spring up throughout the county to find economic benefit from Skagit County's diverse and beautiful landscapes. The Eagle Festival, Birds of Winter, whale watching, rafting, environmental youth camps, Tulip Festival, and other tourist trade oriented businesses have opened a need for a permanent Environmental and/or Interpretive Learning Center. This type of facility would better allow businesses to better capitalize on this growing industry. With the North Cascades Institute facilities representing the upper reaches of the Skagit River watershed, prime locations for a center would be on Fidalgo Island, the Marblemount area, and/or the lower valley/foothill interface. A temporary interpretive facility currently operates at Howard Miller Steelhead Park (in a house adjacent to the park). The facility is currently used for disseminating educational and interpretive information via lectures and material distribution, especially during the eagle season. The development of an environmental learning center at Northern State is included on the master plan and if one day constructed, may reduce the need for such a facility elsewhere. Any interpretive center would have to be part of a greater cross- agency partnership, including public, non-profit and private sectors.



## ACTIVE RECREATION FACILITIES

*Active recreational activities generally involve a court or field and typically require the use of a ball.*

### **Gymnasium Space**

Population growth has led to a reduction of available gym space. With youth leagues growth at 20% since 2013, and youth basketball leagues offered year-round, there is a growing deficiency of available indoor facilities. This deficiency is further pronounced during the winter and early spring months when school sports programs are taking place. This has forced Skagit County to schedule games outside of the county. In addition to shortages, local school districts continue to raise gym rental rates. The new YMCA, which opened in 2019 has several elementary sized basketball courts which is expected to provide some relief.

### **Senior Baseball Fields**

In Skagit County, the senior youth baseball programs are managed by several organizations. Although the county is deficient in the number of senior baseball fields, the pressure to build more is being primarily directed toward municipalities. Skagit County recently turned over its Senior Baseball facility (the Dream Field) to the Skagit Valley College. This field is currently used primarily and almost exclusively by college teams. To properly maintain the baseball fields, resources will need to be continually available. There is a growing demand for Cal Ripken Fields, which are close to the same size as a regulation softball field. The Skagit Playfields will be retrofitted for Cal Ripken leagues with funding made available through their recent YAF grant.

### **Youth Baseball Fields**

In Skagit County, there are several organizations involved in youth baseball. Currently, the local needs are being met, although the conditions of several fields need improvement. Lighted fields are increasing in demand and are needed throughout the county. There is a need for complexes with the ability for tournament play and school district play-offs. The improvements at the Skagit Playfields will increase the demand for their use.

### **Adult/Junior Soccer Fields**

The soccer program in Skagit County is managed by several organizations. This includes but is not limited to Skagit Valley College, local high schools, Skagit County, municipalities, non-profit, and private groups. Soccer fields have a lower Maintenance and Operation costs than other sports fields but locating suitable sites is nearly impossible. Farmlands are ideally situated and geographically uniform but ag-zoned lands unavailable for sports fields. Other agencies have found this out the hard way. A local school district bought ag-zoned land with the intention of amending the zoning for developing a school. After pursuing the change for several years they finally gave up, losing hundreds of thousands of dollars. A changing demographic has increased the need for soccer fields in the Mount Vernon area.



The condition of the field Skagit Valley College field is very good. The City of Burlington is currently meeting the regional need for soccer fields in Skagit County but there is a facility emphasis on larger tournaments. Localized needs are not currently being met.

### **Softball Fields**

The softball program in Skagit County is managed by several organizations. This includes but is not limited to Skagit Valley College, local high schools, Skagit County, municipalities, and private tournament providers. Skagit County Parks and Recreation is a regional provider of Adult Softball leagues in Skagit County with its large and central complex. Recent capital projects include the completion of all four field dugouts, drainage, fencing, backstops, and bleachers. A need for softball fields exist in sub-regions throughout the county. A 2019 YAF grant will provide the funding for synthetic infields which will eliminate the need for chalking lines, pesticides, and grooming fields. The infields have been a limiting factor, contributing to most game cancellations, seasonal delays, and slower turnaround for game scheduling. The changes will make the field more readily available for youth baseball as well.

### **Swimming Pool**

Skagit County had been deficient with aquatic facilities for many years. The new YMCA in Mount Vernon has satisfied this long overdue need. The facility is centrally located and within a half an hour drive for the Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley residents. Anacortes has had a multi-purpose park district pool for many years. In addition, there is a small pool for health club members in Mount Vernon. Shelter Bay on South Fidalgo Island has a pool available to their residents. With the recent construction of the YMCA, there is no longer a deficiency of aquatic facilities in Skagit County.

### **Special Use**

Special-use facilities are provided by the private and public sectors, often via partnerships. Golf courses are being provided by the private sector and the need is currently being met. A shooting range has long been sought by the Skagit Sportsmen. The private sector provides for pistols but long-range rifle opportunities are in demand. Motorized trails are being provided for by the DNR and municipalities (such as the Anacortes Community Forest Lands). Skagit County provides horse arena opportunities for 4-H groups and competition during the annual Fair. Partnerships with equestrian user groups should be pursued. Other activities and facilities such as hang gliding, skateboard parks, disc golf, etc. will be continually monitored for status of need.



## CHAPTER 9 - ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

Utilizing a singular means for analyzing needs falls short of providing the full picture. To determine Skagit County Parks and Recreation program and facility needs, SCPR has adopted a comprehensive approach. The scores derived from four measuring elements are used for establishing project priorities. In this chapter, "park type" is analyzed first, followed by "programs and facilities". The four measuring elements are:

1. **Level of Service (LOS) Standards**, which look at service levels in other Washington Counties and provide guidance in establishing LOS standards for Skagit County.
2. **Public Input - Survey Results**, a month long public opinion survey to learn the recreational desires of Skagit County residents.
3. **Use Patterns**, review of the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Plan (RCP) for statewide trends combined with Skagit County Parks Department input which provides fundamental information from those who use or oversee facilities and programs in Skagit County and indicate facility or program need.
4. **Other Factors** Input comes in many forms: park advisory board meetings, informal conversations, letters addressed to Skagit County staff, field experience, and special meetings. This ensures a wider opportunity for public participation. Geographic dispersion of facilities and financial constraints are recurring concerns with the public and are factored within this category.

The analysis is based on the following formula:

1. Skagit County **Level of Service** as compared to Snohomish, Whatcom, and Spokane County (SWS) aggregate.
  - a. SCPR service levels are below those of the aggregate (5 points)
  - b. SCPR service levels are essentially the same as the aggregate (<10%) (3 points)
  - c. SCPR service levels exceed the aggregate (1 point)
2. Needs as expressed in the **Public Opinion Survey and Public Meetings**
  - a. Highest level of need (5 points)
  - b. Moderate need (3 points)
  - c. Low level of need (1 point)

3. **Use Patterns** based on Skagit County's existing programs and facilities and Statistically Valid recreation trends reported in the WA State Recreation and Conservation Plan (RCP).

- a. High Level of Use / Use Patterns exceed capacity of facility/program. (5 points)
- b. Moderate Level of Use / Use Patterns mostly met by facilities/programs. (3 points)
- c. Low Level of Use / Use Patterns are fully met by facilities / programs. (1 point)

4. **Other Factors**

- a. Factors warrant significant increase. (5 points)
- b. Moderate increase is necessary. (3 points)
- c. No current need to increase capacity (1 Point)

**Combined element scores**

The scores will be combined and averaged to make a final determination of need for facilities and/or programs. The scores will indicate the needs based on the following levels of need:

4.0-5.00	High level of need.
2.0-3.99	Moderate level of need
1.0-1.99	Low level of need

**Analysis of elements**

With the above information, a consensus driven process made up of a planning team consisting of SCPR Staff and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members analyzed the need components to derive a score which will represent SCPR priorities. The scores for park types are listed in Table 9.1.



### ANALYSIS OF "PARK TYPES"

Skagit County parks are currently made up of four different "park types" as defined below. These parks are analyzed as to how they rank according to the data available. The rankings will help determine priorities.

**Table 9.1**  
**Point Rankings of Park Needs**

Park Type	LOS	Public Input Survey	Use Patterns	Other Factors	Total	Average
Regional	3	5	5	3	16	4.0
Community	5	3	3	3	14	3.5
Neighborhood	3	1	3	1	8	2.0
Open Space	5	5	3	3	16	4.0

**Point rankings of park needs:** According to the analysis, there is a high level of need for increasing the LOS of regional parks and open space in Skagit County. There is a moderate to high need for community parks and open space. Neighborhood park rankings indicate a low need.

### REGIONAL PARKS

**Average Score: 4.0**

**Level of Need: High**

Regional Parks are generally larger sites, that offer a variety of unique features or recreational experiences that serve the entire county population. These may include one-of-a-kind natural, cultural, or historic features, water access, or a concentration of facilities that can accommodate large-scale events.

**1)Level of Service:** The current LOS in Skagit County is 9.68 acres/1000 people and the LOS of the tri-county aggregate is 9.81 acres/1000 people.

**2) Public Input Survey:** The public input survey shows a high level of need for regional park type by specifying needs which are generally accommodated by such a facility. This regional park need includes trails (walking, hiking, and biking), shoreline access, park and picnic areas, indoor recreation facilities, pool, and camping facilities. All these facilities would fit well within the definition of a Regional park.



**3) Use Patterns:** Use patterns at current regional parks indicate a facility need in Skagit County to accommodate athletic fields, gymnasiums, open space lands with water access, recreational vehicle camping units, and trails. Local gymnasiums are occupied to full capacity in the winter months, reducing program services for basketball and volleyball programs. Campgrounds are full during weekends for most of the summer months. This deficiency also limits SCPR's ability to obtain important revenues.

**4) Other Factors:** The East Skagit community has stressed the importance of drawing tourists off of the Highway 20 scenic corridor. This would increase the economic benefit to Sedro-Woolley, Concrete, Marblemount and other communities along the North Cascades Highway. Tourists often drive the corridor on their way east of the mountains. Adding destinations on the west side of the mountains increases the amount of economic gain from an increased tourist base. A regional park could help an economy that suffered a setback when the timber industry declined. Other contributing factors include the need for affordable vacations close to home. Regional Parks will provide close and affordable destinations for residents and out of county visitors.

## **COMMUNITY PARKS**

**Score: 3.5**

**Level of Need: Moderate+**

Community Parks are generally bigger than Neighborhood Parks, and host a larger number and type of ball fields, facilities and a variety of activities such as open space, BBQs and picnic areas for larger gatherings.

**1) Level of Service:** The current LOS of Skagit County Community Parks is .26 acres/1000 people. By comparison, the aggregate county LOS is .54 acres/1000 people. Skagit County's service level is approximately 50% of the aggregate.

**2) The survey:** The survey showed a moderate level of need for community parks by demonstrating needs for facilities/programs that are generally provided at this type of park. Surveys have shown a strong need for group picnic areas, playgrounds, wetland and wildlife viewing and other community park type activities and facilities.

**3) Use Patterns:** The RCP report indicates a high need for sports fields, waterbody connectivity, nature viewing, picnicking, and fishing, all appropriate community park activities. Unincorporated urban growth areas or other concentrations of residential housing increase the need for parks in site specific areas.

**4) Public Input and Other Factors:** Skagit County residents need parklands near their homes. Community Parks are distributed disproportionately throughout Skagit County, reducing our ability to adequately serve the community equitably.



## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Score: 2.0

Level of Need: low

Neighborhood Parks are generally small, pedestrian oriented and situated to serve residents of an immediate area. Recreational activities may include both passive and active uses as well as multipurpose facilities, including sports courts and play structures. Passive uses include open play areas and green spaces. Age appropriate needs of the surrounding neighborhood should be emphasized.

Neighborhood parks may also feature natural or conservation areas. Passive recreational development includes boardwalks, nature trails, picnicking facilities, shelters, park benches, picnic tables, environmental, cultural or historic interpretive facilities, and parking. Natural areas include streams, wetlands, forestlands, or even a unique natural feature. Such neighborhood parks may also function as a greenbelt or view shed on which there is no public access. Skagit County recognizes the provision of neighborhood parks ultimately being the responsibility of local cities.

**1) Level of Service:** The LOS shows Skagit County to be deficient in neighborhood park land in comparison to the aggregate service level. Although most county governments continue to have neighborhood parks within their inventories, most are not looking to add more. Municipalities are better positioned to provide neighborhood parks. Rural villages and other areas with unincorporated concentrations of population need to be considered when opportunities for adding recreational facilities arise.

**2) Public Input Survey:** The survey shows Skagit County residents like playgrounds, and site specific needs for neighborhood parks should be considered. Overall, the need for neighborhood parks may be higher for municipalities than for the county. The SCPR need is low to moderate.

**3) Use Patterns:** Skagit County neighborhood parks are used moderately. The state RCP indicates several activities associated with neighborhood parks rank high. These activities include walking, using sport courts, and picnicking.

**4) Public Input and Other Factors:** SCPR recognizes that provision of neighborhood parks will ultimately be the responsibility of cities. SCPR is reluctant to add neighborhood parks to county inventories. However, SCPR is receptive to helping guide small communities and neighborhood associations in developing neighborhood parks. As cities push out their Urban Growth boundaries, they need to make sure designated areas for parks are proactively set aside. Once UGA's have been annexed, the land and park construction should be the responsibility of the city.

## OPEN SPACE

Score: 4.0

Level of Need: High

Open Space Parks and Undeveloped Parks are identified as available for passive outdoor recreation, offering trails for viewing, parking, and other limited improvements. Open Space and undeveloped Parks often allow for passive recreation in the form of hiking, wildlife viewing and various other day-use activities.

**1) Level of Service:** The aggregate LOS of comparable counties indicates current open space acreage in Skagit County is deficient. These numbers have recently changed as Skagit County develops land previously inventoried as open space. NSRA is an example of land that is being reclassified as a part of this plan.

**2) Survey:** The surveys show strong support of open space lands in Skagit County, with Open Space and Natural Areas listed as the second most important priority.

**3) Use Patterns:** Open Space lands with trails are popular and utilized actively in Skagit County.

**4) Public Input and Other Factors:** Open Space Lands with trails serve an important, expressed need of Skagit County residents. A deficiency in the amount of open space is somewhat offset by the amount of open space there is in the thousands of acres federally/state managed lands in Skagit County.

The acquisition of open space lands in Skagit County has many avenues. Local non-profit agencies such as Preservation Trusts, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, Skagit Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Seattle City Light, and others have been involved with acquiring open Space Lands. Partnerships reduce or eliminate the burden of Skagit County taxpayers while still allowing Skagit County residents to reap the benefits of the acquired open space lands. Because of these factors, SCPR staff and Advisory Board will carefully evaluate each potential acquisition as to the cost/benefits to the residents of Skagit County.



## ANALYZING PROGRAM AND FACILITY NEEDS

Park types serve as the vessel for programs and facilities. For the purpose of analyzing program and facility needs, an analogous formula for establishing specific facility/program needs will be used. LOS comparisons for programs and facilities were inventoried by the counties with which SCPR is making comparisons. The data held by other agencies varies greatly, so comparisons are difficult. Due to these data incompatibilities, SCPR ranks program/facility need by evaluating public input, use patterns and survey results rather than relying on comparisons to other counties. LOS comparisons are not part of the table 9.2 equation.

Facility Type	Public Input Survey	Use Patterns	Other Factors	Total	Average
Non-motorized Trails and Pathways	5	5	5	15	5
Public Beach and Water Access	5	5	5	15	5
Soccer Fields	5	3	5	13	4.3
Gym Space / Sport Courts	3	5	3	11	3.7
Boat Launch Areas	3	3	5	11	3.7
Children's Play Equipment	5	3	3	11	3.7
Mountain Bike Areas	3	3	5	11	3.7
Camping - RV and Tent	5	3	3	11	3.7
Day Use / Picnicking /Parks General	5	3	3	11	3.7
Softball Fields	3	3	3	9	3
Dog Park/hiking with Dog	3	3	3	9	3
Swimming Pools	3	3	1	7	2.3
Motorized Trails	1	3	3	7	2.3
Shooting/Training Facility	1	3	3	7	2.3
Disc Golf	1	3	3	7	2.3
Baseball Fields	3	3	1	7	2.3
Equestrian Activities	1	1	3	5	1.3



### **Non-motorized Trails and Pathways Score Derivation**

1. **Survey Results:** The survey shows a strong desire for the addition of trails in Skagit County. The surveys consistently rate trail facilities as the highest need with nature trails the top need and regional linear trails the second ranked need.
2. **Use Patterns:** The statewide patterns is consistent with local information, trails are the top ranked activity. Trails provide opportunities for wildlife viewings, bike riding, hiking, photography, walking pets, transportation, etc.
3. **Other Factors:** Trails continue to be the number one park need of both Skagit County and Washington State residents. People like to have an array of trail choices throughout the County. Linear Trails often provide connectivity from parks, towns, resources, and other locations. With adequate widths, they can also provide important wildlife corridors. With adequate surfacing they can provide non-motorized transportation. Additional ADA trails are needed in Skagit County. There are three types of trails that recreationalists specify in their needs analysis: linear transportation trails, loop trails, and destination trails.

### **Public Beach and Water Access Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Water access, public beach, shoreline access, a boat launch areas are all highly ranked.
2. **Use Patterns:** Water activities, fishing and nature viewing are top RCP activities.
3. **Other Factors:** When river fish are running, the SCPR department is inundated with phone calls and visits from concerned recreationalists about the deficiency regarding river access. Currently there are almost 50 miles of public shoreline in Skagit County. Of the fifty miles, about 30 are saltwater, 5 miles are lake, and 13 miles are River/Creek. Most of the public shoreline is in the western portion of Skagit County, and along the Skagit River in the eastern portion of the County. There is a deficiency in the amount of public shoreline access in Skagit County, especially in regards to lakes and rivers. Fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, sailing, canoeing, water skiing, and many other recreational activities are connected to water access.

### **Soccer Field Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Soccer field is the highest ranked field in the survey.
2. **Use Patterns:** Burlington fields generally satisfy the need for regional soccer fields in Skagit County but due to the demand for tournaments, they are often used to capacity, especially on weekends. The current supply of soccer fields is not meeting demand in the Mount Vernon area. The fees associated with the renting fields can be cost prohibitive for many leagues.
3. **Other Factors:** Soccer is popular with the Latino population and demand increases as their local numbers increase. Hispanics are the largest growing ethnic group in Skagit County, creating needs that are higher than those neighboring counties with lower Hispanic populations. It's important for a complex to be centrally located.



### **Gym Space / Sports Courts Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys indicate a strong desire for sports courts and gym space. This survey was completed before the new YMCA opened their doors.
2. **Use Patterns:** Gymnasium space is used to full capacity and the lack of space has limited SCPR's ability to run basketball and volleyball programs at desired levels. Historical partnerships between the YMCA and school districts will provide greater enrichment opportunities to Skagit County youth. However, access to school facilities has become more limited due to the County's growing population and the increased scheduling constraints of the facilities. The RCP indicates most popular sports are golf, basketball, soccer and ping-pong.
3. **Other Factors:** The new YMCA recreation center with multipurpose rooms are providing space for enrichment programs. The benefit of the additional elementary sized basketball courts at the YMCA should unfold over the next few years

### **Boat Launch Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** surveys show a strong demand for additional and/or improved boat ramps.
2. **Use Patterns:** Water Based Activities are a highly ranked RCP activity. River access is declining as many sites have become inoperable. The sites that do exist are distributed sporadically.
3. **Other Factors:** Puget Sound boating for fishing, wildlife viewing, and general pleasure is increasing in popularity statewide. As the state age demographic is changing toward an older and retired population, the demand for this type of recreation is increasing. The San Juan's are especially popular and launching sites can be used to capacity at peak season. The Swinomish Boat Launch serves many of the crabbers. River access is becoming scarce as previous sites are in poor condition, and improvements are difficult due to current permit requirements. Lake access is also declining as development around the lakes increase and access sites that were once thought to be public but were privately owned are becoming more restrictive.

### **Children's Play Equipment**

1. **Surveys:** surveys show a strong ranking of Children's Play Equipment.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP ranked playing in park highly. SCPR is often requested to add and improve play areas.
3. **Other Factors:** Playgrounds are a facility that can easily be added to many other existing facilities as an additional use.



#### **Mountain Bike Score Derivation**

4. **Surveys:** surveys show a strong demand for mountain bike trails and areas.
5. **Use Patterns:** Trail bike riding is a highly ranked RCP activity. Information about mountain bike riding areas is a consistent request of SCPR.
6. **Other Factors:** Mountain Bike riding in Whatcom County is incredibly popular. Galbraith Mountain is filled with bikers throughout the week and of riders of all ages. Mountain Bike Riding is a growing sport at the high school level as well with several teams in Skagit County competing throughout the state. Mountain Biking is also an activity which attracts tourism and can help the local economies as is the case in the nearby Methow Valley.

#### **Camping: RV and Tent Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys point to a consistent and high desire for campgrounds in Skagit County.
2. **Use Patterns:** Camping is a priority in the RCP plan. There is a deficiency in the number of sites in Skagit County, but this deficiency is somewhat offset by the amount of primitive camping opportunities there are in the thousands of acres federally/state managed lands in Skagit County. RV and cabin camping remain as modest recreational demands in Washington State. There is a need for adequate camping facilities at Lake Shannon to accommodate anglers and summer visitors.
3. **Other factors:** Although there is an abundance of primitive camping opportunities, RV camping is less available. Ready-made facilities such as yurts and camping cabins are being provided for in neighboring counties with great success. Campgrounds provide more than just recreational opportunities. They also attract tourism and help the local economies. Camping opportunities situated along the Highway 20 corridor attract tourists who may otherwise make a non-stop trip through Skagit County on their way to the east side of the mountains. Camping opportunities in the Marblemount area are needed.

#### **Day Use / Picnicking / Parks General Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys indicate the highest desire for parks in general.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP has picnicking, family gathering, attending an event or concert ranked as a top priority.
3. **Other Factors:** The residents of Skagit County like to see picnic shelters as a part of their regional and community park facilities. There are 18 large group picnic areas in Skagit County. Skagit County shelters are often reserved to capacity during the summer months. There is also a need for shelters with "kitchen type" cooking capabilities. The growing Hispanic population is increasing the need for picnic shelters. Shade is a health/safety issue and shelters should be strongly considered as a necessary amenity at most park properties.



### **Softball Field Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** surveys indicate a modest desire for softball fields in Skagit County.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP ranks 6% of the population using softball fields.
3. **Other Factors:** The Skagit Valley Playfields are a regional draw for league play and tournaments. The fields are used to capacity the summer months. The number of leagues and teams are showing trends of flattening. The Janicki Fields in Sedro-Woolley have reduced the need for fields at Northern State Recreation Area. A reduced parks staff won't allow for the maintaining of additional fields without a third party agreement.

### **Dog Park / Hiking with Dog Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys have shown a moderate interest in Dog Park facilities.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP shows a moderate level of popularity of hiking with a dog.
3. **Other Factors:** Dog parks are traditionally provided for in more urban settings and may be best left to cities. It is possible that some trail areas may have off-leash sections for those wishing to have that type of hiking experience.

### **Swimming Pools Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Past surveys shows a desire for a large indoor pool. Though lower than in past years, there is still a strong interest in pools and aquatic centers.
2. **Use Patterns:** Swimming is a highly popular activity in the RCP.
3. **Other Factors:** The YMCA Pool has fulfilled a long need for a centrally located pool facility.

### **Motorized Trails Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys show a lower priority for motorized trails.
2. **Use Patterns:** Motorized trails are available in The Anacortes Community Forest Lands and Walker Valley. The current trails adequately provide for the users. RCP reports an 11 percent Off Road Vehicle participation rate. Most popular are 4x4 vehicles, followed by All Terrain Vehicles, and finally snowmobiling.
3. **Other Factors:** Walker Valley periodically shuts down trails for motorized use. If the trails are permanently closed to County residents, a void will be created. Motorcycle/ORV use is constrained by the availability of desirable land and facilities. Much of the public trail inventory, for example, is closed to motorcycle/ORV use.

### **Shooting/Training Facility Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** The surveys indicate a medium ranking of a shooting/training facility in Skagit County.
2. **Use Patterns:** Approximately 7 percent of the Washington State population participates in shooting/hunting. These percentages are generally much higher in rural counties. Without a



safe public facility for shooting/training, many County residents are forced to use private timberlands and quarries, public open space, and residential properties to accommodate their recreational interest.

3. **Other Factors:** A shooting range may help alleviate safety concerns that currently exist as gun owners often discharge their weapons in unsanctioned areas. A need is especially evident for long-range shooting opportunities.

#### **Disk Golf Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Surveys have shown a lower ranking for disc golf facilities.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP does not comment on disc golf. Use patterns at existing courses indicated a high level of use, comparable to trail usage.
3. **Other Factors:** This use is attractive in that it can be a low impact overlay use on trails or open space, providing recreation with a minimal investment. The new course at NSRA was built almost exclusively by user group volunteers. The NSRA course is being recognized nationally and has hosted national tournaments with some of the best throwers from Canada and US.

#### **Baseball Fields Score Derivation**

1. **Surveys:** Indicate a continual higher ranking for baseball fields.
2. **Use patterns:** The use and needs are mostly being met in Skagit County.
3. **Other Factors:** Little League size fields are traditionally provided for by municipal park departments. Elite select leagues and little leagues are often competing for fields. There may be an adequate number of fields but the quality of the fields vary. A focus should be placed on fixing up the fields with deficiencies. Skagit County should let municipalities fill this niche. A reduced parks staff won't allow for the maintaining of additional fields without a third party agreement.

#### **Equestrian Facilities Score Derivation**

1. **Survey:** Survey respondents indicate a lower ranking of equestrian facilities.
2. **Use Patterns:** RCP ranks participation as low. A small percent of the Washington State population participates in equestrian activities. This is not a use currently featured in the Skagit County inventory other than multi-use trails.
3. **Other Factors:** Cost and urbanization are likely contributing to what is becoming a niche activity. Though the percentage of equestrian users is modest, the location of such a large amount of state and federal public lands in Skagit County makes equestrian use, particularly back-county equestrians use, logical and attractive. Private and public partnerships should be explored. The meetings we had throughout the County were attended heavily by equestrian enthusiasts. The 4-h horse groups are very active and have strong participation.



## **CHAPTER 10 - RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND RENOVATION LIST**

The following projects are based on the needs compiled from the surveys, use patterns, level of service comparisons, public input, and other factors. Project priorities are sorted in order of preference as to which programs/facilities the project encompasses and how those projects/facilities rank using the needs formula (analysis-chapter # 9). In sorting projects by priorities, financial issues are also considered. Considerations can include constraints due to a lack of resources (staff, funds) required to develop, maintain and operate facilities. The ability to draw revenue from the proposed development, facility, and/or program is also factored in. Within a broad range of project priorities, the county needs to be flexible to changing conditions and opportunities as they arise. The priorities are categorized as follows:

#### **Level 1 Need (High Priority):**

Projects in this category typically fall under the department's first priority of "taking care of what we have." In addition, these projects may have demonstrated the highest level of need in some or all of the categories of public input use patterns, level of service, or survey results (from chapter 9 needs rankings). Finally, economic feasibility or potential cost recovery is considered.

#### **Level 2 Need (Moderate to High Priority):**

Projects in this category have a moderate level of need as measured by a composite of public input, level of service analysis, survey results, and/or economic feasibility.

#### **Level 3 Need (Low to Moderate Priority):**

Projects in this category have some level of need as measured by a composite of public input, level of service, survey results, and/or economic feasibility.

#### **Level 4 Need (No to Low Priority):**

Projects in this category have no projected need as measured by a composite of public input, level of service, survey results, and/or economic feasibility. These projects are not listed in the analysis.

## INDEX TO RECOMMENDATIONS & RANKINGS

### Level 1:

Northern State Recreation Area Trails Plan  
Centennial Trail  
Skagit Valley Playfields Improvements  
Big Rock Access and Parking  
Pressentin Park Improvements  
Howard Miller Steelhead Park Improvements  
Other Trail Development and/or acquisitions  
Other Water Access Park Development and/or acquisitions

### Project Category (Primary / Secondary)

Trails  
Trails  
Sports Facilities  
Open Space / Trails  
Parks /Shoreline Access  
Parks / Shoreline Access  
Trails  
Shoreline Access

### Level 2:

Similk Bay Shoreline Access  
Sharpe Park Trail Development  
Rexville Overlook Development  
Smokehouse Trail  
Indoor Gym Space  
Evergreen Trail  
Northern State Recreation Area Development  
Burlington to Sedro-Woolley Trail  
Other Open Space Development and or/acquisitions

Shoreline Access  
Trails / Shoreline Access  
Open Space  
Trails  
Sports Facilities  
Trails  
Parks  
Trails  
Open Space

### Level 3:

Lake Shannon Trail  
Cascade Trail Maintenance and Upgrades  
Lake Shannon Park Development  
Northern State Recreation Area Ball Field  
Shooting/Training Range  
Grandy Lake Development  
Sauk Park Development

Trails  
Trails  
Parks / Shoreline Access  
Sports Facilities  
Parks  
Parks / Shoreline Access  
Parks / Shoreline Access



## **PROJECT AND RENOVATION DESCRIPTIONS**

Following is a description of the above recommended projects. To assist in comparison they will be presented within the following categories.

- 1. Trail Plans**
- 2. Park Development Plans**
- 3. Open Space Plans**
- 4. Shorelines Plans**
- 5. Sports Fields Plans**

### **1. TRAILS PLAN**

Trails continue to be the recreational facility most asked for by Skagit county residents. The 2018 Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan (RCP) surveys indicated similar trends. The (RCP) document makes recommendations for local agencies and encourages trail opportunities. The plan specifically states, "If there is a weakness in the local response statewide, it may be in addressing high-participation activities that take place away from a traditional park, especially bicycling and walking. Health professionals increasingly regard walking and bicycling, both for recreation and transportation, as valuable tools that can help people build healthier lifestyles. Community oriented trails, paths, and routes for walking and cycling can encourage people to participate in health oriented activities; encourage children to walk or bicycle to school; and encourage adults to commute without a car".

Trails and paths, therefore, can provide multiple benefits for the state's citizens including recreation, health, and transportation. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) encourages local government to work more closely with transportation and health professionals on non-traditional recreation projects such as bicycle lanes and walking routes to and from schools and businesses. They also encourage local governments to consider outdoor recreation sites and facilities as integral elements of the public infrastructure, as important to the public health and welfare as utilities and roads. The safety of trail-users will continue to be a priority.

Trails need to be provided at every opportunity. Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley identified proposed trail corridors in their Park Plans as well as connection points to the County-wide system. Anacortes is actively pursuing extending the Guemes Channel Trail in areas where there are gaps. Skagit County residents have identified a need for additional primitive trails. Burlington



has proposed these types of trails on Burlington Hill, and Mount Vernon has recently expanded their trail system on Little Mountain. Anacortes has over 50 miles of primitive trails in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Skagit County has proposals for more trails at Sharpe Park and Northern State Recreation Area, possibly extending into Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) property. The county is making progress in the development of the Centennial Trail. The City of Sedro-Woolley has been promoting the extension of the State Route 20 Trail between Burlington and Sedro-Woolley. ADA paved routes are proposed for sections of this trail. There is also a mile of ADA trail proposed at Lake Shannon as a part of the day-use park project at the Lake Shannon Boat Launch.

The recommended recreational trails plan includes a combination of loop, destination and linear type trails. To complete these sections will require, in some cases, access easements or outright purchase of property. In other cases where no other options exist, the route may need to utilize existing road rights-of-way to complete a segment. A description of the major recreation trails found in the plan is presented below.

Skagit County will work to find regional trail links between trails on county lands and those on public property managed by other agencies. City, County, State, Ports, and Federal agencies should continue to work together to assure a healthy and user-friendly trail system in Skagit County.

### **Trail Design Guidelines**

**Trail Corridors** – The trails are to be routed so as to maintain a natural setting, to avoid unnecessary disturbance to private landowners adjacent to the trail and to preserve wildlife habitat and important vegetation. While a target minimum acceptable trail easement is 20 feet, wider in many instance is more practical and desirable. In riparian areas the recommended corridor width is 100 feet for greater flexibility in locating a trail with as much sensitivity to wildlife at possible.

**Road Crossings** – Road crossings should occur at points of good visibility, perpendicular to the roadway when possible. Signage on the trail should be well designed to maximize the safety of trail users. Signage on roads is largely governed by WSDOT.

**Signage** – Trails should be signed at road crossings and all other public access points with signs that define uses and restrictions. More primitive trails should be signed only at the main entrances. These signs should describe uses, trail surface conditions, and limitations (such as ADA degree of access).



## **Northern State Recreation Area Trails Plan**

### **Level 1**

The NSRA trails component is the development of an integrated non-motorized trail network throughout the Northern State Recreation Area property providing for at least six miles of trail with plans for another three miles in the coming three years. Trails were identified as the highest priority type of facility to include at NSRA in the countywide survey administered in the NSRA planning process. Several trail types are included in the master plan for NSRA, including multiple use trails, interpretive trails, limited use trails, and exercise trails. Connecting neighborhoods to the NSRA trail system is a priority. The new berm trail around the alluvial fan will be an interpretive trail and, with some additional work, this trail will be at ADA standards. Connecting the interpretive berm trail to form a loop has been mentioned by park users as something they would like to see accomplished. Finally, with the old Northern State Hospital grounds are being opened to the public, access points between these two properties should be prioritized. Reestablishing the Olmstead paths and reconnecting the Port property to NSRA are public priorities. In addition, there has been strong sentiment to see connectivity to the DNR lands to the north and east of NSRA. Whatcom County has seen a large flux in recreational tourism because of trails on Galbraith Mountain, Lookout Mountain, the Chuckanut Mountains, and Lake Padden. Snohomish County is actively pursuing similar trails for mountain bike enthusiasts on DNR lands with relatively steep terrain. Green tourism is being recognized for the economic dollars it brings in and as a recruitment tool for businesses.

## **Centennial Trail**

### **Level 1**

The Centennial Trail is a regional trail system with the potential to be continuous through Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. These neighboring counties have been actively buying and creating connections with monies dedicated within their capital facility plans, and for the most part these trails are fully developed and open for use. The Skagit portion is divided into two segments. The northern segment between Sedro-Woolley and Whatcom County will follow State Route 9. Because this segment is within the road corridor, it will probably be used primarily for bicycling. South of Sedro-Woolley, the planned route of the Centennial Trail follows an abandoned railroad corridor. The County has purchased approximately nine miles of this route but anticipates that the remaining portion of the trail could be located within street rights-of-way, at least in the near-term. This is an excellent opportunity to create multi-use trails for bicyclists, walkers, horseback riders and other users. A first phase of development is in the planning stages between Big Rock and Clear Lake, and completion of this should



be one of the highest priorities. The Centennial Trail is envisioned to be part of an overall off-street trail one day connecting British Columbia to Seattle. Snohomish County owns a parcel of land at their northern boundary which has been developed as a trailhead for the Centennial Trail.

#### **Sharpe Park Trail Development**

#### **Level 1**

Sharpe Park encompasses conifer lowland forest, a wetland, rocky balds, a seasonal stream, and coastline. These combined land characteristics make the property unique biologically due to the habitat interface of these differing features. Sharpe Park is also a vital connecting link between shoreline and the Montgomery-Duban Headlands. Together, Montgomery-Duban Headlands and Sharpe Park comprise a 110-acre natural area including almost a mile of rugged, natural shoreline on Rosario Strait. The property features a spectacular view, encompassing most of the Olympic Range, the straits, and Lopez, Allan, Burrows, and other islands. A community group has approached SCPR to financially partner on the potential purchase of a land-locked parcel at the south end of the park. This could allow a trail connection between Sharpe Park and Deception Pass State Park, which would be very desirable.

#### **Other Proposed Trail Development and/or acquisition**

#### **Level 1**

In addition to the major trail routes described above, trails should be developed and improved in existing parks, open space and day-use areas. Some of the specific areas should include:

- Cascade Trail
- Squires Lake
- Chuckanut Mountain Area
- Skagit River Access
- Anne Welford Park
- Pressentin Park
- Sauk Park
- Swinomish Channel Smokehouse Trail
- Fidalgo Island Evergreen Trail
- Other publicly owned lands and/or open space areas.
- Separated paths within state highway corridors connecting towns in Skagit County



There is considerable public interest in having more access onto this region's dike and levee systems for recreational walking. Skagit County parks should continue to be open to opportunities to assist and partner with the local dike districts to facilitate appropriate access onto the dike systems.

#### **Evergreen Trail and Sharpe Park to Deception Pass Connectivity**

#### **Level 2**

This is a cross-island corridor trail concept for Fidalgo Island. It would link Anacortes, San Juan Ferry Terminal, Washington Park, Heart Lake, Campbell Lake, Mount Erie, Sharpe Park and Deception Pass State Park. Most of the linkages would utilize existing public land. Additional linkages need to be acquired and some physical obstacles need to be addressed. This trail program should be a coordinated effort between the City of Anacortes, Washington State Parks, Skagit County, non-profit organizations, and private landowners. Moving people safely from Donnell Road just north of Deception Pass State Park to the Anacortes Forestland Trails should be an initial focus. A safe route along Heart Lake Road would provide non-motorized transportation for commuters and recreationists. Connections can be made in a number of creative ways, including but not limited to:

- Private gifting of conservation or trail easements.
- Development of a revolving "conservation" fund that could purchase available properties and resell them after placing appropriate easements on the property.
- Purchase of available properties or trail easements in critical areas in cooperation with the City of Anacortes, Skagit Land Trust, and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. WSPRC currently has some property in this area designated as potential acquisitions.

Wildlife corridors between the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, Sharpe Park, Tursi Trail, and Deception Pass State Park should always be considered. A wildlife corridor helps accommodate the movement of wildlife between the public lands. Wildlife corridors are important for the long-term genetic health of island wildlife by providing links for subpopulations. Such an Open Space Corridor can be created by purchasing properties, by retaining rural zoning, by conservation easements, etc. Habitat connectivity in this part of Fidalgo Island is very important for the long-term health of the biotic community. Since there will be more and more pressures to develop these properties on Fidalgo Island, the pursuance of wildlife corridors is important. Once these lands are lost to development, the



opportunities may be lost forever. Potential funding in partnership with a local land trust should be pursued.

#### **Burlington to Sedro-Woolley Trail**

#### **Level 2**

Completing the connection between the towns would provide recreational and transportation opportunities. Since these two towns have growing populations, an emphasis should be placed on hardened surfaces, more typically looked for in urban areas. Attracting top employees is dependent on a strong infrastructure of trails, greenspaces, and parks. The Port of Skagit Business Park (SWIFT Center) would benefit from the ability for people to get to work via non-motorized means. This would be a very attractive carrot for local businesses to attract young professionals and laborers.

#### **Smokehouse Trail**

#### **Level 2**

The creation of a four mile berm trail along the Swinomish Channel would provide the longest contiguous shoreline trail in Skagit County. The interpretive trail would celebrate the Swinomish Tribe's culture and history. Interpretive information explaining the ecological value of restoring the brackish wetlands and estuarine habitat would provide educational opportunities. The trail meanders through farm habitat where Trumpeter Swans and Snow Geese gather during the winter months. Connectivity to La Conner and Anacortes would create a great opportunity for the hiking and biking public.

#### **Cascade Trail Maintenance and Upgrades**

#### **Level 3**

The Cascade Trail will need some improvements made to trestles and pedestrian bridges in the coming years. Plans are being put together to regularly look at the structural integrity of the structures and prioritize maintenance needs based on the reports that come from these visits. Skagit County should work with partners to find a funding opportunity for fixing the ongoing issues with the trail and enhancing Wiseman Creek area as better Salmon habitat. Skagit County has entered into these agreements in the past with great results. The trail should maintained and enhanced to a higher standard near towns and cities.

#### **Lake Shannon Trail**

#### **Level 3**

A short ADA loop trail is planned for the Lake Shannon Boat Launch area. Also, a linear trail linking Concrete with Lake Shannon from the confluence of Skagit/Baker River, and Baker Lake may be possible with a long-term adaptive management fund made available through a recent Puget Sound Energy (PSE)



relicensing process. Skagit County should remain involved with PSE, Town of Concrete and other recreational providers in the area to ensure the needs of County residents are being met.

## **2. PARK DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

### **Pressentin Park Development**

#### **Level 1**

This regional park is located off Highway 20 in Marblemount. It was acquired in 1990 with the assistance of an RCO grant. More acreage was added in 2009 and 2018. Pressentin is comprised of three distinct areas, an upper forested shelf, a middle open meadow, and lower (across a drainage swale) floodplain terrace. The community has long asked for a park with walking trails, playground, day-use area and primitive camping. A partnership project with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been funded via several grant sources. The project is scheduled for completion in 2020.

The river island opposite the site belongs to the Skagit Land Trust and is maintained as eagle wintering habitat (specifically, nighttime roosting area). This site is dedicated as wildlife habitat.

In 2017 an RCO grant was secured to purchase more land and add park amenities. The expanded park will be comprised of a day use area, two large picnic shelters, a primitive bike camp area, foot bridges, and additional trails. Habitat enhancement includes a side channel restoration project for salmon. This project is scheduled for completion in 2020.

### **Northern State Recreation Area Development**

#### **Level 2**

A master plan has been prepared for this site and includes about 525 acres of natural open space. Other recommended facilities include a trail system, a softball/baseball complex, a Veterans day-use park, equestrian facilities, environmental education center, camping area, an event center and campground. In 2019 grant funds will become available to install a restroom at the main parking area, a one mile ADA trail, and a Veterans Plaza. Subsequent development is dependent upon the availability of funds and ability to properly provide adequate maintenance. A cross-country course has been developed here and is used by local schools. A dedicated citizens group, the Skagit Trail Builders, has begun developing and improving trails and built a bridge over Hansen Creek connecting the SWIFT center to the NSRA area. The Hansen Creek salmon habitat restoration project at the south end of NSRA accommodates over 100 species of birds and has become a destination for local and regional birders and birding organizations. In



2011 a disc golf course was developed. In partnership with the private sector, the historic buildings should be renovated and preserved. Some buildings are beyond repair and will be lost. The architecture should be assimilated into all new construction. A strong focus should remain on expanding trails and equestrian/bicycle opportunities. The property was purchased with RCO funds and need to be protected for recreational uses that fit within the guidelines of those grants.

### **Howard Miller Steelhead Park Development**

### **Level 2**

Thirteen acres of this site are currently highly developed with the remaining 80 acres lying across a small stream channel to the west, all of which is in flood plain. Mowed paths provide access to some of the undeveloped part of the park and provide visitors with a recreational opportunity in a natural setting. The existing developed site includes picnic areas, picnic shelters, a dump station, a rail trail, boat launch, 54 RV units, an office building, two Adirondack shelters, two camping cabins and tent sites. HMSP has a club house and an interpretive center. With the addition of a new rail car bridge across Rusty Water Creek, low impact uses may expand to the west end of the park. The park receives many regular users from outside the region (upwards of 80%).

There are currently two entrances to the park, one from Sauk Valley Road and the other through the local neighborhood on Alfred Street. During the Eagle Festival and the eagle viewing season, 200 or more cars may attempt to park on the site. This heavy use period occurs mostly on weekends from December to March. Customers of many commercial raft vendors park their cars on the site prior to being transported upriver to a boat launch area. The location of a portion of the developed site in the Skagit River floodway and noise from the nearby tavern are occasional disruptions to public enjoyment of the park.

Consideration should be given to providing greater access and recreation opportunities in the open meadow located west of the developed portion of HMSP. Expansion of the park is limited due to the constraints of the floodplain. For future expansion, all acquisition opportunities along Park Road should be considered as lands become available.

The forested portion found at the furthest west end of the park should not be developed and remain as a wildlife corridor linking riparian habitat with other surrounding land. One of the most important tasks



to complete should be an overall park site plan addressing office space, restrooms, upgraded interpretive center, parking, a gated entrance system, interpretive signage, and a possible amphitheater for educational purposes.

#### **Indoor Gym Space**

#### **Level 2**

The new YMCA is meeting the need for a central indoor recreation center and pool, but with just three middle school sized basketball courts there is still a need for additional gym space to support the county sports leagues as well as local community athletic organizations.

Community groups are advocating for a lower budget metal field house for providing indoor gym space, similar to the Sports N Skills complex in Lynden, WA.

#### **Shooting/Training Range:**

#### **Level 3**

The need for a shooting range has become apparent because of unsanctioned shooting in sand and gravel quarries or other unmanaged areas. Because of the concern for safety, shooting in most informal areas is now restricted. Hunting license sales in the State have remained steady and hunters have a need to practice their skills at an organized, safe, and reliable facility.

### **3. RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN**

Depending upon one's point of view, the definition of Open Space varies widely. For some it includes land designated primarily for the preservation of wildlife habitat or agricultural farmland. To others, it may include environmentally sensitive areas, lands used to buffer, and space to create a sense of seclusion.

In this report, Recreational Open Space (ROS) is defined as undeveloped land left primarily in its natural condition and used for non-consumptive recreational purposes, creation of separation and seclusion, and as buffers between urban uses. Sites designated primarily for agricultural farmland and wildlife habitat are not considered in this category of Open Space. ROS is further defined as large parcels of land that because of unique or scenic quality should be carefully monitored, planned and used. They may



permit a variety of land uses as long as open space qualities are conserved. The maximum development in such areas would be low impact day-use activities and trails.

Currently, most public open space acres and some wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas in the County are managed by state and federal agencies or the City of Anacortes. Both Burlington and Mount Vernon have proposed open space corridors in their comprehensive plans. LaConner has policies related to open space areas but no specific areas have been set aside. The largest open space area in the County is the corridor of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System managed by the US Forest Service.

Skagit County currently has some undeveloped park sites which function as recreation open space. These are sites which permit public access but provide little or no facilities or services. Some of them will eventually be developed, providing both recreational open space and active play areas. Some of the County park sites are not anticipated to be developed for a long period of time and will remain as reserves for future generations.

The Skagit County Planning Department has full review of potential open space areas. The UGA Open Space Concept Plans was forwarded to the Planning Commission and approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 2009. The plan should act as an extension of this parks and recreation plan.

There are a variety of tools available to protect other open space areas. Acquisition is an option and most likely necessary to provide broad public access. Other options include scenic and access easements, development restrictions, etc. It will be necessary to work closely with Skagit County Planning and Development Services to ensure appropriate land use controls are in place to achieve open space objectives. It should be kept in mind that much of the natural open space now exists as critical areas and will be preserved through current land use regulations. Therefore, it isn't often necessary for the county to purchase these parcels when other mechanisms now exist as protection.

### **Rexville Overlook Development**

#### **Level 1**

This site is located off Bradshaw Road, in the community of Rexville. The glacially deposited rock is on the site of the former Rexville School. An area adjacent to the rock provides parking opportunities. A short climb up the moderate slope provides expansive views across patterned agricultural lands to the distant coastline and islands. Skagit County should develop this property as a park, including a viewing



platform with picnic tables. The cost to develop this park is nominal. The deed has a condition for returning the land if it isn't used for recreational purposes.

#### **Big Rock Park Improvements**

#### **Level 1**

Permanent, safe, and legal access needs to be established to this park. Although the property is currently landlocked, it was given to the County with the intention for recreational use. Formal parking and a trailhead will also need to be established. Skagit County should stay engaged with Mount Vernon Planning processes to ensure the creation of a safe and legal access to the Big Rock property. Adjacent development proposals should be looked at for trail access opportunities that will benefit the neighbors and general public. Future properties need to be acquired with the necessary safe and legal access.

#### **Other Open Space Development and/or Acquisition**

#### **Level 2**

Opportunities to acquire open space lands should be pursued when possible. Skagit County should coordinate and cooperate with both public and private sector interests to further park and recreation opportunities. Park planning and land acquisition efforts should consider existing and planned infrastructure, population served, environmental constraints, and available resources. Partnerships with local land trusts and other non-profit agencies should be pursued as a way to find recreational opportunities at a low cost to Skagit County taxpayers. A dedicated fund should be established for acquiring potential parks, trails, and open space lands.

#### **4. SHORELINES PLAN**

The ability of Skagit County residents to gain access to their shorelines has been a persistent challenge over the past couple of decades. The loss of public shoreline access has come with the rising population and subsequent development. Concern has been growing that the public will lose the ability to enjoy their favorite waterbodies as more and more traditional access points are lost to development. And due to zoning anomalies, the private sector has the ability to develop their sites while the public properties are restricted from building some of the same amenities the private property owners enjoy. Private property rights are protected when the public has the same ability to enjoy public lands as in the residential areas. Demand for public access seems to be rising as participation in recreational boating, fishing, and shellfish harvesting grows. As development increases, traditional access sites and affordable shorefront lands suitable for access diminish. Clearly, public access to Skagit County's shorelines is an issue that will not go away. Once lands are developed, developing public access to shorelines becomes much more difficult and expensive. Because of the popularity of shorelines and the diminishing ability to access these areas, the priority for the acquisition and enhancement of these properties ranks high.

Our County abounds with tideland recreational resources—miles of beaches and many important estuaries, in particular at the mouths of the Skagit and Samish Rivers. These resources are the legacy of the Skagit Valley we want to appreciate and preserve. To that end, we recommend and support working with local governments and non-profit agencies in finding ways to acquire intertidal lands for the enjoyment of our public. In the past decade, we partnered with the WDNR and The Skagit Land Trust to keep tidelands on Samish Island available to the public. We will continue to look for creative ways to protect similar properties in the years to come.

##### **Similk Bay Shoreline Access**

##### **Level 1**

This proposed shoreline access area is currently owned by the Swinomish Tribe. In the distant past, the site was a highly utilized resort, featuring a restaurant, public areas, and restroom facilities. Until the 90's, the intertidal area was used for aquaculture. A partnership with the Swinomish Tribe should be pursued for the benefit of the public. An opportunity to improve fish habitat with a provision of public access would be a great grant opportunity. Formal parking, interpretive signs, garbage receptacles, and portable toilet facilities should be made available in partnership with the Swinomish Tribe. The site is currently used informally by the public.

##### **Other Water Access Park Development and/or Acquisition**

##### **Level 1**



Lakefront recreational resources are extremely rare in Skagit County. A long-term objective of SCPR and its partners has been to develop a major regional park on a centrally located lake in Skagit County (Big Lake or Clear Lake would best fill this void). Skagit County is blessed with a number of beautiful lakes, but public access is limited. The site should include an array of day-use opportunities. The public needs to have the same opportunities as the private sector. Public property rights are protected when adequate public lands are provided.

#### **Lake Shannon Park Development**

#### **Level 3**

Baker Lake, in Whatcom County, has a variety of recreational developments, while Lake Shannon to the south has a primitive recreational site with no legal road access to the lake. At Lake Shannon, surrounding lands are mostly in private ownership (except DNR lands on the western shore) and shorelines are steep. Osprey and Loons regularly use the lake and shoreline. The site should include day-use facilities, trails, and a boat ramp. Lakefront recreational resources are extremely rare in Skagit County. Survey results indicate shoreline access to be a primary need of County residents. Standards developed for public access in this plan should focus on the types and scale of facilities developed at other Northwest reservoirs. The formation of this lake has created a demand for its use. Almost 1.5 million dollars were set aside in the Baker River Hydroelectric Project relicensing process for recreational amenities.

#### **Grandy Lake Development**

#### **Level 3**

This primitive camping area is located off Baker Lake Road about five miles northeast of highway 20. This site includes picnic tables, a portable restroom building, and undeveloped parking spurs. The site is used to capacity on the opening weekends of fishing and hunting season. The site has become an overflow to the Baker River recreational developments and many of the users of the Baker Lake facilities stop by to use the rest rooms. A group camp site was constructed in the past decade. Expansion is going to be necessary in the coming years. Howard Miller Steelhead Park is at full capacity and satellite overnight park facilities are growing in demand. This park has become more and more popular with each year.

**Sauk Park Development****Level 3**

This existing site is located about ¼ of a mile north of Lower Government Bridge off Sauk Valley Road. About half of the site is located on the upland side of the road. The park currently provides primitive camping opportunities but is very minimally developed. Changes to the site occur with each flood event. A boat launch once existed on the site but later eroded away during high-water, and now provides good walking access to a broad, sandy riverside area. This sand bar grew with past flood events and provides a very nice day-use area for picnicking, fishing, and walking. Camp units are mostly situated along the river bank. Camping continues to grow in popularity at this campground and more sites may become necessary in the coming years. Uncontrolled access from units to the river has caused some bank erosion, resulting in steepening gradients in some areas. A group site camp or horse camp area should be considered in the future for the upland area.

The site is adjacent to DNR lands, which abuts National Forest lands. A power line crosses the roadway just north of the site. Though timber harvest and management is active in the area, there are trail opportunities. A master plan should be developed for this site. Careful consideration should be given to equestrian opportunities when developing the site plan.



## **5. SPORTS FIELDS PLAN**

Considerable analysis was given to evaluating the role the County should take in managing and maintaining sport fields. While organized sports have historically been the function of local communities, Skagit County assumed this role because a clear need was expressed.

Since there is a great demand for more sport fields and the County is already managing a major complex, it is recommended that the County continue with managing the fields they currently have, while supporting agencies that are making efforts to create new fields.

### **Skagit Valley Playfields Improvements:**

#### **Level 1**

Skagit County obtained 25 acres of land in 1979 through a long-term year lease with Skagit Valley College. The soccer field and baseball fields were transferred to the College a decade ago. The site once hosted more than 20 weekends of softball tournaments per year. Those numbers have dropped in the past decade. SCPR adult softball leagues play weeknights on all 4 softball fields up to 55 games per week. The softball fields are used for league play from the first of March through the middle of October. Drainage problems have been resolved in the outfields. An RCO grant in 2019 provides for the installation of synthetic turf on the infields. The long-term plan is to expand on the ten acres adjacent to the playfields. There is a strong demand for soccer fields in this area.

Site recommendations include:

- Increase the number of paved parking stalls
- Install LED lighting and expand the area of synthetic field turf.
- Improve internal pathways, including ADA accessibility.
- Build soccer and lacrosse fields
- Build an indoor gym

### **Northern State Recreational Area Ballfields**

### **Level 3**

The NSRA masterplan includes an area dedicated for youth and adult sports fields. The Janicki Fields currently fill the current demand but as the population grows, the need for more fields will grow accordingly. The plan includes parking, concessions, restrooms, maintenance facilities, and picnic areas. The ball field component includes the following elements:

- 5 youth/adult softball fields
- 4 youth baseball fields
- 1 youth/ adult baseball field
- Adequate parking for the fields
- Sufficient space for maintenance and operations
- Adequate concessions
- Play areas

There is not currently adequate funding or staff to care for the build out of the sports fields and development of these fields would require a commitment of additional full time staff. A bathroom is being planned and developed as a part of the 2020 Trailhead project.



## **MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS**

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The intent of this law was to strengthen the accessibility requirements for all facilities used by the public. As it relates to park and recreation facilities, the law is intended to insure that a person with a disability has the same opportunity to achieve their recreation goals as those without a disability.

Essential to the ADA is the belief that services, programs and facilities shall be provided in the most integrated setting possible. A public agency is not obligated to guarantee participation but to provide the opportunity. In addition, structural changes are not necessarily required if other methods will result in equal access.

The definition of disability varies widely and includes a variety of impairments and limitations. This includes mobility impairments, visual limitations, hearing impairments, mental disabilities, learning impairments and emotional disabilities. In addition, it includes elderly citizens as well as people with temporary disabilities, such as a broken arm or leg. It is estimated that 57% of the population has some sort of disability or physical limitation.

## **MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR EXISTING FACILITIES**

The approach to meeting accessibility requirements for existing parks and recreational facilities is based on the significance and/or relative level of development of the site. The more significant and intensively used a recreation area becomes, the greater the accessibility must become. Recreation areas that are highly developed such as neighborhood parks, community parks or special use areas require a high level of accessibility. These types of recreation areas should be accessible to people with all types of disabilities. In contrast, a very passive area, such as natural open space that has little development and is seldom used, requires less accessibility.

Where evaluation of existing facilities becomes difficult is when an accommodation would result in a substantial economic burden on the parks department or would require a major change to the nature of service. Under these conditions, a park and recreation agency may decline to make the accommodations. However, determining a substantial economic burden is difficult.

Factors that should be considered include: the cost of change as it relates to the overall operating budget of the agency, the actual cost of the change, the number of individuals who would benefit and the availability of existing funds within the current operating budget.



## **MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW FACILITIES**

Meeting ADA requirements for new development is easier and slightly different from retrofitting existing development. The development of new parks and recreation facilities allows a greater flexibility in terms of design opportunities for people with disabilities. Because the intent of ADA is to provide a disabled person with the opportunity to experience a full range of recreational opportunities, new park and recreation facilities should be designed to provide experiences for all ability levels. Individuals with disabilities who enjoy a challenge should be accommodated as well as those who prefer easier outdoor recreation experiences. Ideally, individual sites should provide a full range of opportunities for those with disabilities.

However, due to the size and physical characteristics of some sites, offering a variety of ability levels is not always possible. Larger sites often have a greater opportunity for accommodating varying levels of development and as a result may require greater accessibility. In general, recreational facilities should provide the highest practical level of access to people with disabilities, though sometimes, that access to facilities may be limited due to physical features of the site.

## **ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

The following are the basic accessibility requirements as identified by the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. These standards should be modified according to the level of accessibility required of the site.

### **1. Parking/Access Routes**

- a. One designated handicapped space per 25 total spaces
- b. Eight-foot wide parking spaces with 5-foot wide access aisles for cars and 8-foot access aisle for vans.
- c. 50% of handicap spaces for cars and 50% spaces for vans.

### **2. Pathways/Trails/Ramps**

- a. A handicap accessible pathway must be provided to all major features of the park.
- b. Ramp required if slope is greater than 1:20 (5%).
- c. Maximum slope on ramp is 1:12 (8%).
- d. Ramp landings 5 feet by 5 feet for every 30 inch rise.
- e. Ramp width is 3 feet minimum.
- f. Two inch high curbs are required along edge of ramp.



- g. Ramp must have a hard non-slip surface.
- h. Handrails are required on ramps and trails with steep cross slopes.
- i. Pathways and trail grades should not exceed 1:20 (5%).
- j. Width of pathways and trails for one-way access is 4 feet and for two-way is 5 feet.
- k. Tactile warnings should be provided along surfaces of potentially dangerous areas.

### **3. Fishing Facilities**

- a. The connection between the fishing pad and pathway should be hard surfaced.
- b. A curb and/or railing should be provided at water's edge.
- c. Two accessible fishing stations are required for each accessible parking space.
- d. Each fishing station should consist of a 30 inch wide and 48 inch deep designated area on a dock or 5 linear feet of fishing area on shore pads.
- e. If there is a guardrail or handrail on the dock, it should be lowered to 34 inches at the designated station.

### **4. Boating Facilities**

- a. Docks, piers and gangways must meet accessible pathway and ramp requirements.
- b. Curbs and/or railings are required.

### **5. Restrooms**

- a. Connection between restrooms and pathways should be hard surfaced.
- b. Facilities such as toilets, stalls and sinks should be designed to meet accessible requirements.

### **6. Playgrounds**

- a. ZERO barrier equipment should be installed in addition to ADA compliant equipment.
- b. Connection between playground and parking should be hard surfaced and meet required design standards.
- c. Entrance to the playground should be appropriately signed.
- d. Pathway from the entrance of the playground to the primary play area shall be fully accessible.

- e. At least 30% of the play equipment shall be accessible and easily reached from the playground path of travel.
- f. The playground equipment should encourage interaction between children with and without disabilities.
- g. The sensation of activity (such as swinging, spinning, etc.) shall be equally available to those with disabilities.
- h. Surface material beneath the play equipment should be firm and level to permit unassisted travel by a person in a wheelchair.

#### **7. Picnic Areas**

- a. Locate on level grade
- b. Pad beneath the picnic table or shelter should be hard surfaced
- c. Connection between picnic pad and pathway should be hard surfaced
- d. Facilities such as tables, benches and grill should be designed to meet accessible requirements.

#### **8. Beach/Waterfront**

- a. Some portion of the beach must be firm to the water's edge.
- b. Access into the water must be firm and safe.

#### **9. Information/Signage**

- a. Site information related to accessibility should be made available in public documents and on websites
- b. If the park has an entrance that is not accessible, then a sign must be provided indicating where an accessible entrance is located.
- c. Site signage is required that designates if the park is accessible for those with disabilities.



## **CHAPTER 11 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

Recommendations for park improvements were discussed in the prior chapter. Funding these improvements is always a challenge, but with the right partners and creativity Skagit County Parks and Recreation (SCPR) will continue to find ways to accomplish the goals of our park plan. The intent of this chapter is to identify a strategy for funding park and recreation improvements. The acquisition of land has long been a challenge. Whereas many counties have established County funds for real estate acquisition and capital projects, Skagit County has no dedicated source. Most Counties dedicate Conservation Futures Funds (CFF) for funding parklands. In addition, many Counties and Cities utilize impact fees for funding acquisitions. In Skagit County, Conservation Future Funds are exclusively used for the Farmland Legacy Program and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Impact Fees for Parks are voluntary and have not generated revenue in years. Because of this, Skagit County Parks and Recreation is required to find creative means for acquiring lands. Funding can come from various sources including grants and non-profit organizations. SCPR is constantly looking for ways for funding both acquisition and development projects. Some of those potential sources are listed in this chapter.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The following themes will guide the implementation of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan:

#### **Parks Will:**

- Focus on the maintenance of and improvements to existing park facilities for the public.
- Pursue opportunities for expanding park use to meet identified needs.
- Pursue opportunities to expand parklands, preserve open space lands, protect critical areas and acquire lands for recreational opportunities as population increases.
- Develop and maintain partnerships to improve the delivery of regional and community parks and natural areas.
- Explore innovations in planning, development, and ongoing stewardship/management of parks and recreation.
- Seek community input and support through programming and public involvement.
- Work with the Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit Conservation District, Skagit County Natural Resource staff and others to partner in land acquisition and protection.
- Work with various community groups, agencies, individuals, and other partners as we acquire and develop parklands.



### **Acquisition Priorities**

- Acquisition to expand and improve existing parks and trails.
- Acquisition of property and/or facilities that fill priority needs of Skagit County residents.
- Acquisition of critical habitat and natural areas.

### **CAPITAL FACILITY PLANNING**

Capital improvement projects funded by Skagit County are inventoried annually in the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). The CFP is the major planning tool for park related facilities including parkland acquisition, development, redevelopment and renovation. The CFP is a 6-year financing plan, evaluated and updated every year by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners.

### **GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL FACILITY PLANNING**

When the Growth Management Act was adopted, it fundamentally changed the way in which public infrastructure is provided. This includes public parks. The GMA requires jurisdictions to identify necessary infrastructure needs and develop clear funding strategies to meet those needs. Listed below are some of the potential funding sources.

### **POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES**

#### **1. Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program:**

A special source of public funding supported by a coalition of recreation and wildlife groups with the intent of preserving wildlife habitats and open space and developing recreation areas. For the 2019-2020 Biennium, the legislative appropriation for RCO projects hit a high-water mark of \$100 million.

#### **2. Property Transfer Excise Tax (Real Estate Excise Tax - REET):**

A tax assessed on the sale of property and administered by local counties and cities. Revenue can only be used to finance capital facilities specified in the local government's Capital Facilities Plan. The second quarter percent of REET is available for capital projects in parklands whereas the first quarter percent is dedicated solely for road infrastructure. A recent legislative adjustment allows for a percentage of REET II to be used for affordable housing.

#### **3. County General Fund:**

This category includes general funds allocated to the Skagit County Department of Parks and Recreation for annual expenditures and capital development. The use of general funds has decreased from its peak years.

#### **4. Park Impact Fees:**

Development fees imposed by a county or city can be used for parkland acquisitions and development. Fees charged to developers are typically based upon a set amount per residential



unit. This amount is calculated to represent the development's share of public improvements in relation to growth.

Credits can be given to developers that contribute land, improvements or other assets. Funds must be used for capital facilities required by growth, and not for current deficiencies in levels of service. Fee revenues cannot be used for operations.

This fee is currently voluntary in Skagit County and does not represent a significant revenue stream. In the public opinion survey conducted as part of this plan, 82% of the respondents indicated "YES" when asked the question "Recognizing that it may increase the cost of new housing, should Skagit County require developers to pay a fee for parks, open space and trail systems." More intensely zoned subareas, including Planned Unit Developments (PUDS), should set aside land and pay for adequate park construction in their developments.

**5. Short Term Special Levy:**

A property tax for construction and/or operations levied for a set number of years (typically 1-3 years). A special levy requires a 60% voter approval.

**6. General Obligation Bond:**

A property tax for the sale of construction bonds. The tax assessment can be levied up to 30 years. Passage requires a 60% majority approval of 40% of the voters who voted at the last election. This approach is usually used for large scale projects.

**7. Revenue Bonds:**

Revenue from the operation of a facility pays for the capital cost and debt service. This does not require a vote of the people.

**8. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):**

Grants are distributed from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund established in 1965 using revenues from offshore oil and gas leases. Grants provide matching funds for the cost of parkland acquisition and development. At one time, this was a major funding program for recreation programs. The program is administered locally by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The Skagit County Parks Department should partner with the Public Works Natural Resource Division to identify and acquire lands that fit within the needs of both departments.

**9. Department of Ecology:**

Grant monies are available from the Coastal Zone Management account and pay up to 50% of the project cost. They are primarily used for shoreline acquisition and public access.



**10. HUD Grants:**

Grant monies are available from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for a wide variety of projects. Most are distributed in the lower income areas of the community. Grants can be up to 100% of project cost. Funds may not be used for maintenance or operation of existing facilities.

**11. Aquatic Land Enhancement Fund:**

This program, funded by the State Department of Natural Resources, provides funding for acquisition and development of waterfront parks, public access and environmental protection. Within this fund is the "Wetland Stewardship Grant Program." This program will fund acquisition of locally significant wetlands.

**12. Youth Athletic Facilities**

The program focuses on serving youth through the age of 18, who participate in sports and athletics

**13. Boating Facilities Program**

Created in 1964, the Boating Facilities Program provides grants to acquire, develop, and renovate facilities for motorized boats and other watercraft, including launching ramps, guest moorage, and support facilities.

**14. Certificates of Participation:**

This is a lease purchase approach in which a City or County sells Certificates of Participation (COP's) to a lending institution. The City or County pays off the loan from revenue produced by the facility or from its own general operating budget. The lending institution holds title to the property until the COP's are repaid. This procedure does not require a vote of the public.

**15. Volunteer Efforts:**

Volunteers can be quite effective in terms of contributing cash, materials, or labor.

**16. Transfer of Development Rights:**

This is a process wherein the development rights on a specific parcel of desired open space land is transferred to a second parcel of land more suitable for development. The second parcel is then permitted a higher level of development. If the two parcels are owned by two different landowners, the increased value of the second parcel is given to the owner of the first parcel.

**17. Work Release Program:**

An alternative to jail time, this program is for offenders to provide community services such as working on a park maintenance crew.



**18. Conservation Futures Levy:**

Counties can levy up to \$0.065 per \$1,000 assessed valuation for the acquisition of shoreline and open space areas. The money cannot be used for development and/or maintenance. In Skagit County, these funds have been levied for the preservation of farmland only. A percentage of these dollars should be considered for park and open space acquisition.

**19. Centennial Clean Water Program:**

This is a state program administered by the Department of Ecology and financed by a tax on cigarettes. The program is designed to provide grants and loans on projects that will enhance water quality. Typical projects related to parks and open space could include storm water retention, wetland enhancement and other water quality mitigation measures. Grants are available for planning, design and construction up to 70% of the total project cost.

**20. Utility Tax:**

Counties can charge a tax on the gross receipts of electric, gas, garbage, telephone, cable TV, water/sewer, and storm-water service providers. Revenue can be used for capital facilities acquisition, construction and maintenance.

**21. Urban Forestry Grants:**

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers two funding grant programs in the art of urban forestry. The first is funded by the US Small Business Administration and provides grants to purchase and plant trees. Urban street tree planting programs are sometimes funded by this method. A 25% match is required. The second program is for educational and technical assistance and is funded by the US Forest Service. A local match is also required for this program.

**22. Fast Act:**

The "Fast Act of 2015" provides a portion of its funding for bicycle transportation facilities, including new or improved lanes or paths, traffic control devices, shelters and parking facilities.

**23. Donations/Foundations:**

Private donations and foundations can be important sources of funding for park projects.

**24. Councilmatic Bonds:**

Bonds issued by a City or County. Issuing these bonds does not require a vote of the people, but they must be paid out of the annual operating budget.



**25. User Fees:**

Cities, counties, and special purpose districts can charge fees for use of facilities or participating in programs. They are often entrance fees or registration fees. Since 2009, our recreation programs and fairgrounds have paid their own way in Skagit County.

**26. Transportation Improvement Account:**

Cities, counties, and transportation benefit districts can apply for these funds through the State Transportation Improvement Board. Funding is provided annually for projects to alleviate and prevent traffic congestion caused by economic development or growth. The proposal should be multi-agency, multi-modal, congestion related, related to growth, and have a 20% local match.

**27. Local Option Vehicle License Fee:**

Counties can charge up to \$15 per vehicle registered in the county, with proceeds to be used for "general transportation purposes". Revenues are distributed back to the county and its cities on a weighted per capita basis-- unincorporated areas receive a larger share, per capita, than do cities. The state parklands have used "optional" licensing fees for their park budgets.

**28. Life Estate or Living Trusts:**

This is the donation of a property to a public agency with the provision that the donor may live on the site as long as desired or until end of life.

**29. Resource Management:**

The County can acquire and dedicate the revenues of specified properties to certain programs or departments. For instance, revenues from timber sales, grazing leases, concessions, etc. could be allocated to recreation programs or used to acquire and develop park properties.

**30. Hydroelectric Relicensing Opportunities**

Projects that generate hydroelectric power fall under the regulations of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Any new hydroelectric project, or one requiring relicensing, must submit a license application. Part of the application process includes a plan for mitigating open space and recreation opportunities lost as a result of the project.

Local regulatory authority over hydropower development falls under the jurisdiction of the Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58). The Skagit County Department of Planning and Development Services and the State Department of Ecology have entered into a Coastal Zone Management Grant Agreement addressing amendments to the Skagit County Shoreline



Management Master Program relating to the siting and development of hydropower generation facilities.

The rationale behind this agreement lies in the intention of a for-profit corporation to use Skagit County resources to generate a service for residents living outside the County. As a result, these corporations are asked to pay for the right to use the County's resources. Lake Shannon has been created by hydroelectric companies, and these companies should create and maintain adequate recreation facilities at this site.

# Parks, Trails, and Recreation

## Parks & Trails Inventory

Facility	Acres	Location	County-Owned	Notes/Needs
Rail Corridor-Misc	45	SR 20 and vicinity	—	
Allen Community Park	17	9101 Avon Allen Rd, Bow	no	
Campbell Lake Boat Launch	3	5834 Campbell Lake Rd, Anacortes	no	
Lake Erie Boat Launch	1	13380 Rosario Rd, Anacortes	no	
Anne Wolford Park	33	8508 Robinson Rd, Sedro-Woolley	yes	
Big Rock Park	13	15050 SR 9, Mount Vernon	yes	
Burlington-Sedro Woolley Trail	7	Between Burlington & SW	yes	
Cascade River Park	41	Cascade River Rd, Marblemount	yes	
Cascade Trail	292	24700 SR 20, Sedro Woolley	yes	
Centennial Trail	77	S. Lake McMurray off Hwy 9	yes	
Clear Lake Beach	1	12925 S. Front Street, Clear Lake	yes	
Conway Park	4	18445 Spruce St, Conway	yes	
Conway Park Boat Launch	3	Below South Fork Bridge, Conway	yes	
Cleveland Park	1	1401 Cleveland Ave, Mount Vernon	yes	
Donovan Park	3	3494 Friday Creek Rd, Burlington	yes	
Frailey Mountain Park	400	Adjacent DNR Forest Lands/SE Skagit Co.	yes	
Grandy Lake Campground	22	43200 Bake Lake Rd, Concrete	yes	
Hansen Creek Park	3	Hansen Creek, Sedro Woolley	yes	
Howard Miller Steelhead Park	110.5	52804 Rockport Park Rd, Rockport	yes	
Marblemount Community Club	2	SR 20, Marblemount	yes	
Moon Trailhead	30	SR9	yes	
Northern State Recreation Area	726	Helmick Rd, Sedro Woolley	yes	
Padilla Bay Shore Trail	6	11404 Bay View-Edison Rd, Mount Vernon	yes	
Pilchuck Forest	81	Near Centennial Trail, South Skagit Co.	yes	
Pomona Grange Park & Interpretive Trail	15	5625 Old Hwy 99 N. Rd, Burlington	yes	
Pressentin Park	78	60060 SR 20, Marblemount	yes	
Rexville Park	0.5	Between Mt. Vernon & La Conner	yes	
Rogers Park	10	E. College Way, West of 911 Center	yes	
Samish Beach Access	1	4645 Wharf St, Bow	yes	
Samish Island Park	2	10836 Halloran Rd, Samish Island, Bow	yes	
Sauk Campground	30	54569 Concrete-Sauk Valley Rd, Concrete	yes	
School House Park	4	5554 Edens Rd, Guemes Island, Anacortes	yes	



Facility	Acres	Location	County-Owned	Notes/Needs
Sharpe Park-Montgomery Duban Headlands	112	14692 Rosario Rd, Anacortes	yes	
Skagit Valley Playfields	30	2700 Martin Rd, Mount Vernon	yes	
Squires Lake Park & Trail	8	Old Hwy 99 N Rd (between Alger and S. Lake Samish Rd)	yes	
Swinomish Channel Boat Launch	3	SR 20 (under Berentson Bridge) Mt. Vernon	yes	
Tursi Trail Easement	2.5	South Fidalgo Island	no	
Young's Park	13	4243 Guemes Island Rd, Guemes Island, Anacortes	yes	
Total	0			

# Parks and Trails: Proposed Projects & Financing

All amounts are in thousands of dollars.

Project	Funding Source	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	Total
Misc. (Equipment)	Real Estate Excise Tax	200	10	10	10	10	10	250
	Grant Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Samish Island	Real Estate Excise Tax	25	5	5	5	5	5	50
Skagit Valley Playfields	Real Estate Excise Tax	200	10	10	10	10	10	250
	Grant Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clear Lake Beach	Real Estate Excise Tax	2.5	7.5	10	10	10	10	50
	Special Pathways	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Howard Miller Steelhead Park	Real Estate Excise Tax	200	100	100	100	100	100	700
	Special Pathways	10	25	25	25	25	25	135
	Real Estate Excise Tax	350	50	50	50	50	50	600
Northern State Recreation Area	Special Pathways	25	25	25	25	25	25	150
	Grant Funding	200	0	0	0	0	0	200
	Real Estate Excise Tax	30	30	30	30	30	30	180
System-wide Park Amenities & Infrastructure	Special Pathways	25	25	25	25	25	25	150
	Special Pathways	75	75	75	75	75	75	450
	Special Pathways	25	25	25	25	25	25	150
Cascade Trail	Real Estate Excise Tax	150	50	50	50	50	50	400
	Special Pathways	150	50	50	50	50	50	400
	Special pathways	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Highway 20 Trail	Real Estate Excise Tax	225	25	20	10	10	10	300
	Grant Funding	25	0	0	0	0	0	25
Pressentin Park	Real Estate Excise Tax	100	100	75	75	75	75	500
	Grant	25	25	25	25	25	25	300
Fairgrounds	Real Estate Excise Tax	200	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Impact Fees	0	5	5	5	5	5	25
Total								



Fairgrounds: Facilities Inventory

The County Fairgrounds, at 1410 Virginia Street in Mount Vernon, consists of 14 acres of various building types and sizes totaling almost 47,000 square feet.

Facility	Sq Ft	Notes/Needs
Building A	2100	
Building B	2345	
Building C	4800	
Building D	8400	
Building E	5400	
Building F	5400	
Building G	2700	
Pavilion/Arena	6000	
2 Pavilion Attachments	9400	
ADA Restrooms	220	
Restrooms	450	
Horse Barn 1	5700	
Horse Barn 2	5700	
Exotics Building	900	Needs structural integrity evaluation
Arena/Grandstands	48180	
Stage	1345	
Tent Buildings	5760	
Feline Barn	450	
Ticket Booths	400	
Total	116,862	All: inspect siding; check for structural issues



## Fairgrounds: Proposed Projects

### Fairgrounds

There are no new buildings anticipated for the fairground through 2023 unless funding becomes available to replace Building C. A long period of deferred maintenance has led to a lot of necessary work to keep the fair buildings and fairgrounds infrastructure operational. Roofs are being replaced, sewer lines are being repaired, water lines are being fixed, electrical poles are being exchanged, structural improvements are being made, and a variety of other projects are being implemented. This funding is coming from cash reserve accounts for the fairgrounds. Many of the Park improvements will come from a combination of real estate excise tax funds, cash reserve funds, and grants. None is anticipated from general funds.

## Capacity Analysis

### Parks

The practice of quantifying local levels of service to a national standard has not proven to be beneficial or justifiable by the National Recreation and Park Agency. 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 level of service standards. There are many other factors contributing to priorities/need in Skagit County. The Skagit County need assessments are extrapolated using public input, survey results, and staff knowledge of "use patterns", as well as level of service comparisons of other Washington State Counties. A combination of these 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 existing capacity and future needs. See the 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan for a more thorough discussion of park and recreation facility needs assessments.

Most projects on the capital list could be construed more as "maintenance" projects. Most of the Park projects taken up in the past few years are based on building and infrastructural failure. For instance, a failing cinder block building was removed from Clear Lake was replaced recently. Water and wastewater upgrades, electrical improvements, trail/roadway resurfacing, and other projects are generally prioritized by safety and health concerns. Other projects are occasionally prioritized by available resources, such as outside contributions of labor and/or funds. Projects can have a variety of funding sources, including real estate excise tax funds, special pathway funds, cash reserves, grants, partnership funds, volunteer labor, and other. We are in the process of exploring opportunities expanding our partnership with the Skagit Valley College to meet some of our needs, including the construction of shared facilities. These facilities may include maintenance and office buildings and playfields.

The existing park inventory, proposed capacity and non-capacity projects identified in the CFP will allow for improved park utilization and provide adequate total park capacity for the next six years.

### Fairgrounds

There are no standard national or regional levels of service recommended for fairgrounds.