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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Island County's Parks and Recreation Element was first adopted in 1998. Island County has grown since the last Parks, Recreation & Open Space (PROS) Plan was updated in 2016. The choices that confront Island County at the present time are significant and could alter the character and quality of open space, trail, and park facilities if not adequately planned.

Washington State's Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) requires the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan be updated at least every 6 years to qualify for certain state and federal park, open space, and trail grants. The Island County 2026-2036 PROS Plan update also provides the Parks & Recreation Element of Island County's Comprehensive Plan, which must be updated every 6-8 years for the County to qualify for utility, transportation, and community development grants and funds.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan identifies Island County's specific area of focus in managing parks and natural areas for recreation and conservation. It includes policies and strategies for making the best use of existing County resources, including partnering with other providers to ensure that parks and natural areas remain vital assets.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan synthesizes existing data from a variety of sources to create a County inventory of habitat and recreation lands. It incorporates public involvement findings that were used to identify a vision for County parks, recreation, and conservation that maintain the long-term health of the County and its residents.

Based on this vision, this Comprehensive Plan Element includes specific goals and policies for developing, protecting, and maintaining the Island County park system to address recreation and conservation needs in a fiscally-sound and sustainable manner. This Element provides the County a set of directions to concentrate efforts on core services and improve its land and facility management for current residents and future generations. In doing so, this Comprehensive Plan Element satisfies requirements of the State's Growth Management Act as specified in RCW 36.70A.070 and Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to update parks, recreation, and habitat conservation plans.

## PARKS & RECREATION GOALS

- 1 Provide a quality, diverse, and, sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs. Island County is dedicated to ensuring that outdoor experiences in natural environments are accessible to all, regardless of abilities.
- 2 Provide low impact ~~passive~~ outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County increasing access to parks near populated areas such as Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) while emphasizing those that have relatively low impact on the natural environment over others with higher impacts.
- 3 Increase public access to the County's beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.
- 4 ~~Acquire lands that~~ Protect and conserve priority habitat, ~~and~~ natural resources, preserve open space, ~~improve~~ beach access, and maintain island character. Where appropriate, acquire public access rights or title to lands to ~~and~~ improve and expand ~~passive~~ outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment including ADA facilities, wildlife viewpoints, beach access, trails, boat launchers, and other recreational improvements.
- 5 ~~Divest in parks lands that are not~~ conformance with the County's Comprehensive Plan and stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals ~~consistent with the County's area of focus.~~

(Continued on next page)

## PARKS & RECREATION GOALS (CONTINUED)

- 6** Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.
- 7** Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.
- 8** Foster partnerships and county-wide collaboration among park and habitat providers to improve the provision of habitat conservation and recreation services.
- 9** Engage Island County residents in the planning and stewardship of parks, trails, and conservation areas, and provide effective communication to improve awareness and support of County services.

### 7.1.1 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

This Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation Element integrates County efforts to provide recreation opportunities and conserve habitat and natural areas within the park land system. For this reason, many goals and policies noted in this Parks and Recreation Element are consistent with the County's Natural Resources Element. However, the content of this Element does not supersede the information in the Natural Resources Element, which addresses a different context than the parks system.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the Parks and Recreation Element to be consistent with the Capital Facilities Element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. This Element includes estimates of park and recreation demand for a 10-20-year period, an evaluation of facilities and service needs, and an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand. This Element is also consistent with other Elements of the County's Comprehensive Plan, including the Land Use Element, Shoreline Element, and the Critical Areas Ordinance.

To be consistent with other County planning documents, the Parks and Recreation Element utilizes data from the County's Non-Motorized Trails Plan (NMTDP) and Shoreline Master Program (SMP). The current update of the SMP provides direction on priority shoreline habitat for protection and acquisition, while the Parks and Recreation Element addresses recreation needs for beach and shoreline areas.

### 7.1.2 TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

This Parks and Recreation Element uses the following definitions throughout this Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

**Active (high impact) Recreation:** Activities and/or facilities that generally have a significant impact on the natural environment and/or significant disruption to the quality of the natural character (e.g. increased noise levels). Motorized recreational use (dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc.), ball fields, playgrounds and tennis courts are examples of active recreation.

**Habitat/Habitat Area:** The area or natural environment in which an animal, plant, or ecological community normally lives, grows, or is found.

**Natural Lands:** Any land area where preservation in its existing state would conserve or enhance natural, scenic, or cultural resources; protect surface water or groundwater supplies; promote the conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or other open spaces; enhance passive recreation opportunities; preserve historic sites; preserve working agricultural landscapes; or preserve visual quality or scenic vistas along transportation corridors.

**Outdoor Recreation:** Leisure activities (or the act of engaging in a leisure activity) that are typically associated with outdoor, natural, or semi-natural settings, such as a beach, forest, grassland, lake, mountain, wetland, or farmland. Hiking, boating, camping, horseback riding, bicycle riding, fishing, hunting, and nature interpretation are examples of outdoor recreation activities.

**Park Lands:** All the lands managed by Island County which are formally used for or dedicated to outdoor recreation and/or conservation including: 1) Parks; 2) Conservation Areas; and 3) Natural Recreation Areas, which can be overlapping terms.

- **Parks:** Any area that has been set aside or is managed for outdoor recreation purposes and, has associated built elements (e.g., boat ramps, picnic tables, playground equipment, or ballfields).
- **Conservation Areas:** Park lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation or environmental protection. Conservation Areas may include fish or wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge areas, significant ecosystems, ecologically critical areas, or agricultural or forest resource lands that may also support outdoor recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts.
- **Natural Recreation Areas:** Park lands that offer recreational opportunities in a natural setting but do not meet the definition of a Park or Conservation Area including beach access sites without built elements, off-leash dog parks, and forest areas with a greater focus on outdoor recreational use.

**Wildlife Corridor:** Connected habitats that link larger patches of habitat, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants, which may not always be linear. Connecting one habitat with another allows species to flow between larger habitat patches, interbreed, genetically mix, and access food and other resources. RCW 36.70A.160 requires identification of open space corridors, that may overlap with wildlife corridors.

## 7.2 EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

Island County is one of multiple jurisdictions and agencies responsible for managing parks and habitat in the County. To understand the role that Island County plays in providing recreation and conservation services, this section describes the planning area, the jurisdictions involved in park and habitat management, and Island County's park, facility, and habitat inventory.

### 7.2.1 JURISDICTIONS INVOLVED IN PARK/HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Island County parks planning requires an understanding of jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities. The land management jurisdictions defined in 7.2.1 illustrate the context within which Island County operates.

#### 7.2.1.0.1 *Federal*

The United States Navy (USN) and the National Park Service (NPS) are involved in managing parks and habitat lands in the County. The Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) on Whidbey Island protect natural acreage and provides recreation opportunities. Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (Ebey's Reserve) in Central Whidbey Island, is managed as a partnership; that includes the NPS that owns and manages approximately 400 acres within Ebey's Reserve.

#### 7.2.1.0.2 *State*

The State of Washington supports recreation and habitat conservation through the efforts of several agencies including Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Fish & Wildlife (WDFW). Washington State Parks operates 9 state parks in Island County including: Deception Pass, Joseph Whidbey, Fort Ebey, Ebey's Landing, Fort Casey, Possession Point, and South Whidbey on Whidbey Island and Cama Beach and Camano Island Park on Camano Island. The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) manages fishing and shellfish harvest areas. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns forest lands but does not currently manage any commercial forest land in Island County. DNR does help manage the Naas Natural Area Preserve and maintains some conservation easements and the water around Smith and Minor Island as an aquatic reserve.

#### 7.2.1.0.3 *Cities and Towns*

Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville also provide parks and natural areas on Whidbey Island. Island County's largest city, Oak Harbor, has the most park land inventory, Langley and the Town of Coupeville have several small parks and natural areas

#### 7.2.1.0.4 *Park Districts*

North Whidbey Park & Recreation District (NWPRD) manages and operates the John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool and the Clover Valley Park. South Whidbey Park & Recreation District (SWPRD) manages the Community Park & Sports Complex, Deer Lake, Lone Lake and Goss Lake public beaches, and the Trustland Trails.

#### 7.2.1.0.5 *Port Authorities*

The Port of Coupeville operates the Coupeville Wharf and owns Greenbank Farm. The Port of South Whidbey provides several parks, waterfront sites, and a marina. The Port of Mabana does not own park land or operate facilities.

#### 7.2.1.0.6 *School Districts*

The Coupeville, Oak Harbor, South Whidbey, and Stanwood 205 School Districts each provide recreation and play facilities at local schools.

#### 7.2.1.0.7 *Non-Profits*

The Nature Conservancy owns a large parcel of protected land in Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve which includes trails and natural bluff lands. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) acquires land and conservation easements through donation and purchase to protect coastal areas, wetlands and streams, wildlife habitat, working farmlands, scenic vistas, natural areas, and trails. The Land Trust then provides ongoing stewardship on its lands, or in some cases, transfers ownership to other jurisdictions, such as Island County, with a conservation easement in place to restrict future use.

### 7.2.2 PARK AND HABITAT INVENTORY

Island County's composite open space, trails, and parks inventory includes 220 sites comprising 10,356 acres owned by Island County Parks and Public Works, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Langley, Washington State Parks & Recreation, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), NAS Whidbey, North and South Whidbey Park & Recreation Districts, Ports of Coupeville, South Whidbey, and Mabana, Oak Harbor, Coupeville, South Whidbey, and Stanwood/Camano Island School Districts, and nonprofit land trusts.

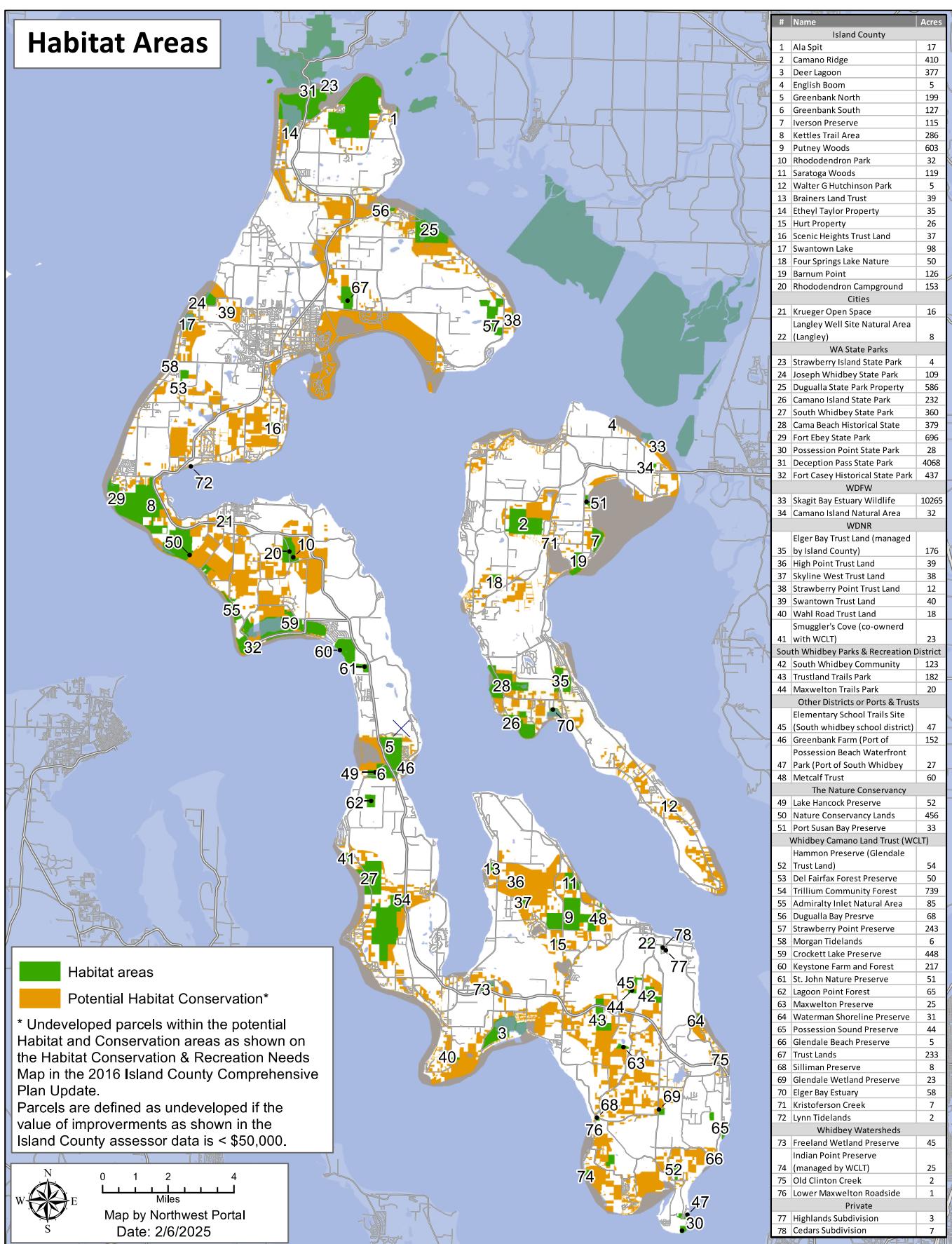
**Table 7-1 Parks and habitat land inventory**

Island County	Sites	Acres	%
Parks Department	50	2,663.8	25.7%
Public Works	7	735.2	7.1%
Unassigned	40	289.2	2.8%
Other non-parks	6	53.4	0.5%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>3,741.6</b>	<b>36.1%</b>
Towns and cities			
Coupeville	10	29.8	0.3%
Langley	15	24.9	0.2%

Oak Harbor	28	160.4	1.5%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>215.1</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
School Districts			
Coupeville	6	50.2	0.5%
Oak Harbor	8	160.4	1.5%
South Whidbey	7	190.7	1.8%
Stanwood-Camano	1	19.9	0.2%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>421.2</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
Other jurisdictions			
Federal	2	44.4	0.4%
State	23	4,787.3	46.2%
Port Authorities	7	229.4	2.2%
Park & Rec Districts	3	300.0	2.9%
Nonprofits/private	7	617.2	6.0%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5,978.1</b>	<b>57.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>10,356.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

State agencies, including Washington State Parks & Recreation, DNR, WDFW own 46.2% of the inventory followed by Island County Parks, Public Works, and unassigned with 36.1%. Towns and cities only own 2.1% and all school districts only 4.1% of the composite inventory.

Consequently, state and county agencies combined provide 82.3% of all open space and park assets and thereby affect most of the open space and park opportunities of interest to county residents and tourists.



**Table 7-2 Existing habitat area acreage by jurisdiction** (also see list in the map legend to easily find the location of each of these sites.)

1	Ala Spit	17
2	Camano Ridge	410
3	Deer Lagoon	377
4	English Boom	5
5	Greenbank North	199
6	Greenbank South	127
7	Iverson Preserve	115
8	Kettles Trail Area	286
9	Putney Woods	603
10	Rhododendron Park	32
11	Saratoga Woods	119
12	Walter G Hutchinson Park	5
13	Brainers Land Trust	39
14	Ethel Taylor Property	35
15	Hurt Property	26
16	Scenic Heights Land Trust	37
17	Swantown Lake	98
18	Four Springs Lake Nature	50
19	Barnum Point	126
20	Rhododendron Campground	153
<b>Island County</b>		<b>2,859</b>
21	Krueger Open Space	16
22	Langley Well Site Natural Area	8
<b>Cities</b>		<b>24</b>
23	Strawberry Island State Park	4
24	Joseph Whidbey State Park	109
25	Dugualla State Park Property	586
26	Camano Island State Park	232
27	South Whidbey State Park	360
28	Cama Beach Historical Site	379
29	Fort Ebey State Park	696
30	Possession Point State Park	28
31	Deception Pass State Park	4,068
32	Fort Casey Historical State Park	437
<b>Washington State Parks</b>		<b>6,889</b>
33	Skagit Bay Estuary Wildlife	10,265
34	Camano Island Natural Area	32
<b>WA Dept Fish &amp; Wildlife (WDFW)</b>		<b>10,297</b>
35	Elger Bay Trust Land (1)	176
36	High Point Trust Land	39
37	Skyline West Trust Land	38
38	Strawberry Point Trust Land	12
39	Swantown Trust Land	40

40	Wahl Road Trust Land	18
41	Smuggler's Cove (2)	23
	<b>WA Dept Natural Resources (DNR)</b>	<b>346</b>
42	South Whidbey Community	123
43	Trustland Trails Park	182
44	Maxwelton Trails Park	20
	<b>Whidbey Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>325</b>
45	Elementary School Trails Site (3)	47
46	Greenbank Farm	152
47	Possession Beach Waterfront Park (4)	27
48	Metcalf Trust	60
	<b>Ports and land trust</b>	<b>286</b>
49	Lake Hancock Preserve	52
50	Nature Conservancy Lands	456
51	Port Susan Bay Preserve	33
	<b>Nature Conservancy</b>	<b>541</b>
52	Hammon Preserve (5)	54
53	Del Fairfax Forest Preserve	50
54	Trillium Community Forest	739
55	Admiralty Inlet Natural Area	85
56	Dugualla Bay Preserve	68
57	Strawberry Point Preserve	243
58	Morgan Tidelands	6
59	Crockett Lake Preserve	448
60	Keystone Farm and Forest	217
61	St John Nature Preserve	51
62	Lagoon Point Forest	65
63	Maxwelton Preserve	25
64	Waterman Shoreline Preserve	31
65	Possession Sound Preserve	44
66	Glendale Beach Preserve	5
67	Trust Lands	233
68	Silliman Preserve	8
69	Glendale Wetland Preserve	23
70	Elger Bay Estuary	58
71	Kristoferson Creek	7
72	Lynn Tidelands	2
73	Keystone Lake Preserve	<u>216</u>
	<b>Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)</b>	<b>2,462</b>
74	Freeland Wetland Preserve	45
75	Indian Point Preserve (6)	25
76	Old Clinton Creek	2
77	Lower Maxwelton Roadside	1
	<b>Whidbey watersheds</b>	<b>73</b>
78	Highlands Subdivision	3
79	Cedars Subdivision	7
	<b>Private parks</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24,122</b>
	(1) Managed by Island County	

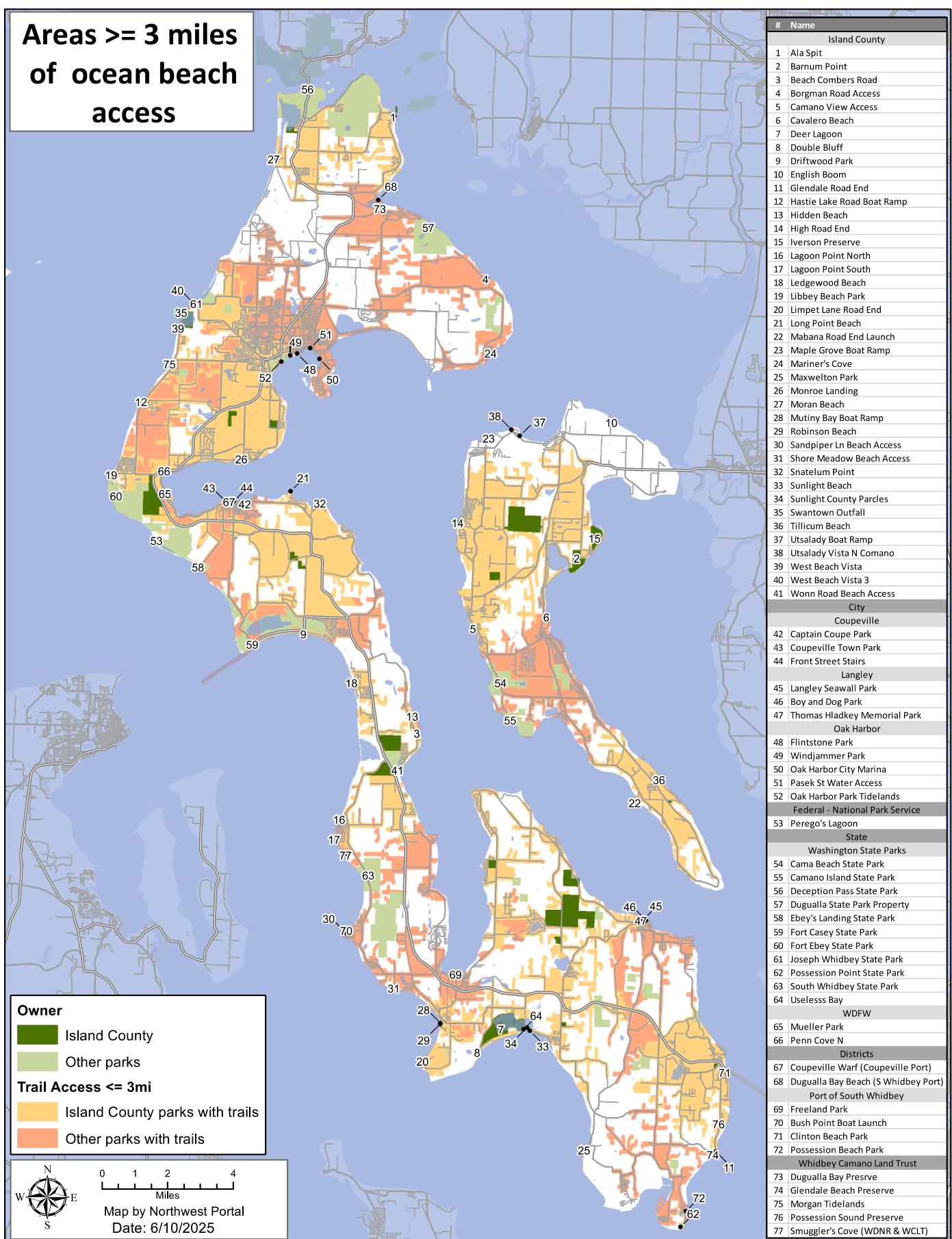
- (2) Co-owned with WCLT
- (3) South Whidbey School District
- (4) Port of South Whidbey
- (5) Glendale Trust Land
- (6) Managed by WCLT

All agencies combined own 78 sites that provide 24,122 acres of habitat of which the largest holdings are by the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) of 2 sites for 10,297 acres or 42.7% primarily due to the 10,265-acre holding for the Skagit Bay Estuary, followed by Washington State Parks of 10 sites for 6,899 acres or 28.6% due also to the 4,068-acre holdings for Deception Pass State Park.

Island County owns 20 sites for 2,859 acres or 11.9% and the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) 21 sites for 2,462 acres or 10.2% of the total.

While all agencies own a large habitat inventory, there remain significant habitat lands in the county that are not protected especially in north, central, and south Whidbey Island.

## Areas >= 3 miles of ocean beach access



## 7 Parks & Recreation > Existing Park System

**Table 7-3 Waterfront beach acreage and sites by jurisdiction (also see list in the map legend to easily find site locations.)**

<b>Island County</b>	<b>580.8 - 41</b>
1 Ala Spit	16.7
2 Barnum Point	24.5
3 Beach Combers Road	1.1
4 Borgman Road Access	0.1
5 Camano View Access	0.3
6 Cavalero Beach	0.6
7 Deer Lagoon	377.6
8 Double Bluff	2.7
9 Driftwood Park	0.7
10 English Boom	5.2
11 Glendale Road End	0.2
12 Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp	0.1
13 Hidden Beach	0.6
14 High Road End	0.1
15 Iverson Preserve	115.1
16 Lagoon Point North	0.3
17 Lagoon Point South	0.3
18 Ledgewood Beach	0.6
19 Libbey Beach Park	2.7
20 Limpet Land Road End	0.1
21 Long Point Beach	1.7
22 Mabana Road End Launch	0.1
23 Maple Grove Boat Ramp	0.8
24 Mariner's Cove	0.5
25 Maxwelton Park	20.0
26 Monroe Landing	0.4
27 Moran Beach	0.4
28 Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	0.1
29 Robinson Beach	1.3
30 Sandpiper Lane Beach Access	0.2
31 Shore Meadow Beach Access	0.1
32 Snatelum Point	0.5
33 Sunlight Beach	0.4
34 Sunlight County Parcels	0.1
35 Swantown Outfall	0.2
36 Tillicum Beach	0.2
37 Utsalady Boat Ramp	1.5
38 Utsalady Vista North Camano	0.2
39 West Beach Vista	2.0
40 West Beach Vista 3	0.1
41 Wonn Road Beach Access	0.4

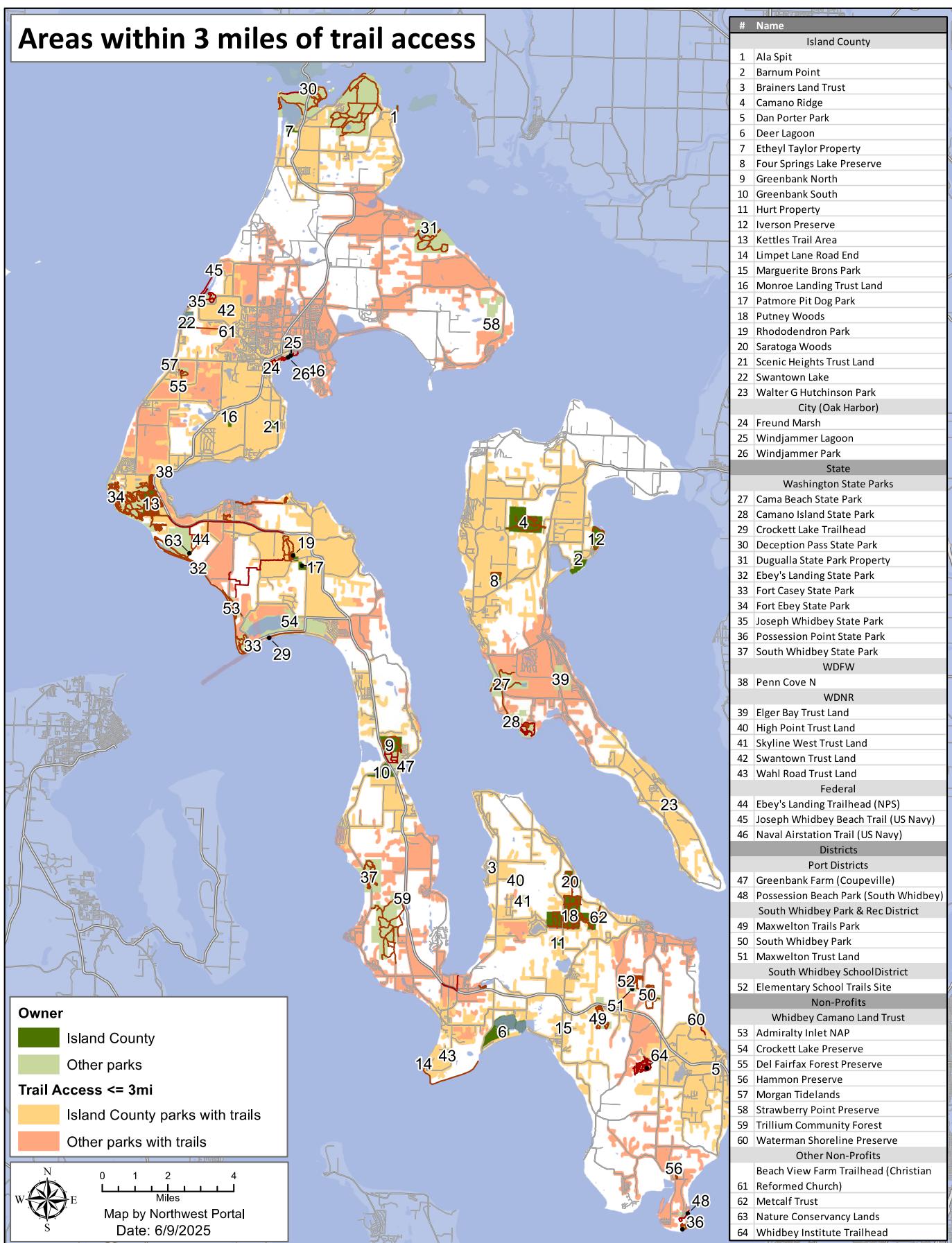
<b>Towns and cities</b>	<b>123.4-11</b>
42 Captain Coupe Park	1.9
43 Coupeville Town Park	3.6
44 Front Street Stairs	0.1
45 Langley Seawall Park	0.7
46 Boy and Dog Park	0.7
47 Thomas Hladkey Memorial Pk	0.0
48 Flintstone Park	20.5
49 Windjammer Park	33.2
50 Oak Harbor City Marina	33.8
51 Pasek Street Water Access	0.4
52 Oak Harbor Park Tidelands	28.5
<b>State and Federal</b>	<b>7,503.9 - 14</b>
53 Perego's Lagoon	17.9
54 Cama Beach State Park	379.0
55 Camano Island State Park	232.0
56 Deception Pass State Park	4,068.0
57 Dugualla State Park Property	586.0
58 Ebey's Landing State Park	28.9
59 Fort Casey State Park	437.0
60 Fort Ebey State Park	696.0
61 Joseph Whidbey State Park	109.0
62 Possession Point State Park	28.0
63 South Whidbey State Park	360.0
64 Useless Bay	560.0
65 Mueller Park	0.5
66 Penn Cove North	1.6
<b>Park &amp; Rec Districts and Ports</b>	<b>33.6 - 6</b>
67 Coupeville Wharf	0.3
68 Dugualla Bay Beach	1.9
69 Freeland Park	3.1
70 Bush Point Boat Launch	1.5
71 Clinton Beach Park	0.6
72 Possession Beach Park	26.2
<b>Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)</b>	<b>385.8 - 6</b>
73 Dugualla Bay Preserve	68.0
74 Glendale Beach Preserve	40.6
75 Morgan Tidelands	6.0
76 Possession Sound Preserve	44.0
77 Smuggler's Cove (1)	11.2
78 Keystone Preserve	216.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,627.5 - 78</b>

Acreage includes site areas not on the waterfront.

## (1) Co-owned with Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT)

All agencies combined own 77 waterfront sites of which 41 sites or 53.2% are owned by Island County, 11 sites or 14.3% by towns and cities, 14 sites or 18.1% by state and federal agencies, 6 sites or 7.8% by park and recreation districts and ports, and 5 sites or 6.5% by the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT).

While all agencies own a large inventory of waterfront access sites, there remain significant shorelines in the county that are beyond a 3-mile walk/drive zone especially in south Whidbey Island.



**Table 7-4 Trail miles by jurisdiction (see list in the map legend for trail locations)****Island County**

1	Ala Spit	0.5
2	Barnum Point	N/A
3	Brainers Land Trust	N/A
4	Camano Ridge	3.9
5	Dan Porter Park	Na
6	Deer Lagoon	Na
7	Etheyl Taylor Property	Na
8	Four Springs Lake Preserve	1.6
9	Greenbank North	3.1
10	Greenbank South	N/A
11	Hurt Property	N/A
12	Iverson Preserve	1.7
13	Kettles Trail Area	12.6
14	Limpet Lane Road End	N/A
15	Marguerite Brons Park	N/A
16	Monroe Landing Trust	N/A
17	Patmore Pit Dog Park	N/A
18	Putney Woods	13.4
19	Rhododendron Park	3.4
20	Saratoga Woods	4.2
21	Scenic Heights Trust Land	N/A
22	Swantown Lake	0.4
23	Walter G Hutchinson Park	N/A
<b>Island County total</b>		<b>44.8</b>

**Towns and cities**

24	Freund Marsh	1.0
25	Windjammer Lagoon	0.8
26	Windjammer Park	3.0

**Towns and cities total** **4.8****State and federal**

27	Cama Beach State Park	15.0
28	Camano Island State Park	4.5
29	Crockett Lake Trailhead	1.2
30	Deception Pass State Park (3)	22.6
31	Dugualla State Park Property	4.3
32	Ebey's Landing State Park	1.7
33	Fort Casey State Park	2.6
34	Fort Ebey State Park (2)	28.0
35	Joseph Whidbey State Park	5.5
36	Possession Point State Park	0.9
37	South Whidbey State Park	5.1
38	Penn Cove North	N/A
39	Elger Bay Trust Land	N/A

40	High Point Trust Land	N/A
41	Skyline West Trust Land	N/A
42	Swantown Trust Land	N/A
43	Wahl Road Trust Land	N/A
44	Ebey's Landing Trailhead	N/A
45	Joseph Whidbey Beach Trail	1.0
46	Naval Airstation Trail	0.6
<b>State and federal total</b>		<b>92.4</b>
<b>Park &amp; Rec Districts &amp; Ports</b>		
47	Greenbank Farm	1.9
48	Possession Beach Park	0.8
50	South Whidbey Park	3.6
51	Maxwelton Trust Land	3.2
52	Elementary School Trails Site	3.8
<b>Park &amp; Rec Districts &amp; Ports total</b>		<b>13.3</b>
<b>Nonprofits</b>		
53	Admiralty Inlet NAP	2.3
54	Crockett Lake Preserve	N/A
55	Del Fairfax Forest Preserve	1.0
56	Hammon Preserve	0.3
57	Morgan Tidelands	0.5
58	Strawberry Point Preserve	1.6
59	Trillium Community Forest	7.0
60	Waterman Shoreline Preserve	N/A
61	Beach View Farm Trailhead (1)	N/A
62	Metcalf Trust	1.3
63	Nature Conservancy Lands	5.8
64	Whidbey Institute Trailhead	5.8
<b>Nonprofits total</b>		<b>25.6</b>
65	Oak Harbor Waterfront Trail	3.0
66	Coupeville/SR-20 Trail	5.1
<b>Off-road multipurpose total</b>		<b>8.1</b>
<b>All total</b>		<b>189.0</b>

All agencies combined own approximately 189.0 miles of hike, bike, and horse trails of which 44.8 miles or 23.3% are owned by Island County, 4.8 miles or 2.5% by towns and cities, 92.4 miles or 48.5% by state and federal agencies, 13.3 miles or 6.9% by park and recreation districts and ports, 25.6 miles or 14.5% by nonprofits, and 8.1 miles or 4.2% or off-road.

While all agencies own a large inventory of park trails, there remain significant areas in the county that are beyond a 10-minute walk/drive zone.

### 7.2.2.1 COUNTY LAND BY DEPARTMENT

Island County manages 3,741.6 acres of park land most of which is managed by the Parks Department or Public Works, including 289.2 acres of open space properties held as potential parks or habitat areas, but currently not assigned to a particular department for management.

- The Island County Parks Department, a division of the Public Works Department, is responsible for more than half of the acreage associated with Parks and Habitat Conservation Areas in Island County (1,800 acres).
- Through other divisions, the Public Works Department manages more than 930 acres, including Deer Lagoon, North and South Greenbank Farm, the Kettles Trail System, and a few beach access sites.
- Island County also owns or holds 289.2 acres (44 parcels) that are not assigned to a particular department or division for management. These unassigned sites include wetlands, remnant prairies, beach access, and a number of tax-title lands.
- As special maintenance areas, the Parks Department co-owns with the Port of South Whidbey 3 sites through inter-local agreements including a section of Freeland Park, a section of Maxwelton Park, and Robinson Bay (Boat ramps owned by South Whidbey but maintained by Island County Parks Department).
- Through long-term lease agreements, Island County manages over 330 acres of School Trust Lands owned by the Washington State DNR that include Elger Bay Preserve, High Point Trust land, Strawberry Point Trust Land, Swantown Trust Land, Skyline West Trust Land, Smuggler's Cove Trust Land, and Wahl Road Trust Land.

### 7.2.3 BENCHMARKS

The **National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) Areas and Facilities Standards** has not been updated in more than 20 years and will never again be updated because there is not a single set of standards for parks and recreation that could encompass the uniqueness found in every park agency. Park agencies vary greatly by size, needs and desires; as should a park and recreation agency's offerings. To have the same standard for a community in Washington, Alaska, Kansas, and south Florida is unrealistic, impractical, and potentially detrimental.

Nearly a decade ago, NRPA replaced the single set of standards with a nationwide benchmarking tool for parks and recreation. **NRPA Park Metrics** is the most comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for park and recreation agencies. Each spring, NRPA publishes **NRPA Agency Performance Review**, an annual report summarizing the benchmarking data contributed by nearly 1,100 park and recreation agencies to the **Park Metrics** database.

The report presents the “typical” (median) nationwide benchmarking numbers based on peer agency data and the limitations of the former one-size-fits-all set of standards. For example, in the **2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review**: the typical park and recreation agency has 1 park per 2,386 residents. The report, however, indicates significant variation in the metric when the size of the jurisdiction being served by the agency is taken into consideration.

For example, jurisdictions of less than 20,000 residents have a median of 1 park for every 1,172 residents, but agencies serving more than 250,000 residents have a park for every 6,120 people served. In addition, the benchmark data within **NRPA Park Metrics** and the **2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review** break down to the lower (25%) and upper (75%) quartiles.

For example, the ratio of parks per persons for Island County’s 2025 population of 86,267 persons, or within the 50,000-99,999-peer agency population comparison, would be a median of 1 park per 2,346 persons but ranges from 1 park per 1,489 persons in the lower quartile to 1 park per 4,048 persons in the upper quartile.

There is no one-size-fits all solution for maintaining and improving a park and recreation agency. The **2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review** does not provide “standards”, but an informative evidence-based guideline. Factors such as jurisdiction population, the unique needs of each community and funding all play a major role in how an agency operates.

#### 7.2.3.2.1 *Benchmark comparisons*

The following benchmark comparisons are for the low, median, and upper quartiles for park agencies of 50,000-99,000 population since Island County’s 2025 population of 86,267 is projected to increase to 102,639 by 2045. (Note – the next peer agency comparison is for 100,000-249,999 considerably above Island County’s projected population.).

#### 7.2.3.2.2 *Residents per park*

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	1,489	2,346	4,048
<b>PROS ratios year:</b>		<b>2025</b>	<b>2045</b>
Island County		838	996
All agencies		392	467

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 103 parks and open spaces or 1 park per 838 persons and all park agencies combined including the county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits provide 220 parks and open spaces or 1 park per 392 persons, considerably above the ratio typical of peer agencies with 50,000-99,999 population.

If Island County does not acquire more parks by 2045 the ratio of residents per park will be 996 persons and for all agencies combined 467 residents per park which remains considerably above peer agency ratios.

Island County does not need more park property to accommodate resident needs though a considerable portion of the park inventory will be used by tourist, or non-resident interests and users.

#### 7.2.3.2.3 *Acres of parkland per 1,000 population*

“Parkland” includes maintained parks and accessible open space areas which does not include conservation easements.

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	4.8	10.2	17.4
<b>PROS ratios year:</b>		<b>2025</b>	<b>2045</b>
Island County		43.3	36.5
All agencies		120.0	100.9

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 3,741.6 acres of parklands or 43.3 acres per 1,000 residents while all park agencies combined provide 10,356.0 acres or 120.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

If Island County does not acquire more parklands by 2045 the ratio of parkland per 1,000 residents will be 36.5 acres per 1,000 residents and all agencies combined 100.9 acres per 1,000 residents which remains considerably above peer agency ratios.

Island County does not need more parkland but rather a diversification of activities on existing parks and properties.

#### 7.2.3.2.4 *Acres of conservation easements per 1,000 population*

Conservation easements include purchased or agreements on privately-owned lands to protect wildlife habitat, farmlands, or forests from development. NRPA does not calculate ratios for conservation easements.

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	na	na	na
<b>PROS ratios year:</b>		<b>2025</b>	<b>2045</b>
Island County		23.5	19.8
All agencies		38.0	31.9

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

Island County currently provides 2,023.0 acres of conservation easements or 23.5 acres per 1,000 residents while all park agencies combined provide 3,278.40 acres or 38.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

If Island County does not acquire more conservation easements by 2045 the ratio per 1,000 residents will be 19.8 acres per 1,000 residents and for all agencies combined 31.9 acres per 1,000 residents.

However, there are significant unprotected wildlife, farm, and forest acreage that needs protection from development that Island County should pursue in concert with cities, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

#### 7.2.3.2.5 Miles of trail

	Lower	Median	Upper
NRPA benchmark	8.0	18.1	37.0
<b>PROS miles year:</b>		<b>2025</b>	<b>2045</b>
<b>Island County</b>		<b>44.8</b>	
<b>All agencies</b>		<b>189.0</b>	

The inventory includes publicly accessible county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits. Not all trails have been inventoried in mile.

Island County amenities	Island County	All agencies
Beach access	24	35
Hand carry launch site	2	6
Boat ramp	10	25
Dock/pier	2	4
Campground	1	7
Tent and RV campsites	15	611
Kayak overnight campsite	1	7
Bike overnight campsite		8
Dog park/off-leash areas	5	7
Community garden		3
Picnic facility	25	70
Playground	5	45
Basketball court	0.5	10
Volleyball court	1	6
Tennis court	2	26
Pickleball court	6	7
Disc golf		1
Baseball field	6	33
Soccer field		29
Football field		5
Track		4
Exercise course		3
Skateboard park		3
Pump track		2
Outdoor event space	2	7
Meeting facility	7	16
Swimming pool		2

7.2.3.2.6 *Amenity benchmarks per median number of residents*

	%	Median	2025
Beach access	*	*	2,464
Hand carry launch site	*	*	14,377
Boat ramp	*	*	3,450
Dock/pier	*	*	21,566
Campground	*	*	12,323
Tent, RV campsites	*	*	136
Kayak campsite	*	*	12,323
Bike campsite	*	*	10,783
Dog park/off-leash areas	68%	55,135	12,323
Community garden	52%	56,150	28,755
Picnic facility	*	*	1,232
Playground	93%	3,707	1,917
Basketball court	84%	8,363	8,626
Volleyball court	23%	26,612	14,377
Tennis court	72%	5,865	3,317
Pickleball court	42%	10,500	12,323
Disc golf	20%	58,603	86,267
Baseball field	85%	3,675	2,614
Soccer field	83%	4,070	2,974
Football field	*	*	17,253
Track	*	*	21,566
Exercise course	22%	35,000	28,755
Skateboard park	46%	60,904	28,755
Pump track	*	*	43,133
Outdoor event space	40%	59,000	12,323
Meeting facility	59%	52,000	5,391
Swimming pool	49%	46,353	43,133

**Inventory includes publicly accessible** county, cities, school districts, federal, state, port, park and recreation districts, and nonprofits.

\* **2024 NRPA Agency Performance Review** does not include benchmark or percent provided by comparable agencies.

Island County's combined agencies provide more recreational facilities per residents than comparable agencies in the 50,000-99,000-population range for all activities except disc golf where NRPA identifies benchmarks. While the inventory does not identify the quality of the facilities, there is nonetheless enough recreational facilities to service the existing Island County population.

NRPA does not provide benchmarks for beach, hand carry, boating, camping, or picnicking facilities. Given the extensive state park system in the county, however, there should be more than enough to satisfy county resident interests.

#### 7.2.3.2.7 *Island County proposed amenities 2025-2045 to existing parks*

Island County Parks and Public Works currently provides an extensive network of beach and fishing access sites, hand carry and boat launch ramps, park hike, bike, and horse trails, off-leash areas and dog parks, picnic facilities, a small number of courts and fields, 2 outdoor event spaces, and 7 meeting facilities.

	2025	2045
Beach access	24	25
Hand carry launch site	2	4
Boat ramp	10	10
Dock/pier	2	2
Kayak overnight camp	0	1
Campsites	15	15
Hiking trail in park	22	25
Biking trail in park	6	6
Horse trail in park	5	6
Dog park/off-leash	5	6
Picnic facility	25	38
Playground	5	6
Basketball court	0.5	0.5
Volleyball court	1	1
Tennis court	2	2
Pickleball court	6	15
Baseball field	6	6
Soccer field	0	1
Skateboard park	0	0
Pump track	0	3
Outdoor event space	2	2
Meeting facility	7	7

This PROS Plan update proposes to add 1 beach access site, 2 hand carry boat launch ramps, 3 park hike, 1 bike, and 1 horse trails, 1 dog park, 13 picnic facilities, 1 playground, 9 pickleball courts, 1 soccer field, and 3 pump tracks to existing parks to realize opportunities to improve and diversify Island County parks.

The county may acquire through purchase or easement additional lands of opportunity containing habitat, beach, or trail connections outlined in the preceding.

## 7.2.4 EXISTING COUNTY HABITAT

All County parks protect habitat, although the amount varies greatly from site to site. Habitat types were identified using the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Northwest Regional Gap Analysis data.

The USGS Northwest Regional Gap Analysis uses remote sensing data from satellite and aerial images to identify different types of land cover in the Pacific Northwest. Although the usefulness of this data for smaller parcels is limited, the data can be used to make generalized conclusions regarding the types of habitats protected in Island County.

The data identifies 25 habitat types in Island County. Working with the Land Trust, the Project Management Team grouped these habitat types into 7 categories, as shown in Table 7-6.

Table 7-6. Island County Habitats

Department	# of Sites
Water	• Open Water
Developed Parkland	• Developed, Open Space • Developed, Low Intensity • Developed, High Intensity
Farmland	• Pasture/Hay • Cultivated Cropland
Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	• Unconsolidated Shore • Temperate Pacific Intertidal Mudflat • North Pacific Montane Massive Bedrock, Cliff and Talus • North Pacific Maritime Coastal Sand Dune and Strand • North Pacific Hypermaritime Shrub/Herbaceous Headland • North Pacific Maritime Eelgrass Bed • Temperate Pacific Tidal Salt and Brackish Marsh
Forest	• North Pacific Maritime/Douglas-fir/Western Hemlock Forest • North Pacific Broadleaf Landslide Forest and Shrubland • North Pacific Lowland Riparian Forest and Shrubland • Harvested forest-regeneration
Freshwater Habitat	• North Pacific Shrub Swamp • North Pacific Intertidal Freshwater Wetland • Temperate Pacific Freshwater Emergent Marsh • North Pacific Bog and Fen • North Pacific Hardwood-Conifer Swamp
Prairie & Oak Woodlands	"• North Pacific Herbaceous Bald and Bluff • Willamette Valley Upland Prairie and Savannah • North Pacific Oak Woodland"

Approximately 75% of the County's park acreage is forested, 14% is shoreline or tidal habitat areas; 3% is freshwater habitat, and 1% is farmland. In total, approximately 98% of the Island County park system is characterized by natural land covers and habitat. Developed parkland accounts for just over 3% of the park and habitat system.

## 7.3 COUNTY AREA OF FOCUS

Using findings from public involvement activities conducted as part of the PROS planning process, the following vision, mission, and area of focus are defined for the Parks Department that are consistent with community priorities for recreation and habitat conservation.

### 7.3.1.1 VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS

**Island County envisions an interconnected system of park lands that provide the best recreation, conservation, and sustainability in the state.**

**Through focused investment, site design, park development, maintenance, and stewardship, Island County Parks will provide outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting priority habitats to support the long-term health and well-being of county residents, the economy, and natural resources.**

- **Sustainability:** We value efficient and effective management and stewardship of natural resources and County park lands to sustain such lands for current and future generations.
- **Quality of Life:** We value the role that park lands play in supporting the long-term health, well-being, and safety of county residents, economy, and natural resources.
- **Recreation:** We value healthy opportunities for outdoor play and relaxation, supported through the provision of accessible park lands, trails, shorelines, natural areas, and outdoor recreation facilities.
- **Habitat Conservation:** We value maintaining and protecting the integrity of Whidbey and Camano Island's significant natural areas.
- **Long-Term Success:** We value vibrant thriving park lands and will strive for excellence in County efforts to create a better future for Island County residents.

### 7.3.2 AREA OF FOCUS

Residents and visitors to Island County have many different needs and desires associated with parks, recreation facilities, trails, and habitat areas. Given limited resources, Island County cannot meet all these needs. Island County Parks Department has defined a specific area of focus within the context of other agencies and groups who provide recreation opportunities and habitat conservation areas on one or both islands.

Island County will provide habitat and outdoor recreation, reflecting a desire to protect habitat and meet outdoor recreation needs. Island County will take a balanced approach toward addressing outdoor recreation and habitat conservation priorities that will require conscientious acquisition, design, development, maintenance, and stewardship of parks to protect critical areas from development while supporting recreation opportunities. Individual areas may be focused on habitat conservation, recreation, or both, according to the County's area of focus.

Figure 7-1. The County's Area of Focus



Island County will focus its resources on providing outdoor recreation opportunities that are compatible with habitat conservation goals. Island County Parks will phase out its interest in the following by encouraging other recreation and habitat providers to address these types of needs:

**Traditional Recreation:** Island County Parks will phase out investments in traditional recreation opportunities, such as those found at Dan Porter, Dave Mackie, the Rhododendron ball fields, and Camano Park, by finding other providers to assume responsibility for the properties who will operate more effectively for public use. The County will limit any new facilities that support active, organized, or indoor recreational opportunities, such as sports fields, basketball, tennis courts, skate parks, community centers, swimming pools, etc. However, the County will maintain the current facilities until other providers can meet these needs, should the community desire these types of opportunities.

**Conservation Areas with no Recreational Uses:** Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation purposes but may provide outdoor recreational uses that are secondary to and do not conflict with conservation values. The Island County Parks Department will only invest in lands that both protect habitat and provide for outdoor recreational opportunities. Other Island County departments may continue to protect Conservation Area lands (as provided for in the Natural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan) that are not appropriate for recreational uses.

### 7.3.2.1 PARK DEVELOPMENT

In areas that are suitable for outdoor recreation, Island County will support facilities that provide self-directed outdoor activities such as walking, biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, camping, boating, clamming, hunting, swimming and beach activities, and picnicking. The County will avoid active park uses that could damage natural resources and will limit temporary, higher intensity activities (such as large group gatherings) to appropriate sites.

The types of outdoor recreation facilities that are consistent with the County's area of focus and provide a general overview of major considerations for site selection include:

- Appropriate Amenities and Facilities: Amenities and facilities are consistent with the County's area of focus. The County may develop parks with any of these amenities unless a site-specific design or resource protection issue makes that amenity impractical or undesirable for a particular site.

- Amenities and Facilities to Consider: Facilities that are consistent with the County's area of focus, but, because of their greater impact, should be carefully planned and considered before development.
- Amenities and Facilities to Avoid: Those that are not consistent with Island County's area of focus and should not be included in County park development.

While not a comprehensive list of allowable or unpermitted uses, regarding the County's area of focus site characteristics and habitat needs will affect facility location, design, and development.

The County's area of focus reinforces and refines the current direction for park and habitat planning, based on community desires, existing resources, and current management strategies. Most, but not all facilities and sites within the County's existing inventory, reflect this area of focus. However, some changes in land and facility management, maintenance, and operations will be necessary to ensure best practices according to the habitat and outdoor recreation provider area of focus. Table 7-11 provides an overview of these management and operation considerations.

## 7.4 HABITAT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION NEEDS

A 'Community Needs Assessment' was conducted to identify outdoor recreation and conservation needs in Island County that enhance the County's area of focus. This assessment included identification of habitat conservation criteria, a GIS analysis to assess where opportunities are needed for two key County outdoor recreation focuses, and a discussion of needs for additional outdoor recreation opportunities that support the County's area of focus. This section summarizes the methodology and findings of the Community Needs Assessment. The criteria and map will be used, in conjunction with the map of existing open space (map 6E), to analyze and prioritize future potential acquisitions.

### 7.4.1 HABITAT CONSERVATION NEEDS

Island County Parks will limit its focus to habitat areas that have the capacity to address outdoor recreation needs. Island County currently owns and manages lands that support this area of focus by protecting wildlife habitat and open space, improving water and environmental quality, supporting aquifer recharge and water filtering, and protecting critical, sensitive, or ecologically important areas, such as shorelines, wetlands, prairies and oak woodlands, upland forests, while providing recreation access.

### MAP 7L. Habitat Conservation Priorities for Parks Acquisition

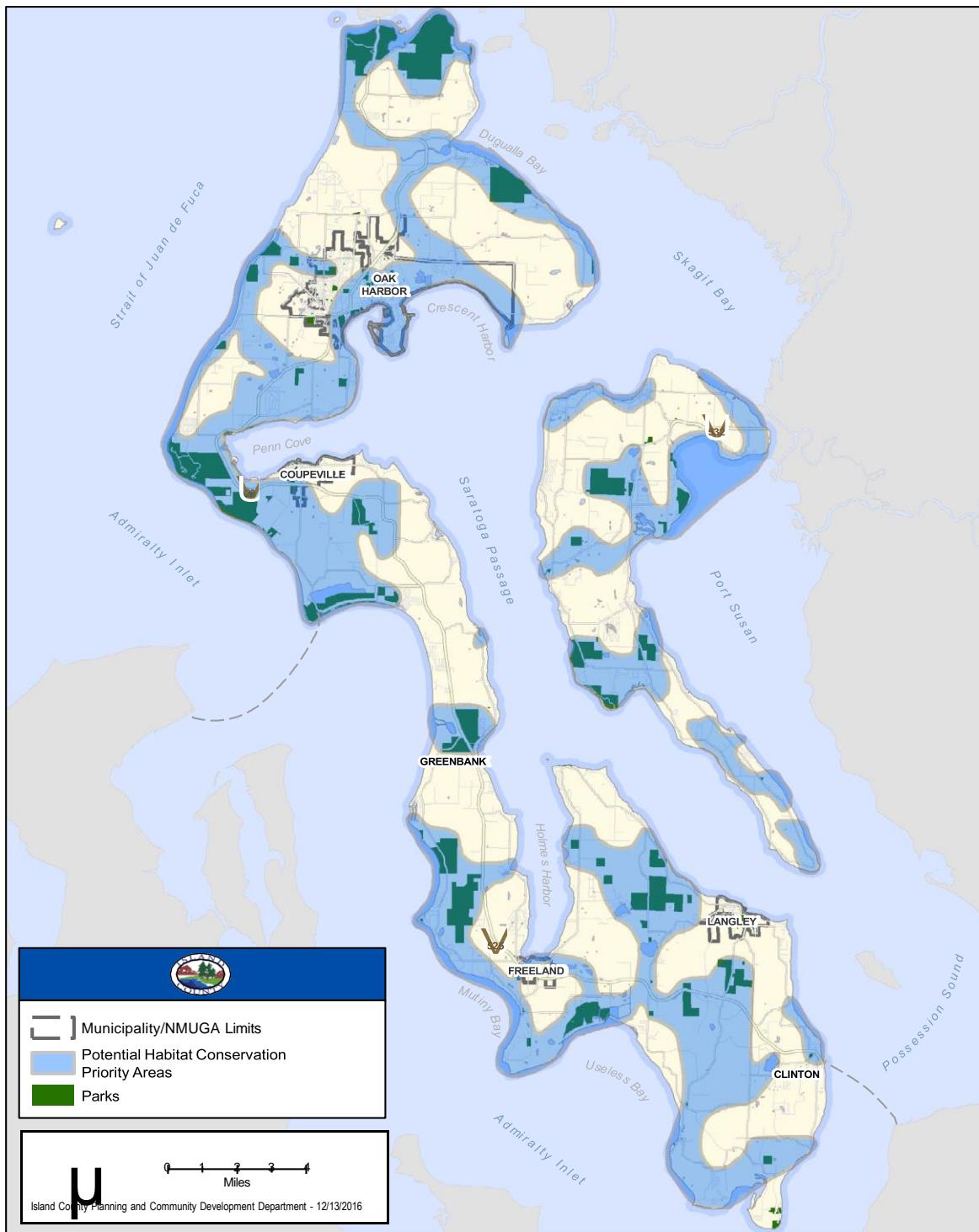


Table 7-11. Habitat and Outdoor Recreation Provider Area of Focus

Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County park lands include Parks, Natural Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas that have a capacity to meet the community's outdoor, low-impact outdoor recreation needs. These park lands contain natural resources that are managed for conservation, as well as amenities and facilities that are maintained for recreation.</li> </ul>
Site Selection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site size and configuration should be based on habitat and/or recreation needs. Size and shape should be determined by resource conservation or recreational needs.</li> <li>Site location should be based on the location of significant natural resources (e.g., aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, critical shoreline, important ecosystems, wetlands, etc.) or the location of place-based recreation opportunities (suitable shoreline for boat launches, etc.)</li> <li>Sites should be well-distributed on both islands to meet the recreation needs of all County residents.</li> <li>Amenities and facilities should be limited to support the numbers and types of visitors the site can accommodate, while retaining resource value and natural character</li> </ul>
Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site identification and interpretive signs</li> <li>Appropriate site furnishings for the intended scale and use of the park (benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash receptacles)</li> <li>Seasonal or permanent restrooms</li> <li>Off-street parking</li> <li>Trail and pathway system</li> <li>Trailhead or entry/kiosk</li> <li>Viewpoints or viewing blinds</li> <li>Equestrian trailheads and staging areas</li> <li>Motorized boat ramps and hand carry boat launches</li> <li>Swimming beaches</li> <li>Water access areas (for clamming, beach walks, etc.)</li> <li>Shelters (small or medium sized)</li> <li>Picnic areas (group areas or dispersed tables)</li> <li>Dog parks and off-leash dog areas</li> <li>Primitive campgrounds (no electricity, showers, etc.)</li> <li>Deer hunting areas</li> <li>Restoration areas for natural resource protection or regeneration</li> <li>Other amenities compatible with the County's area of focus</li> </ul>
Amenities and Facilities to Consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community gathering and event space to support large-group gatherings (e.g., community festivals, outdoor weddings, trail races, waterfront events, farmer's markets)</li> <li>Facilities, concessions, or vendor space to support outdoor recreation (e.g., boat storage, boat moorage, boat rental, bike rental, outdoor ropes course, riding stables, etc.)</li> <li>Outdoor interpretive or environmental educational facilities (e.g., small amphitheaters, fire rings, shelters/kiosks for environmental programming, etc.)</li> <li>Outdoor recreation facilities reflecting character of site (e.g., nature play areas, horseshoe pits, disc golf)</li> <li>Temporary/permanent caretaker's residences</li> <li>Storage and maintenance buildings</li> <li>Community gardens</li> <li>Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), u-pick farms and orchards, leased agricultural lands, etc.</li> </ul>
Amenities and Facilities to Avoid:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional active use facilities (sports fields, sport courts, skate parks, etc.)</li> <li>Indoor facilities, including community centers, recreation centers, nature centers, and museums.</li> <li>Restaurants or indoor concessions that do not support passive outdoor recreation.</li> <li>High-impact outdoor facilities, such as full-service marinas, RV campgrounds, ATV/OHV areas, swimming pools, golf courses, miniature golf courses, BMX racetracks, equestrian arenas, event amphitheaters, etc.</li> <li>High maintenance landscaping, such as turf areas, annual plantings, or ornamental gardens</li> <li>Other uses and programs that conflict with the County's area of focus</li> </ul>

Table 7-12. Management and Operations Habitat/Recreation Provider Area of Focus

Land & Facilities Management	Future Acquisition	Whether acquired through purchase, donation, or transfer, the Island County Parks Department should only acquire new sites that can help meet both low-impact recreation and habitat conservation needs. Other Island County Departments may acquire new sites that provide important habitat and natural resources, as provided for in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
	New Facility Development	The County should distribute facilities equitably to provide recreation opportunities in all service areas, while carefully considering habitat needs. Not all sites will be suitable for or have the capacity to support all types of recreation.
	Implication for Existing Land and Facilities	The existing inventory should be evaluated to determine: 1) Which sites and/or facilities do not fit within this area of focus. The County will need a transition strategy to determine how to address these facilities and properties. 2) Which existing sites are suitable for increased recreational development without significantly degrading site habitat function or quality. The County should increase its capital investment at appropriate sites to meet identified needs.
	Maintenance/Operations	This habitat conservation/outdoor recreation area of focus will require increased staffing and/or funding for facility maintenance and habitat stewardship—particularly if habitat restoration is desired. Partnerships with concessionaires and volunteers may be considered to reduce staffing needs.
	Administration/Management	A higher level of habitat management and facility administration is needed. This may include a half-time staff position as a volunteer coordinator and concessions manager to oversee partnerships with volunteers, non-profits, friends' groups, caretakers, lease holders, and concessionaires.
	Programming/Events	Island County should support programs and events that are consistent with its vision, mission, and area of focus. The County is most likely to operate as a facility provider, collaborating with community groups, partners, and concessionaires to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events, such as outdoor community events, environmental education, campground programs, facility-based programming (e.g., boating, hunting, trails), etc.

#### 7.4.1.1 HABITAT CONSERVATION CRITERIA

Island County and WCLT discussed key criteria for determining habitat conservation needs and priorities. Because so many agencies and organizations are working on conservation in Island County, Island County will focus on using existing data to be an effective steward of public resources. To evaluate priorities on a County-wide scale, data that is consistent across the entire County is intended to be dynamic, not to paint a static picture of habitat needs across the County. As newer or better information is developed, the County can continue to refine its habitat conservation priorities to make decisions about specific parcels and site specific data can be incorporated if it is available.

Using existing data in Island County, the below criteria was developed to identify priority habitat conservation areas:

**7.4.1.1.1 *Identified as a Whidbey Camano Land Trust Priority Habitat:***

As part of the Land Trust's efforts to permanently protect the most important and irreplaceable lands and waters on Camano and Whidbey Islands, the organization has developed a Land Protection Plan and Protection Priorities Map. First created in 2003 based on known data and input from experts, the Land Protection Plan Map highlights the Land Trust's identified target areas. The Land Trust's 2024 Conservation Plan is the fourth iteration of the plan that was originally adopted in 2004 as the Land Protection Plan, and updated in 2010 and 2018. This plan guides the Land Trust's work by identifying priority areas within which to focus landowner outreach to ensure the Land Trust is saving the most important and irreplaceable lands and waters in Island County.

**7.4.1.1.2 *Adjacent to Other Conservation Lands:***

Larger protected areas provide better habitat than smaller isolated parcels. For this reason, the criterion included any land within 1,000 feet of Island County park land; Non-profit habitat and easements; State Parks; and NPS sites and easements. These parcels would allow existing conservation lands to expand.

**7.4.1.1.3 *Contains Critical Areas:***

Island County identifies and updates Critical Areas through its Critical Areas Ordinance, which includes wetlands and aquifer recharge areas as well as unstable slopes.

**7.4.1.1.4 *Contains Rare Habitat:***

Prairies and Oak Woodlands were identified by the Project Management Team as priority rare habitat in Island County.

**7.4.1.1.5 *Contains Other Significant Habitat:***

The site contains "Habitats of Local Importance" and "Protected Plant Communities" on Whidbey and Camano Islands or has been identified by the Washington DNR Natural Heritage Program as potentially containing rare plants and ecosystems.

**7.4.1.1.6 *Prioritized in the Shoreline Master Program:***

Shoreline areas designated as Aquatic, Natural, Rural Conservancy and Urban Conservancy within Island County, or otherwise identified for habitat conservation in the updated of the SMP.

**7.4.2 **A HABITAT CONSERVATION CONCEPT FOR ISLAND COUNTY****

Map 7L depicts an illustrative habitat conservation concept for Island County, created by applying the criteria described in the section above. This illustration presents an overall concept but does not identify specific needs or priorities for habitat acquisition.

### 7.4.2.1 The habitat conservation concept by geographic area.

#### 7.4.2.1.1 *North Whidbey/Deception Pass*

This area contains important aquifer recharge areas, rare habitat, old-growth forest, wildlife habitat, critical shoreline and long stretches of public shoreline, scenic vistas, protected plant communities, unstable slopes, and wetlands.

#### 7.4.2.1.2 *Northeast Whidbey Shoreline*

This elongated shoreline area on the northeast side of the island contains important aquifer recharge areas, old-growth forest, long stretches of public shorelines, wildlife habitat, farmland, scenic vistas, areas of critical shoreline, some unstable slopes, and some wetlands.

#### 7.4.2.1.3 *Oak Harbor*

Oak Harbor's shoreline area and a stretch on the northeast side of the island contains important aquifer recharge areas, old-growth forest, critical shoreline, wildlife habitat, oak woodlands, significant habitat, protected plant communities and prairie soils, areas of critical shoreline, and wetlands. The Urban development in Oak Harbor on the northeast side of Whidbey Island forms a barrier to wildlife movement, and a wildlife corridor for migration around Oak Harbor should be considered.

#### 7.4.2.1.4 *Swantown Lake*

The area near Swantown Lake contains important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, prime farmland, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, mature forests, rare habitat, critical shoreline, prairie soils, unstable slopes, and wetlands that provides the opportunity for protection of a wildlife corridor around Oak Harbor on the west side of Whidbey Island.

#### 7.4.2.1.5 *Penn Cove Area*

The area north and west of Coupeville contains small aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, rare habitat, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmlands, critical shoreline, significant prairie soil areas, some protected plant communities, some unstable slopes, and some wetlands that extends from coast to coast, potentially providing an important corridor across Whidbey Island.

#### 7.4.2.1.6 *Coupeville South*

The area south of Coupeville contains aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, rare habitat, important wildlife habitat, extensive critical shoreline, scenic and historic vistas, prairie and grassland habitat, oak woodlands, protected plant communities, prime working farmlands, significant prairie soil areas, some unstable slopes, and wetlands.

**7.4.2.1.7 *Greenbank***

The area immediately around Greenbank has important plant communities and an important aquifer recharge area to the northeast of Greenbank most of which is protected by various agencies or owned by the US Navy. Because Whidbey Island is relatively narrow from the area south of Coupeville to the Freeland area, this region is vulnerable to blockage of north-south wildlife movement over the long term and a protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

**7.4.2.1.8 *Trillium Community Forest/Bush Point***

This elongated area on the west side of Whidbey Island contains aquifer recharge areas, rare habitat, large areas of wildlife habitat, critical shoreline (on the north side of Bush Point landform), protected plant communities, unstable slopes, and wetlands.

**7.4.2.1.9 *Freeland***

The area around Freeland, particularly south of Freeland between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay, includes important aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmland, critical shoreline, some unstable slopes, and wetlands. As Freeland develops, a protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

**7.4.2.1.10 *Putney Woods***

This area north includes important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands (especially around Lone Lake and Goss Lake), rare habitat, large areas of forest, wildlife habitat, and unstable slopes.

**7.4.2.1.11 *Bayview Area***

This area of South Whidbey contains important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands.

**7.4.2.1.12 *South Whidbey***

The area in South Whidbey includes important aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, critical shoreline, unstable slopes, and habitat of local importance.

**7.4.2.1.13 *Livingston Bay***

This shoreline area on Camano Island includes some important aquifer recharge areas and wetlands that have been protected. This area is also identified as Tier 1 in the county Salmon Recovery Plan.

#### 7.4.2.1.14 *Four Springs*

The area around the Four Spring Lake Preserve has some wetlands and important aquifer recharge areas.

#### 7.4.2.1.15 *Central Camano*

There are wetlands habitat and smaller aquifer recharge areas between Elger Bay Trust Land, Camas Beach State Park, and Camano Island State Park, and is highlighted for expanding these three larger protected areas.

#### 7.4.2.1.16 *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area*

Camano Island has large aquifer recharge areas northwest of Tillicum Beach.

#### 7.4.2.1.17 *South Camano*

The southern end of Camano Island contains rare habitat and plant communities, feeder bluffs with unstable slopes, some smaller aquifer recharge areas, and wetlands.

### 7.4.3 HABITAT QUALITY RATING CRITERIA

Before acquiring new land for parks and/or habitat conservation areas, Island County should consider the habitat quality of the site. Below are descriptions of each habitat type, along with criteria, to rate the habitat's quality as high, medium, or low for purposes of acquisitions.

#### 7.4.3.1 **CONIFER FOREST**

Conifer forest refers primarily to upland temperate coniferous forest communities with climax associations dominated by Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar. Due to logging history, many of these forests are presently dominated by deciduous tree species, particularly red alder and bigleaf maple.

##### 7.4.3.1.1 *High Quality*

- Older aged forests (>80 years) with higher proportions of conifers
- Rare species present
- Large scale (over 50 acres)
- Connected to other forests, natural areas, or water bodies
- Few or no invasive species, especially English ivy

#### 7.4.3.1.2 *Medium Quality*

- Younger forests (40-80 years) with mixed conifers and hardwoods
- Moderate scale (25-50 acres)
- Common species
- Near other forests, natural areas, or water bodies
- Manageable levels of invasive species

#### 7.4.3.1.3 *Low Quality*

- Regenerating forests (5-40 years,) mostly hardwoods or brush
- Small scale (< 25 acres)
- Isolated patch
- Dominated by invasive species

### 7.4.3.2 **GRASSLAND**

Grassland includes native prairies and/or non-native meadows. Native prairies were historically dominated by bunchgrasses, particularly Romer's fescue. Flowering perennials are often visually dominant, and include Indian paintbrush, fritillaria, iris, lupine, and fawn lily. Non-native meadows include hay fields and pastures that may or may not have once been native prairies.

#### 7.4.3.2.1 *High Quality*

- Native prairie plants comprise 50% of flora
- Endemic or listed species are present (e.g. golden paintbrush)
- > 5 acres
- Connected to or near other prairies
- Limited invasive species, particularly Scott's broom

#### 7.4.3.2.2 *Medium Quality*

- Native prairie remnants
- Endemic or listed species recorded in past
- 1-5 acres
- Near other prairies or good environmental education opportunity
- Manageable invasive species

#### 7.4.3.2.3 *Low Quality*

- No native prairie present
- No record of listed species in past
- 1 acre or smaller patch
- Isolated
- Overrun by invasive species, particularly Scott's broom

#### 7.4.3.3 **WETLANDS**

Wetlands are emergent fresh or saltwater marsh, willow scrub, forested swamps, peat bogs.

##### 7.4.3.3.1 *High Quality*

- All or mostly native species
- Natural hydrology is intact
- > 5 acres
- Connected to other natural areas, or water bodies
- Few or no invasive species, particularly reed canarygrass and knotweed

##### 7.4.3.3.2 *Medium Quality*

- Some native species
- Hydrology functional
- < 5 acres
- Near other natural areas
- Manageable invasive species

##### 7.4.3.3.3 *Low Quality*

- No or few native species
- Hydrology severely altered
- < 3 acres
- Isolated
- Overrun with invasive species, particularly reed canary grass or knotweed

#### 7.4.3.4 **FRESHWATER HABITATS**

Freshwater habitat includes rivers, creeks, ponds, and lakes.

#### 7.4.3.4.1 *High Quality*

- Salmon bearing natural stream or lake (or other important species)
- High water quality, no or few point source pollutants
- Intact riparian vegetation
- Linked to other aquatic habitats upstream and down
- Few or no invasive aquatic species

#### 7.4.3.4.2 *Medium Quality*

- Historic salmon habitat (or other important species)
- Moderate water quality, few to moderate point sources
- Some intact riparian vegetation
- Linked to downstream aquatic habitats
- Low levels of invasive aquatic species

#### 7.4.3.4.3 *Low Quality*

- Unnatural water body (i.e. reservoir)
- No history of salmon or other important species
- Impaired water quality, multiple point pollution sources
- Damaged or destroyed riparian vegetation
- Not linked to other aquatic habitats
- High levels of invasive aquatic species

### 7.4.3.5 SALTWATER (SHORELINE) HABITATS

Saltwater habitat includes shorelines, tidal flats, beaches, bluffs, inlets.

#### 7.4.3.5.1 *High Quality*

- Important wildlife species use (marine mammals, seabirds, fish)
- Unique vegetation communities (kelp, seagrass, salt marsh)
- Well connected to inland habitats
- Absence of built facilities (docks, riprap, roads)
- Absence of invasive species

#### 7.4.3.5.2 *Medium Quality*

- Past recorded use by important species
- Native vegetation dominates
- Near inland habitats
- Small amount of built facilities
- Manageable number of invasive species

#### 7.4.3.5.3 *Low Quality*

- No recorded use by important species
- Non native vegetation dominates
- Isolated from inland habitats
- Large amount of built facilities
- Large amount of invasive species

#### 7.4.3.6 **OAK WOODLANDS**

Oak woodland includes groves and savannas.

##### 7.4.3.6.1 *High Quality*

- Older aged woodlands or trees (>80 years)
- Rare species present
- Over 10 acres
- Connected to other habitats, natural areas, or water bodies
- Few or no invasive species

##### 7.4.3.6.2 *Medium Quality*

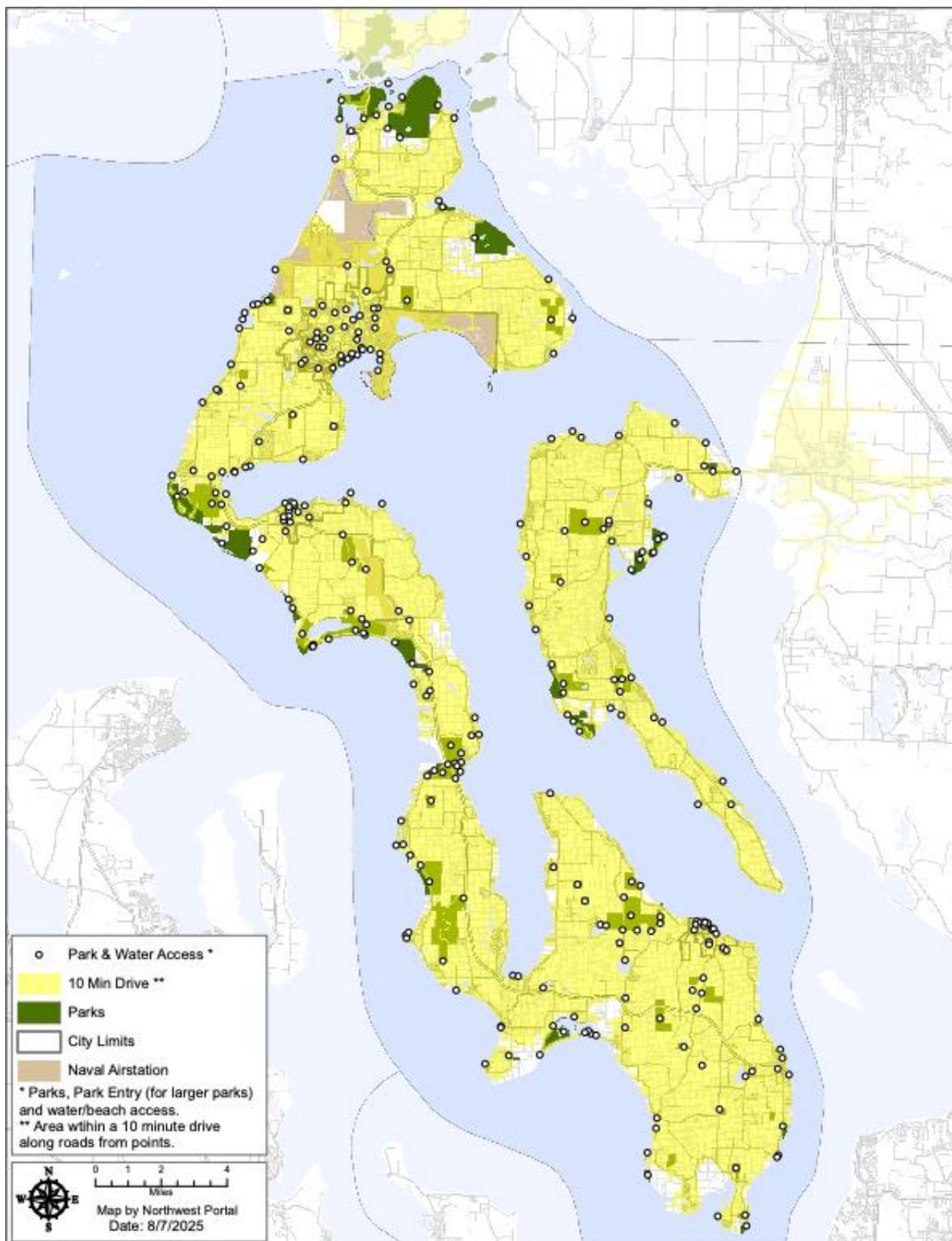
- Younger woodlands or trees (40-80 years) with conifers and hardwoods
- < 10 acres
- Common species
- Near other natural areas
- Manageable levels of invasive species

##### 7.4.3.6.3 *Low Quality*

- Regenerating stands (5-40 years,) mostly hardwoods or brush
- < 5 acres
- Isolated patch
- Dominated by invasive species

#### 7.4.4 **RECREATION NEEDS**

Providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities is as important as providing quality habitat areas. The most critical needs, highly prioritized County- wide, are for water access and trail activities. A variety of other outdoor recreation needs were identified through the public involvement process.



#### **7.4.4.1    GEOGRAPHIC NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Two critical needs were identified and evaluated using a GIS access analysis that are integral to the provision of outdoor recreation in Island County, and are primary recreation needs for all residents. All County residents should have beach access and an opportunity for a nature walk within 20 minutes from home.

GIS data was used to map service areas around sites that provide beach access or existing trails based on a 3-mile travel distance.

##### **7.4.4.1.1    *Nature Trails***

Combining protected habitat with public access, Island County residents most desired nature trails which were defined as a hard or soft-surfaced trail that provide at least a one-mile walk in nature.

##### **7.4.4.1.2    *Beach Access***

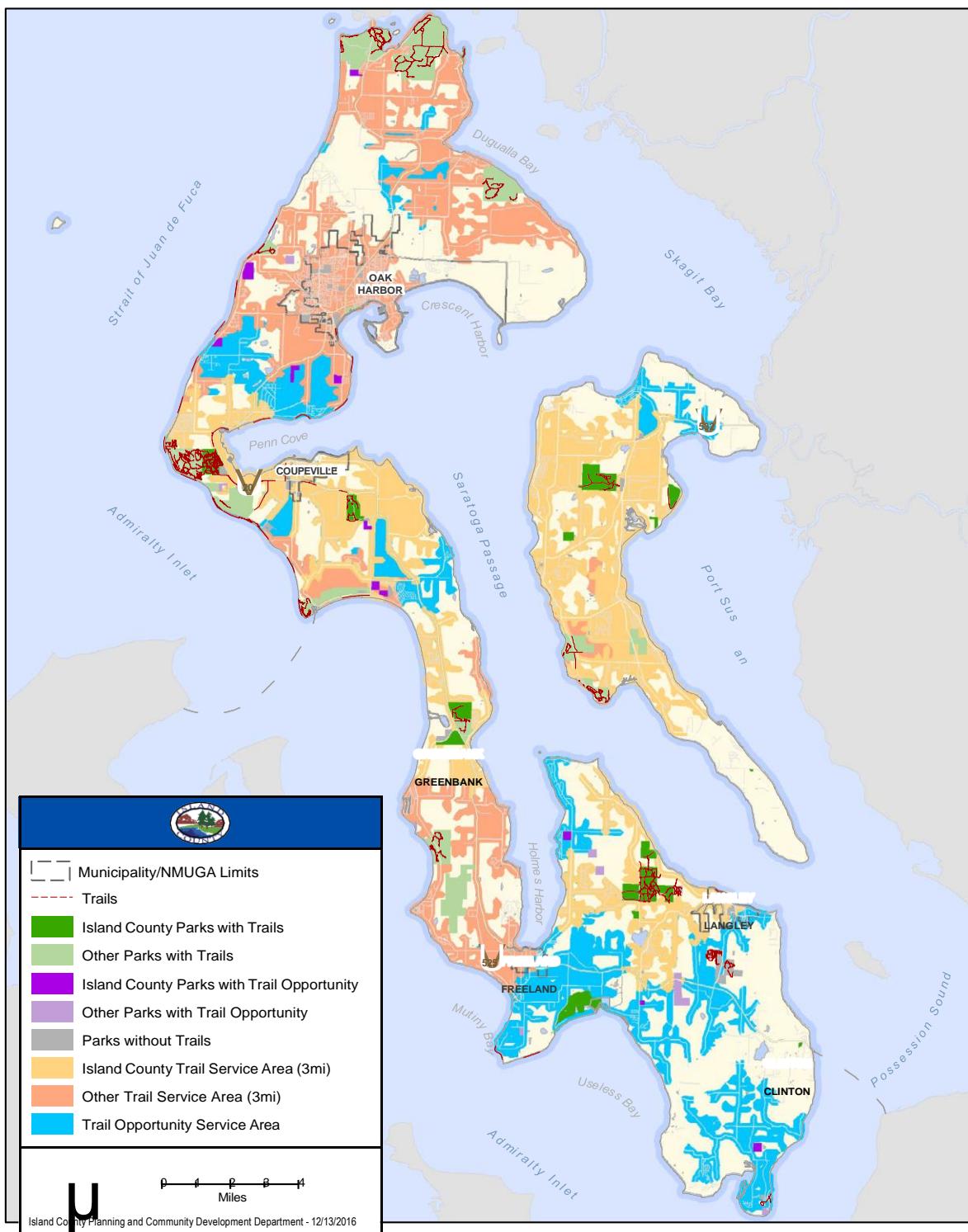
Island County residents indicated public water access is desired that includes more than just a road end, boat ramp, or viewpoint. Places where residents can touch the water and engage in beachfront recreation activities, such as boating, clamping, fishing, beach strolling, wading, etc. A public water access site should be at least one acre in size to allow space for activities.

#### **7.4.4.2    Trail Access and Needs**

Island County provides unpaved, soft surfaced trails at 15 sites. While most of these sites are larger parks and habitat conservation areas, sites with trails range in size from 0.3 acres (Hidden Trail Camano View) to nearly 600 acres (Putney Woods). Several sites managed by other agencies also provide trail opportunities, including State Parks, National Parks, and to a lesser extent, habitat areas supported by the cities, town, ports, and recreation districts.

Map 7M illustrates trail access and service areas (following the road network), where residents can engage in a one mile walk in nature. Shorter trail segments, trails at sites too small to incorporate a one-mile trail, and trails in highly developed parks or transportation corridors were excluded from the analysis. As shown on the map, service areas around Island County sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale orange. However, other jurisdictions also help meet trail needs for a one mile walk in nature. Service areas around other provider's sites with qualifying trails are shaded in pale yellow. White areas on the map indicate gaps in service, or areas where opportunities for trails should be considered.

## MAP 7M. Trail Access Opportunities



This map is intended to be used as a GUIDE. Island County is providing this information as a general geographic representation that should not be used for precise measurements or calculations. Some of the features on this map are not accurately depicted. Any user of this map assumes all responsibility for use and agrees to hold Island County harmless for liability, damages, or loss incurred by use of this information. Specific questions should be directed to Island County's Department of Planning and Community Development.

GIS data was used to map service areas around “trail opportunity areas” which are areas or sites of a sufficient size (more than 10 acres), have a lower level of development, and habitat type to perhaps provide a one-mile walk in nature if a trail was appropriate. County-owned sites and sites owned by other agencies were considered as potential opportunities for trail development shown in a hatched purple color on the map.

The remaining white areas on Map 7M reflect areas that are unserved because of limited or no road access or residential development., Trail needs will have to be re-evaluated should these areas develop.

Whidbey Island has several areas where nature trail access is needed, described in more detail below.

#### 7.4.4.2.1 *Northeast Whidbey*

The area between Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved and no trail opportunity areas are present.

#### 7.4.4.2.2 *Penn Cove North*

Several trail opportunity areas are present in this unserved area that include Site E (currently undeveloped), Monroe Landing Trust Land (currently lacks an access road), and/or Scenic Heights Trust Land (is currently farmed and forested).

#### 7.4.4.2.3 *Coupeville South*

Trails developed in one of two opportunity areas in sites B and D (shaded in purple) would improve service.

#### 7.4.4.2.4 *Greenbank/Trillium (East-Central Whidbey)*

There are gaps in the road network to the north of Greenbank, to the north of South Whidbey State Park, and around the Trillium Community Forest. However, existing sites are sufficient to provide service if these areas are further developed.

#### 7.4.4.2.5 *Freeland South, between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay*

Much of south Whidbey is unserved though the County inventory does not include formal trails at Deer Lagoon, the 378-acre site that could support a one-mile walk in nature as could the Wahl Road Trust Land.

#### 7.4.4.2.6 *Putney Woods North*

Areas to the northwest (adjacent to Holmes Harbor) of Putney Woods and Saratoga Woods are unserved. While much of this area lacks road access, Whidbey Camano Lake Trust (WCLT) has developed some appropriately located trails at Brainers, High Point, and Skyline West Trust Land.

#### 7.4.4.2.7 *Bayview Area*

The area around the Trustland Trails' site (owned by the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District) and Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park lack access to nature trails though both sites have a trail potential. The dog park at Marguerite Brons should be maintained, which limits opportunities for a nature trail at the site.

#### 7.4.4.2.8 *South Whidbey/Clinton*

South Whidbey lacks access to a one mile walk in nature although there are two opportunity areas for trail development at Glendale Trust Land and Possession Point State Park. New parks and/or habitat conservation areas are needed around Clinton to address nature trail needs.

Camano Island has good access to nature trails throughout the central portion of the island although the north and south ends are unserved.

#### 7.4.4.2.9 *Livingston Bay/North Camano*

North Camano is unserved by nearby nature trails although English Boom is in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. A new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

#### 7.4.4.2.10 *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area & South Camano*

The southern end of Camano Island lacks trail access although Walter G. Hutchinson Park is in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. A new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

#### 7.4.4.3 Beach Access and Needs

Island County provides some type of water access at 41 sites, other providers own or manage 18-37 sites for a total of 78 sites that provide water access that include boat ramps, boat docks and marinas, swimming beaches, and other types of water access. 60% of County-owned water access sites are less than one acre in size. In addition, Island County has numerous small beach access points in the inventory that lack support facilities and infrastructure to support this use.

Map 7N illustrates service areas around sites that provide beach access that include County parks and habitat conservation areas, as well as similar public sites provided by other jurisdictions. All service areas are mapped in blue, indicating where residents have access to an applicable beach within a 3-mile travel distance from home. White areas on the map indicate where access to qualifying beachfront sites is not provided.

##### 7.4.4.3.1 *Northeast Whidbey*

The area between Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved.

##### 7.4.4.3.2 *Penn Cove*

Gaps on the north side of Penn Cove are caused by gaps in the road network in this area.

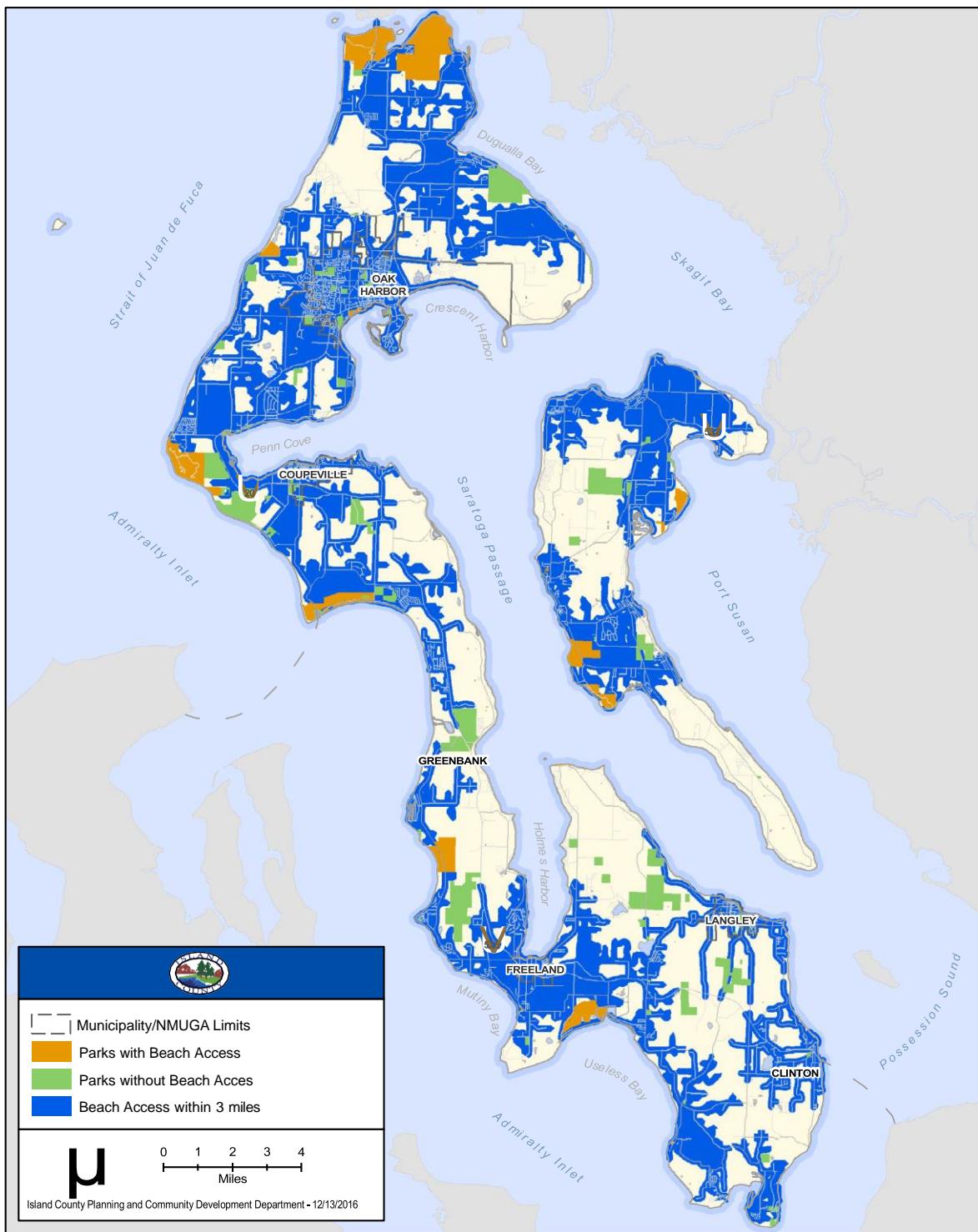
##### 7.4.4.3.3 *Greenbank (Central Whidbey)*

Much of Central Whidbey Island is unserved, especially on the east coast from Coupeville to Greenbank and nearly to Freeland. The area north of Greenbank on the west coast is unserved as well.

##### 7.4.4.3.4 *Freeland South, between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay*

Access to Double Bluff is limited by the road network in this area, which creates a large gap. Limpet Lane Road End (0.1 acres) is in this area but is too small of a site to meet primary recreation needs.

## MAP 7N. Beach Access Opportunities



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#### 7.4.4.3.5 *Putney Woods*

The area north and west of Putney Woods, between Holmes Harbor and the Saratoga Passage, lacks beach access. Baby Island Heights site is only accessible by water.

#### 7.4.4.3.6 *South Whidbey/Clinton*

The entire eastern shoreline of South Whidbey is unserved by beach access areas except for areas near Possession Point State Park.

#### 7.4.4.3.7 *Camano Island*

Camano Island lacks beach access at Livingston Bay, Four Springs, and Camano Aquifer Recharge Area.

#### 7.4.4.3.8 *Livingston Bay*

Parts of the Livingston Bay area lack beach access mainly because of road limitations or for its extensive mudflats, which limit opportunities for beach activities.

#### 7.4.4.3.9 *Four Springs*

Central Camano on the west side of the island and north of Henry Hollow is unserved because access is limited due to adjacent residential development. A stretch of the central east coast area of the island is also unserved.

#### 7.4.4.3.10 *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area*

This area lacks beach access.

#### 7.4.4.3.11 *South Camano*

South Camano is unserved by beach access areas, though this highly vegetated, feeder bluff may not provide an opportunity for beach access.

#### 7.4.4.4 OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS

Washington State's Recreation & Conservation Office (RCO) develops a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every 6 years to help decision-makers better understand statewide recreation issues and to maintain Washington's eligibility for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funds.

RCO conducted a series of 12-month diary surveys of a random sample of Washington State residents in 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018, and 2022 to determine the type of indoor and outdoor recreation activities and events residents engaged in over the year including the resident's age, gender, ethnicity, income, and regional place of residence.

The 2022 statewide survey was completed by 6,171 persons and collated and weighted by age, gender, region, race, and income of and weighted accordingly. The survey is within a 95% confidence level with a +/-5% confidence interval. Response by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity, and income varies.

The 2022 RCO SCORP survey recorded what residents 18 years and older participated in of 10 recreation categories consisting of over 88 different activities including the participation rate and number of occasions per year and generalized location of activity by city, county, federal, and tribal land. Island County is in the Islands region that includes Island and San Juan Counties.

The 2022 RCO survey elicited what participants did for recreational activities but not where the activity occurred. Survey participants from Island County may engage in activities but possibly outside of Island County, and conversely participants from other regions may travel to engage in activities in Island County. The survey did not control for user transpositions between regions.

Islands region's participation rates vary slightly from Washington State partly reflecting the availability of different activities in the county, county resident preferences, and statistical variations between the smaller number of survey respondents for the Islands region compared to the state total.

Even so, there are subtle differences where Islands residents engage less in urban activities like athletics and more in farmers' markets, shellfishing, and wildlife/nature viewing due to the county's more rural character.

#### Annual volumes 2020-2050

Island County's annual volume of recreation activity is determined by multiplying Washington State's age-specific participation rates for each of the 18-0, 41-64, and 65+ age groups by the annual occasion or frequency rates by the number of persons projected to be in each age-specific category for the projection years. (Note - Washington State participation rates are used due to the larger statewide sample size statistical accuracy and identified age group collations.)

The following table itemizes the projected total annual volume in 2020, 2050, and the percent of volume increase that will occur between 2020-2050.

Activity	2020	2050	Pct
Scooter riding	109,847	126,502	15.2%
Inline skating	117,149	135,153	15.4%
Volleyball	92,663	106,894	15.4%
Pickleball	161,276	187,793	16.4%
Tennis	131,681	152,288	15.6%

Basketball	136,541	158,014	15.7%
Skateboarding	105,048	120,808	15.0%
Ice sport, hockey	93,710	107,994	15.2%
Golf	200,819	234,089	16.6%
Baseball/softball	154,834	179,467	15.9%
Track	106,911	123,214	15.2%
Ultimate frisbee	83,158	95,586	14.9%
Rugby	78,900	90,589	14.8%
Lacrosse	80,361	92,075	14.6%
Football	91,476	105,552	15.4%
Soccer	146,293	168,950	15.5%
BMX or pump trk	61,625	71,004	15.2%
Model aircraft	123,810	143,451	15.9%
Geocaching	143,265	165,664	15.6%
Yard games –	293,571	342,733	16.7%
Disc golf	98,290	113,508	15.5%
Dog park	409,686	478,115	16.7%
Hanging out	804,393	941,524	17.0%
Playground	346,279	403,987	16.7%
Picnic, BBQ,	470,809	552,656	17.4%
Concert/ event	286,952	335,942	17.1%
Garden, farmers'	568,244	666,771	17.3%
Splash pad	142,083	164,621	15.9%
Paintball	59,218	67,882	14.6%
Shell fishing	308,228	359,479	16.6%
Fishing in boat	325,017	379,497	16.8%
Fishing bank	274,303	320,128	16.7%
Cultural, historic	398,311	467,994	17.5%
Volunteering	332,324	389,552	17.2%
Gather nature	582,097	682,243	17.2%
Wildlife viewing	14,34,997	1,688,108	17.6%
Sledding, tubing	159,617	185,249	16.1%
Inner tubing	132,518	154,098	16.3%
Surfing	152,201	174,890	14.9%
Snorkel diving	95,015	110,414	16.2%
Canoe, kayak	496,066	580,357	17.0%
Sail boating	171,978	200,160	16.4%
Motorboat skiing	407,117	475,466	16.8%
Swim natural	412,563	481,825	16.8%
Swim pools	250,458	292,113	16.6%
Electric bicycling	232,022	270,721	16.7%
Jog, run on trails	368,724	426,826	15.8%
Jog/run on roads	443,864	514,003	15.8%
Walk on trails	1,675,167	1,966,910	17.4%
Walk on sidewalk	2,055,536	2,414,225	17.4%

The total volume that will occur in 2020 and by 2050, Pct – the percent increase the additional volume between 2020-2050 represents.

Source: 2022 RCO SCORP Survey

The total annual volume of all activities will increase from 16,407,016 occasions in 2020 to 19,167,086 occasions by 2050 or by 2,760,070 additional occasions or by 16.8%. An increase in annual occasions from 2020 to 2050, however, will not be proportionately the same for all activities due primarily to the aging of the county's population and age-related participation rates.

For example, the greatest annual volume and percentage increase will be in walking on sidewalks (358,689 additional occasions from 2020 to 2050 or by 17.4%) and trails (291,744 additional occasions or by 17.4%), and wildlife viewing (253,111 additional occasions or by 17.6%), which are

popular with older age groups.

Conversely, the lowest annual volume and percentage increase will be in paintball (8,664 additional occasions from 2020 to 2050 or by 14.6%) and lacrosse (11,715 additional occasions or by 14.6%) which are popular with younger age groups.

### Activity location

RCO's 2022 Diary-Based SCORP Survey did not identify the specific location of each individual activity, but the survey did collate location by major activity groups by major park ownership including local parks, school districts, state and federal parks, tribal parks, and unspecified.

The location of an activity group depends on the nature of the activity and the availability of appropriate facilities.

For example, athletic, leisure, and trail-based activities are focused on local parks with 38.3% of all athletics, 38.0% of all leisure, and 32.8% of all trail and road-based activities or close to residential areas.

Comparatively, camping (60.5%) and motorized vehicle excursions (50.3%) are focused on state and federal lands where forests, wilderness, and other attractions are located.

Island County includes facilities in all ownerships that appeal to all activity groups, so it is unlikely to be able to adjust (or reduce) the projected Island County 2020-2050 annual activity volumes significantly.

### Specialized activities

Island County should support the following needs in its role as an outdoor recreation provider:

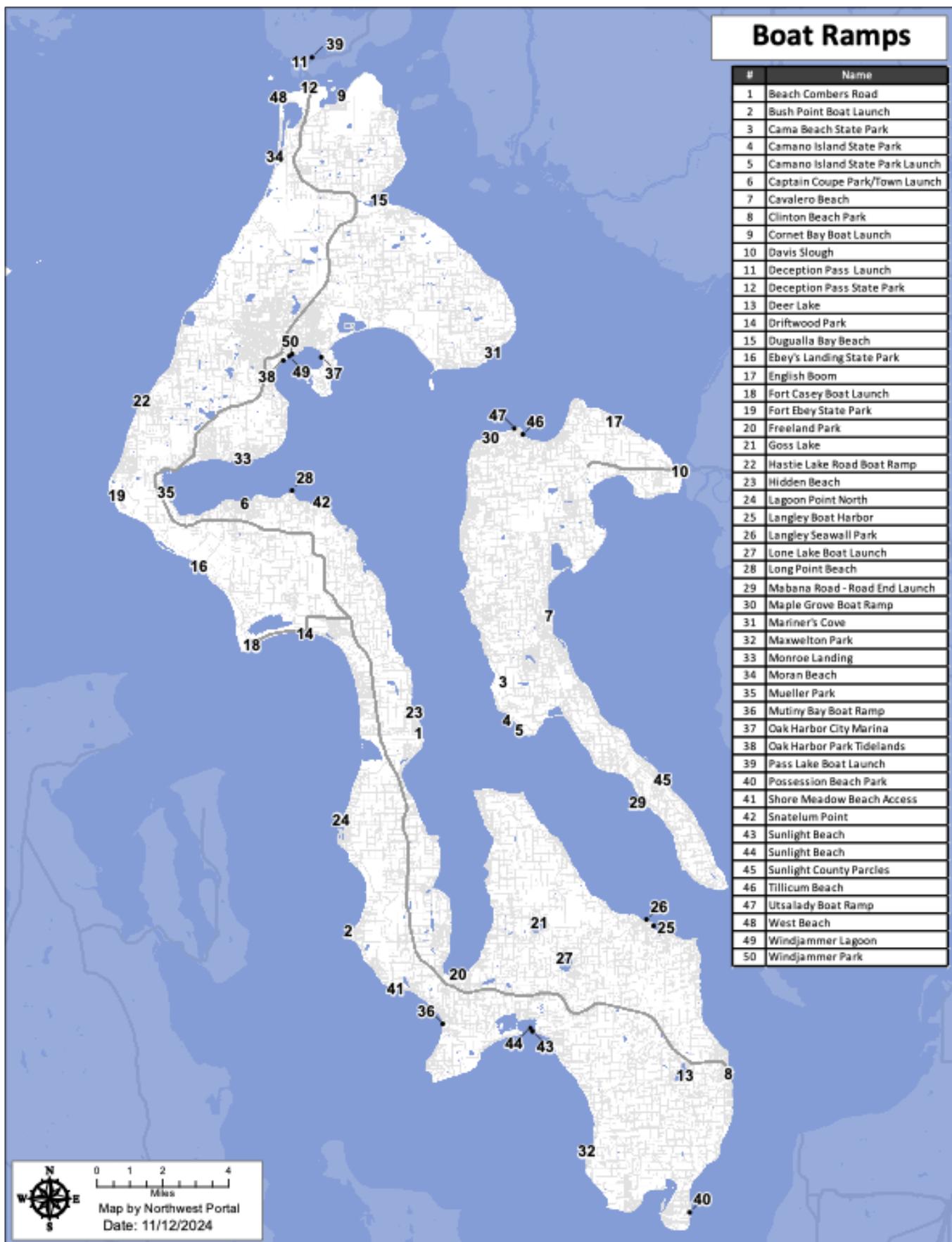
- Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)
- Dog Parks
- Camping
- Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)
- Deer Hunting

#### **7.4.4.4.1 Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)**

Island County provides 9 boat ramps and 2 docks, other agencies provide 41 boat ramps and 2 docks/marinas for a total of 50 ramps and 4 docks or piers. Island County provides 2 handcarry launch sites, other agencies provide 4 sites, for a total of 6 sites. These facilities are dispersed throughout the County, with the exception of Central Whidbey, north and south of Greenbank.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes Island County develop 2 more handcarry launch sites in existing parks to meet demand by 2045.

	<b>Park</b>	<b>Boat Ramp</b>	<b>Pier</b>	<b>Handcarry</b>
Island County	Moran Beach			1
	Mariners Cove	1		
	Monroe Landing	1		
	Coronet Bay		1	
	Hastie Lake	1		
	Freeland Park	1	1	
	Mutiny Bay	1		
	Dave Mackie	1		
	Cavalero Beach	1		
	Maple Grove	1		



#### 7.4.4.4.2 Dog Parks

Island County provides 3 dog parks and 4 off-leash areas, other jurisdictions 1 dog park and 2 off-lease areas for a total of 4 dog parks and 6 off-leash areas. Almost every Island County park, however, allows dog walking on a leash with waste receptacles. The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes Island County add 1 additional dog park facility in an existing park site.

	Park	Dog Park	Off-leash
Island County	Double Bluff		1
	Patmore Pit	1	
	North Greenbank		1
	Double Bluff		1
	Marguerite Brons Memorial	1	
	English Boom	1	
NWPRD	Henry Hollow		1
	Clover Valley		1
Oak Harbor	Dog Park	1	
Port Coupeville	Greenbank Farm		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>

FETCH! (Free Exercise Time for Canines and Humans!), a nonprofit organization, maintains the County's off-leash parks at Double Bluff Beach, Marguerite Brons Memorial Park, Patmore Pit, and Oak Harbor Dog Park (also known as Technical Park).

Except for the beach park at Double Bluff, all FETCH! parks are fenced and provide a mix of amenities, such as picnic tables, shelters, a rinse station, portable toilets, and sheltered bulletin boards, which are maintained by FETCH! Volunteers and funded by membership contributions.

#### 7.4.4.4.3 Camping

Island County provides 12 tent and 3 RV or a total of 15 campsites at Rhododendron Campground while other agencies, including Washington State Parks, Coupeville, US Navy, and private organizations provide 809 campsites for a total of 824 campsites including

	Campground	Tent	RV	Cabin	Biker	Kayak	Total	Group#
Island County	Rhododendron	12	3				15	
	Fairground*	15	30				45	
WA State Parks	Cranberry Lake	147	83	1	5		236	3#
	Quarry Pond	7	49	5	1		62	
	Bowman Bay	18	2				20	
	Hope/Skagit Islands					11	11	
WA State Parks	South Whidbey**	46	8				54	60
	Cama Beach			31			31	
	Joseph Whidbey					1	1	
	Fort Ebey		44			6	50	
WA State Parks	Possession Pt					1	1	
	Dugualla					1	1	
	Fort Casey	11	24				35	
	Camano Island	88				1	89	100
Coupeville	Captain Coupe					1	1	

US Navy	Cliffside RV Park***	10	56	6			72	30
Private	North Whidbey RV		100				100	
<b>Total</b>		<b>354</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>824</b>	

\* Fairgrounds closed during fair.

\*\* Closed indefinitely due to diseased tree hazard to campsites.

\*\*\* Cliffside RV Park is open to active and retired military, reservists, authorized DoD civilians, full-time contractors, and their guests by reservation.

Hope and Skagit Islands are boater-only.

The 2026-2032 PROS Plan proposes to add 1 kayak overnight campsite. Island County could play a larger role in meeting the demand for primitive camping by providing dispersed natural camp sites, or canoe and kayak camps that provide a quieter camping experience in nature. Several areas lack kayak campgrounds, including Camano, East Camano, and Central and South Whidbey.

#### 7.4.4.4.4 *Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)*

Horseback trail riding are provided at 5 Island County parks including Camano Ridge, Greenbank North, Kettles, Putney Woods, and Saratoga Woods as well as at other trust properties including Trustland Trails, Trillium Community Forest, and Metcalf Trust Trails that are multi-purpose trails for hikers and mountain bikers as well. Several lack equestrian trailheads with room for horse trailer parking, a staging area, hitching rails, or other amenities.

<b>Island County</b>	<b>Hike</b>	<b>Bike</b>	<b>Horse</b>	<b>Miles</b>
1 Ala Spit	X			0.5
2 Barnum Point	X			N/A
3 Brainers Land Trust	X			N/A
4 Camano Ridge	X	X	X	3.9
5 Dan Porter Park	X			Na
6 Deer Lagoon	X			Na
7 Etheyl Taylor Property	X			Na
8 Four Springs Lake Preserve	X			1.6
9 Greenbank North	X	X	X	3.1
10 Greenbank South	X			N/A
11 Hurt Property	X			N/A
12 Iverson Preserve	X			1.7
13 Kettles Trail Area	X	X	X	12.6
14 Limpet Lane Road End	X			N/A
15 Marguerite Brons Park	X			N/A
16 Monroe Landing Trust	X			N/A
17 Patmore Pit Dog Park	X			N/A
18 Putney Woods	X	X	X	13.4
19 Rhododendron Park	X			3.4
20 Saratoga Woods	X	X	X	4.2
21 Scenic Heights Trust Land	X			N/A
22 Swantown Lake	X			0.4
23 Walter G Hutchinson Park			X	N/A
<b>Island County total</b>				<b>44.8</b>

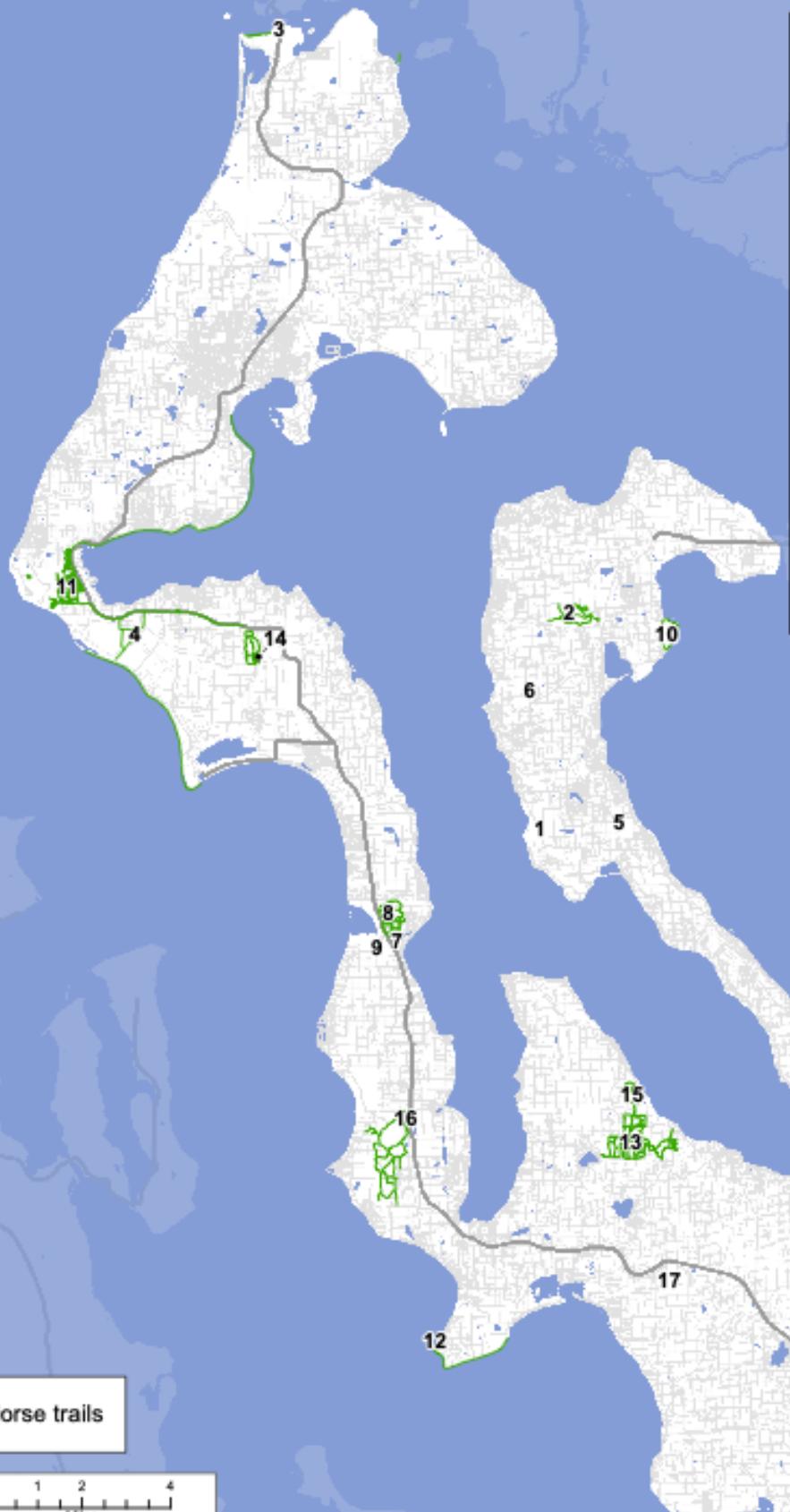
N/A – trail miles not available for these parks.

There are several sites that could be improved to support horse trails, including Greenbank Farm South, and Elger Bay if appropriate trailheads and support amenities were added.

## Horse riding

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#	Name
1	Cama Beach State Park
2	Camano Ridge
3	Deception Pass State Park
4	Ebey's Landing Trailhead
5	Elger Bay Trust Land
6	Four Springs Lake Preserve
7	Greenback Farm
8	Greenbank North
9	Greenbank South
10	Iverson Preserve
11	Kettles Trail Area
12	Limpet Lane Road End
13	Putney Woods
14	Rhododendron Park
15	Saratoga Woods
16	Trillium Community Forest
17	Trustland Trails Park



#### 7.4.4.4.5 Hunting

The State of Washington regulates hunting and allows deer hunting in season. Deer hunting is allowed at the Trillium Community Forest, Kettles, Putney Woods, North and South Greenbank, and the US Navy allows hunting for staff and residents who have access to the WNAS.

	Park	Hunt deer
Island County	Camano Ridge	Yes
	Kettles	Yes
	Putney Woods	Yes
	North Greenbank	Yes
	South Greenbank	Yes
Land Trust	Trillium Community Forest	Yes
US Navy	WNAS*	Yes
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>

\* Staff and residents who have access to the base only.

Island County has a hunting history and culture that some residents would like to see preserved. The challenge is to be able to safely maintain this use while also addressing other recreation needs.

The County's approach is to close sites to other uses when allowing hunting. The parcels need to be large enough to accommodate safe firearms discharge during hunting season.

## 7.5 FUNDING STRATEGIES

### 7.5.1 STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT PROS PROJECTS

The funding strategy to implement priority projects in the Capital Facilities Plan is multi-faceted and includes the following:

#### 7.5.1.1 General fund

The General Fund is derived from property and sales taxes, licenses and permits, intergovernmental revenues including state and federal grants, service charges and fees, fines and forfeitures, and other miscellaneous revenues. General funds are used to finance most government operations including staff, equipment, capital facility, and other requirements including Parks Department staff administration, operations, and maintenance.

Under Washington State's constitution counties may levy a property tax rate not to exceed \$1.80 per \$1,000 of the assessed value of all taxable property within county jurisdictional limits. The total of all property taxes for all taxing authorities, however, cannot exceed 1.0% of assessed valuation, or \$10.00 per \$1,000 of value. If the taxes of all districts exceed the 1.0% or \$10.00 amount, each is proportionately reduced until the total is at or below the 1.0% limit.

In 2001, Washington State law was amended by Proposition 747, a statutory provision limiting the growth of regular property taxes to 1.0% per year, after adjustments for new construction. Any proposed increases over this amount are subject to a referendum vote.

The statute was intended to control local governmental spending by controlling the annual rate of growth of property taxes. In practice, however, the statute can reduce the effective property tax yield to an annual level far below a county's levy authorization, particularly when property values are increasing rapidly.

#### 7.5.1.2 General levy rate referendums

Proposition 747, the statutory provision limiting the growth of regular property taxes to 1.0% per year, can be waived by referendum approval of a simple (50%) majority of Island County's registered voters. Voters can be asked to approve a resetting of the property tax levy rate that would adjust the amount of revenue the county can generate.

The new total revenue that can be generated by a resetting of the rate would be subject to the same 1.0% limitation, however, and the total amount of revenue and the resulting property tax rate would start to decline again in accordance with the Proposition.

However, the adjusted rate and revenue could finance specific capital improvement projects – or programs that involve construction, maintenance, and operations aspects that a majority of the voters are willing to pay for under the adjusted rate.

The resetting of the rate can be permanent, subject to the provisions of Proposition 747. Or temporary, where the rate is adjusted until a specific amount of revenue has been generated to finance a project or program – whereupon the rate reverts to the original or a specified amount defined in the referendum.

#### 7.5.1.3 Special revenues

Special revenues are derived from state and local option taxes dedicated to specific expenditure purposes, such as the motor vehicle tax, motor excise tax, real estate excise tax (REET), motel and hotel tax (Lodging Tax), public art, criminal justice, paths and trails, convention center, and the like.

Some special revenues may be used to finance limited capital facilities, such as roads or parks, where the local option allows – such as the local real estate excise tax (REET) and/or under special circumstances Motel/Hotel or Tourism Taxes or Stormwater Utility Taxes where a project or program can be expensed as a direct extension or beneficiary of these accounts.

#### 7.5.1.4 Debt service funds

Debt service funds are derived from a dedicated portion of the property tax or general fund proceeds to repay the sale of Councilmanic (non-voted) bonds and general obligation (voted). Both types of bonds may be used to finance park facility improvements – but not maintenance or operational costs.

**Councilmanic (limited or non-voted) bonds** - may be issued without voter approval by the Commissioners for any facility development purpose. The total amount of all outstanding non-voted general obligation debt may not exceed 1.5% of the assessed valuation of all county property. For this reason, Councilmanic bonds are usually only used for the most pressing capital improvement issues.

**Limited general obligation bonds (GO bonds)** - must be paid from general governmental revenues. Therefore, debt service on these bonds may reduce the amount of revenue available for current operating expenditures and the financial flexibility the Commissioners may need to fund annual budget priorities.

Island County may come to depend on voter referendums as a means of financing a larger portion of the capital improvement program, since limited and unlimited obligation bonds are not paid from the property tax subject to the 1.0% limitation.

#### **7.5.1.5 Enterprise funds**

Enterprise funds are derived from the user fees and charges levied for utility operations including water and sewer, storm drainage, regional water, solid waste, cemetery, and parks. The enterprise revenues are used to pay operating costs, retire capital facility debt, and plan future replacement and expansion projects. Enterprise funds may be created for a park or recreation activity that has a revenue source sufficient to finance all costs.

#### **7.5.1.6 User fees and charges**

Island County may elect to use an increasing array of special user fees, charges, and special assessments to pay facility operating and maintenance capital requirements. The user fee approach may be difficult to impose on facilities that don't have readily identifiable or chargeable users - like some park or trail systems. The approach may be very responsive, however, for facilities and services that have an identifiable user group receiving a direct proportional benefit for the charge – like fairground, picnic, marina, and RV campground facilities.

#### **7.5.1.7 Special legislation**

Local government representatives can seek state enabling legislation authorizing new or special revenue sources. Senate Bill 5972 (RCW 82.46) is an example of one possible legislative solution. The 1982 bill gave county governments the option of adding an additional 0.0025% increment to the real estate excise tax (REET) for the sole purpose of financing local capital improvement projects including parks, utilities, and other infrastructure except governmental buildings. Like bonds, Senate Bill 5972 funds may not be used to finance park operation and maintenance requirements.

#### **7.5.1.8 Washington State grants**

Washington State, through the Resource Conservation Office (RCO) funds and administers several programs for parks and recreation, and non-motorized transportation and trails purposes using special state revenue programs including the following examples:

**Endangered Species Act (ESA)** - a Department of Ecology administered water quality program provides grants for up to 75% of the cost of water quality/fish enhancement studies. Referendum 39 monies can be applied to park and open space developments that propose to restore, construct, or otherwise enhance fish producing streams, ponds, or other water bodies.

**Washington Wildlife Recreation Program (WWRP)** – provides funds for the acquisition and development of conservation and recreation lands. The Habitat Conservation Account of the WWRP program provides funds to acquire critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife categories. The Outdoor Recreation Account of the WWRP program provides funds for local parks, state parks, trails, and water access categories.

**Capital Projects Fund for Washington Heritage** – initiated on a trial basis in 1999, and since renewed, provides funds for the restoration and renovation projects for historical sites and buildings by local governments and nonprofit agencies. The Heritage Resource Center (HRC) administers the program.

**Boating Facilities Program** – approved in 1964 under the state Marine Recreation Land Act, the program earmarks motor vehicle fuel taxes paid by watercraft for boating-related lands and facilities. Program funds may be used for fresh or saltwater launch ramps, transient moorage, and upland support facilities.

**Aquatic Lands Enhancement Act (ALEA)** - initiated on a trial basis in 1985, and since renewed and expanded, uses revenues obtained by the Washington Department of Natural Resources from the lease of state-owned tidal lands. The ALEA program is administered by the RCO for the development of shoreline related trail improvements and may be applied for up to 50% of the proposal.

**Washington State Public Works Commission** - initiated a program that may be used for watercraft sanitary pump-out facilities.

**Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)** – provides grants to cities, counties, and qualified nonprofit organizations for the improvement and maintenance of existing, and the development of new athletic facilities. The Community Outdoor Athletic Fields Advisory Council (COAFAC) of the RCO administers the program.

**Non-Highway & Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program (NOVA)** – provides funding to develop and manage recreation opportunities for users of off-road vehicles and non-highway roads. An allocation (1%) from the state Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax (MVFT) and off-road vehicle (ORV) permit fees fund the program. NOVA funds may be used for the planning, acquisition, development, maintenance, and operation of off-road vehicle and non-highway road recreation opportunities.

**Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program (FARR)** – provides funds to acquire, develop, and renovate public and private nonprofit firearm and archery training, practice, and recreation facilities. The program is funded from a portion of the fees charged for concealed weapons permits.

### **7.5.1.9 Federal grants**

Federal monies are available for the construction of outdoor park facilities from the National Park Service (NPS) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The Washington State Resource Conservation Office (RCO) administers the grants.

**NPS (National Park Service) grants** - usually do not exceed \$150,000 per project and must be matched on an equal basis by the local jurisdiction. The RCO assigns each project application a priority on a competitive statewide basis according to each jurisdiction's need, population benefit, natural resource enhancements and several other factors.

In the past few years, project awards have been extremely competitive as the federal government significantly reduced the amount of federal monies available the NPS program. The state increased contributions to the program over the last few years using a variety of special funds, but the overall program could be severely affected by pending federal deficit cutting legislation.

Applicants must submit a detailed comprehensive park, recreation, and open space plan to be eligible for NPS funding. The jurisdiction's plan must demonstrate facility need and prove that the jurisdiction's project proposal will adequately satisfy local parks, recreation, and open space needs and interests.

Due to diminished funding, however, RCO grants have not been a significant source of project monies for county or other local jurisdictions in recent years.

**TEA21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century)** - can be used to finance on and off-road non-motorized trail enhancements along major and minor arterial collector roads or sometimes, within separate trail corridors. The program was adopted in 1993 and is administered by the Regional Transportation Organization on behalf of the US Department of Transportation.

Applicants must demonstrate the proposed trail improvements will increase access to non-motorized recreational and commuter transportation alternatives.

**National Recreational Trails Program (N RTP)** – is the successor to the National Recreational Trails Act (NRFTA). Funds may be used to rehabilitate and maintain recreational trails that provide a backcountry experience. In some cases, the funds may be used to create new “linking” trails, trail relocations, and educational programs.

#### **7.5.1.10 Environmental impact mitigation – subdivision regulations**

Island County subdivision policies can require developers of subdivisions on the county to provide suitably designed and located open spaces, woodland preserves, trail systems, tot lots, playgrounds, and other park or recreational facilities. Such facilities may include major components of the park or recreational system that may be affected by the project's location or development.

Island County may also consider requiring developers provide acceptable long-term methods of managing and financing maintenance requirements. Attractive management systems could include:

**Ownership by a private organization** - like a tennis, swimming, or golf club, who assumes responsibility for all maintenance responsibilities and costs,

**Ownership by a homeowners or common property owners' association (HOA)** - who may contract maintenance responsibilities and assess property owner's annual costs, or

**Dedication of property** - to Island County who assumes maintenance responsibilities using county funds.

Island County should not accept title and maintenance responsibility unless the land or facility will be a legitimate park or recreation or open space element that may be supported using public financing.

Island County may be contracted by any of the other agencies to provide or oversee a maintenance contract on the owner's behalf provided all Island County costs are reimbursed by an approved method of local financing.

#### **7.5.1.11 Growth impact fees**

Island County could adopt a park growth impact fee in accordance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). A park impact fee could apply to all proposed residential, commercial, and industrial developments in the county as a means of maintaining existing park, recreation, and open space levels-of-service (ELOS).

The ordinance could estimate the impact each development project has on park, recreation, and open space facilities within the project's service zone and make provisions for setting aside the resources, including lands or monies, necessary to offset the project's park facility impacts.

The dollar value of the project's park, recreation, and open space impact can be offset by the project developer of an amount equal to the combined facility acquisition and development costs that Island County would incur to maintain the same existing level-of-service (ELOS).

#### **7.5.1.12 Facility user fees and charges**

Island County could charge an array of special user fees, charges, and special assessments to pay

facility operating and maintenance capital requirements. Proposals to recover recreation program costs could be augmented with additional or higher user fees on picnic shelters, meeting rooms, campgrounds, public gathering areas, and other facilities.

Island County could also increase the number of activities subject to user fees and charges and use the proceeds to purchase land, develop, operate, and maintain facilities where all costs are reimbursed by the revenue obtained. Essentially, Island County would become a facility developer/operator providing whatever facilities or services the market will support from user revenue.

User fees have and could be used to provide facilities for park and recreation activities whose profit margins are too low to sustain commercial operations or whose benefiting user group may extend beyond county boundaries. Possible user fee financed facilities could continue to include recreational vehicle parks and tent campgrounds, and any other facility where demand is sizable enough to warrant a user fee financing approach.

In essence, the market determines which facility's revenues equal costs, and thereby, which programs Island County would provide on a direct costs/benefit basis. While important, this source of finance will likely never pay full costs for all programs, or any operation, maintenance, or development costs.

Some programs designed for youth and family activities, may never generate fees large enough to finance full costs and will require Island County to determine to what extent the public benefits merit the subsidized fee revenues.

The user fee approach may also be difficult to impose on facilities that don't have readily identifiable or chargeable users - like some park or trail systems. The approach may be very responsive, however, for facilities and services that have an identifiable user group receiving a direct proportional benefit for the charge.

#### **7.5.1.13 Conservation Futures (CF) (RCW 84.34.240)**

RCW 84.34.210 authorizes any county, city, town, metropolitan park district, metropolitan municipal corporation, or nonprofit historic preservation corporation as defined in RCW 84.34.250 to acquire open space, land, or rights to future development by purchase, gift, grant, bequest, devise, lease, or otherwise, except by eminent domain, the fee simple or any lesser interest, development right, easement, covenant, or other contractual right necessary to protect, preserve, maintain, improve, restore, limit the future use of, or otherwise conserve, selected open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timberland as such are defined in Chapter 84.34 RCW for public use or enjoyment.

Such entity may acquire such property for the purpose of conveying or leasing the property back to its original owner or other person under such covenants or other contractual arrangements as will limit the future use of the property.

#### **7.5.1.14 Special use agreements**

Special property agreements can often be used instead of property purchases to secure public use rights for land or property at no cost or a nominal fee, particularly where the possible public use is of benefit to the private landowner. Some forms of special use agreements can provide favorable tax benefits if the use agreement can be shown to have an assigned value.

Island County could expand the use agreement concept to include complete development, operation, or maintenance responsibilities. Package lease agreements will usually provide more effectively maintained facilities than possible where Island County must staff specialized, small work crews.

Sometimes package lease agreements covering use and maintenance aspects may be the only way of resolving an equitable agreement with the private ownership. This may include trails on utility corridors

where the ownership may prefer to control development and maintenance activities, and Island County may prefer to avoid any implied responsibility or liability for the utility worthiness that Island County's maintenance of a trail system could imply.

#### **7.5.1.15 Public/private service contracts**

Private market skills and capital may be employed in a variety of ways including the use of public/private services contracts where a private party can be contracted to operate and maintain a facility for a fixed fee cost. Service contracts can be very efficient where the activities are small, scattered in location, seasonal, expert, or experimental. Service contracts are also relatively easy to initiate or terminate if area demand fails to provide sufficient use or revenue to justify continued operation.

Service contracts may be very flexible and can include agreements with the county, school district or local user groups who can or would be interested in sustaining the activity on a subsidized or sweat-equity basis in exchange for the facility.

#### **7.5.1.16 Public/private concessions**

Island County could lease a portion of a site or facility to a private party in exchange for a fixed fee or a percentage of gross receipts. The private operator assumes operation and maintenance responsibilities and costs in exchange for a profit. For certain types of facilities, such as enterprise fund account facilities like a golf course, campground, marina, gun and archery range, or community center Island County's portion of the profits may be used to pay facility development and/or operation and maintenance costs at the same or for similar facility developments.

Island County may save considerable monies on concessions where the activities are specialized, seasonal, experimental, or unproven. Concessions can be easily initiated, provide direct user benefit/cost reimbursements, and relieve Island County of a capital risk should market or user interest fail to materialize to at least break-even levels.

Concessionaires could operate a wide variety of park and recreational facilities including boating and bicycle rentals, special group and recreational vehicle campgrounds, athletic field and court facilities, and boar launches and beaches, among others.

#### **7.5.1.17 Public/private joint development ventures**

Island County can enter into an agreement with a private or public developer to jointly own or lease land for an extended period. The purpose of the venture would be to allow the development, operation, and maintenance of a major recreational facility or activity in exchange for a fixed lease cost or a percentage of gross receipts.

The developer assumes development, operation, and maintenance responsibilities, costs, and all market risks in exchange for a market opportunity providing a profitable return not otherwise available. Island County realizes the development of a facility not realized otherwise in exchange for a low minimum capital return and no or very little capital risk.

Joint development agreements represent an ultimate benefit/cost resolution that may also provide public revenue that Island County could use for other development opportunities. Examples include the possible joint development on Island County lands of recreational vehicle campgrounds, seminar retreats, special resorts, golf courses, and gun and archery ranges, among others.

#### **7.5.1.18 Self-help land leases**

There are instances where an activity is so specialized in appeal or of a service area so broad in scope that it cannot be equitably financed using public funds. Specialized user groups should be provided options for developing or maintaining facilities in ways that account for equitable public cost

reimbursements.

Examples include the use of land leases where Island County may lease land at low or no cost where a user group or club assumes responsibility for the development, operation, and maintenance of the facility. The club could provide volunteer help or use club finances to develop, operate and maintain the facility as a means of meeting user benefit/cost objectives.

Land lease agreements could accommodate organized athletics like soccer, baseball, football, softball, and rugby, or very specialized facilities like shooting ranges, archery fields, OHV trails, and ultra-light aircraft parks, among others.

#### **7.5.1.19 Self-help contract agreements**

Island County can purchase land, develop, operate, and maintain a specialized facility under a negotiated contract agreement where a special interest group agrees to defray all costs in addition to or in lieu of a user fee as a means of meeting user benefit/cost objectives. The agreements can be quite flexible and could contract the city, school district, the user group, another public agency, or a private operator to be developer/operator.

Contract agreements could accommodate a range of more expensive special purpose facility developments including high quality athletic competition facilities for league organizations; and specialized facility developments like shooting ranges and OHV trail systems, or historical or children's museums, or railroad train excursions when and where the user organization can provide financial commitments.

## 7.6 GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies noted in this Element describe how Island County Parks will carry out their mission and achieve the community vision for the park system. Taken together, goals and policies can be a means of measuring Island County's performance in providing recreation opportunities and conserving habitat areas according to their area of focus.

These goals and policies were developed based on input from staff and community members to provide policy direction for the implementation strategies and actions. All goals, policies, strategies, and actions flow from the vision for park and recreation services and advance the County's area of focus.

**Goal 1. Provide a quality, diverse, and sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs. Island County is dedicated to ensuring that outdoor experiences in natural environments are accessible to all, regardless of abilities.**

- PR 1.1. Park land should support the mission and vision of Island County Parks with a preference towards providing **passive** outdoor recreation experiences and protecting habitat.
- PR 1.2. Provide signature park lands and high-quality recreation facilities that reflect the character of Island County, draw users from throughout the region, and establish an identity/brand for Island County Parks.
  - PR 1.2.1. Provide attractive and uniform signage at park entrances to improve the branding of Island County Parks.
  - PR 1.2.2. Improve the image of County parks through sensitive site design and development that reflects Island County's character.
    - PR 1.2.2.1. Prior to the development of any new **minor** feature or facility, consider its design, and placement, and ADA access within the park.
    - PR 1.2.2.2. Prior to the development of any new major facility or park, create a site design (for smaller sites) or site master plan (for larger sites) to help achieve the County's vision for parks lands of being the best in the state.
  - PR 1.3. Continue to update the County's facility inventory to have an accurate count of facilities within all parks, including the length of trails (in linear feet or miles) that are developed and maintained both inside and outside of parks and habitat areas.

## 2025 UPDATES

**REVISED**/**NEW**

Goals and policies that have been revised (more than minor text edits) are indicated with **blue underlined** for added text and **red cross-through** for removed text.

- PR 1.4. ~~Ensure~~ Require recreational uses and development ~~that do~~ does not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.
- PR 1.5. Residents of all abilities should have adequate access to “open space” areas. Open spaces include land which contains natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural, and scenic resources. Such land should be preserved and provided to residents for recreational use when appropriate. Open spaces should be linked to non-motorized transportation and public transportation.

**Goal 2. Provide low impact ~~passive~~ outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County by increasing access to parks near populated areas such as Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) while emphasizing those that have relatively low impact on the natural environment over others with higher impacts.**

- PR 2.1. Invest in amenities and facilities that support ~~passive~~, ADA access outdoor recreation activities, such as walking, biking, boating, camping, wildlife watching, horseback riding, beach activities, hunting, fishing, clamping, etc.
- PR 2.2. Strive to provide areas where people can walk at least ~~one mile~~ 5-10-minutes in nature or within a ~~20~~ 10-minute drive from most County residences.
- PR 2.3. Provide additional recreation opportunities and ADA facilities that are consistent with the County’s area of focus, such as dog parks, boat ramps, camping, and hunting, in dispersed locations county wide where safe and appropriate opportunities exist to support these activities.
- PR 2.4. Provide diverse, non-motorized trail opportunities, including both ADA hard and soft-surfaced trails, water trails, looped trail systems, and trails with variety of lengths and access points consistent with the Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan. Include appropriate amenities to support a variety of trail uses, including pedestrians, equestrians, bikes, non-motorized watercraft, and other appropriate uses.
  - PR 2.4.1. Trail development on public lands should be completed through regional collaboration and prioritize linking multimodal transportation, schools, urban development, places of employment, and recreational facilities.
  - PR 2.4.2. Development of community trails should be completed through collaboration with private landowners and prioritize providing a recreational experience in nature and lining neighborhood and recreational facilities.
- PR 2.5. Increase the level and quality of development in park lands, where appropriate, to enhance the County’s image as a premier provider of ~~passive~~ outdoor recreation opportunities in the Puget Sound area and in Washington State.
- PR 2.6. Monitor community demand for additional outdoor recreation services as the population in Island County continues to grow.
  - PR 2.6.1. When a need or gap is identified, the County will look to develop plans to address these discrepancies by expanding existing recreation facilities, acquiring new land, or coordinating with other agencies or private landowners to meet those needs.

PR 2.7. Evaluate existing sites to determine which sites are suitable for increased facility development. Prioritize projects using the prioritization criteria presented in PR 4.7 and add these projects to the County's Capital Facilities Plan.

**Goal 3. Increase public access to the County's fresh and saltwater beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.**

PR 3.1. Plan, design, maintain, and develop beach access areas for ADA access, walking, beachcombing, fishing, wading, swimming, kayaking, and boating while adhering to the goals and policies set forth in the County's Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.2. Inform the public of existing Island County public shore accesses where recreational use does not pose a threat to public health, safety, or the environment. Once a clear County title, a physical location, a viable view, or a viable tidal access is established, the County should identify sites with signs (including from the water side for kayak and canoe pullouts and against motorized boating in sensitive waters) where appropriate and consistent with the most current County's Non-Motorized Trails Plan and Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.3. Identify opportunities to increase public waterfront access through the recovery of public road ends where public access is being blocked, with provisions of for swimming beaches, coastal and water vistas, and accesses, motorized and non-motorized boat launches, public boat moorage, and water viewpoints while being consistent with goals and policies set forth in the County's Shoreline Master Program.

PR 3.4. Strive to provide shoreline access for beach activities where people can walk within 5-10-minutes or within a ~~20~~ 10-minute drive from most County residences.

**Goal 4. ~~Acquire lands that~~ Protect and conserve priority habitat, and natural resources, preserve open space, improve beach access, maintain and island character. Where appropriate, acquire public access rights or title to lands to improve and expand passive outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment including ADA facilities, wildlife viewpoints, beach access, trails, boat launches, and other recreational improvements.**

PR 4.1. ~~Acquire~~ Protect and conserve land that protects habitat and working landscapes that can help recharge aquifers, prevent surface and groundwater pollution, filter sediments, limit air and noise pollution, maintain wildlife habitat and other natural systems, or to address ~~addressing~~ identified recreation needs while avoiding incremental or cumulative habitat without causing degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

PR 4.2. Maintain the important ecological functions of park lands, including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.

PR 4.3. Connect park lands by identifying and conserving wildlife habitat corridors, riparian corridors, and protected space along other elongated natural features—where such connections support trail development and connectivity.

- PR 4.4. Only accept land donations that support the County's area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this [Comprehensive Plan](#) Element.
- PR 4.5. Foster Island County's economic vitality by protecting productive resources and park lands that support economic activity in industries such as tourism, agriculture, and forestry.
- PR 4.6. Ensure donations from other providers are consistent with the County's area of focus and can be sustainably managed and maintained with identified funding resources, such as a stipend, long-term stewardship fund, revenue-generation strategy, etc.
- PR 4.7. Acquire land using the following criteria:
  - PR 4.7.1. The site is adjacent to a County-owned park land so that acquisition would create a larger park land and/or the site is adjacent to a trail and will provide a longer trail corridor.
  - PR 4.7.2. The site is located near park lands owned by other entities. Unlike PR 4.7.1, these parcels must be large (e.g., five acres or more), or contain important habitat, or meet a specific recreational need or wildlife corridor need to justify the County's role in this area.
  - PR 4.7.3. Larger sites typically have higher habitat value, greater recreation capacity, and a greater maintenance cost efficiency. The County should avoid acquiring small habitat parcels, unless these sites contribute to a larger protected area, contain important habitat, or provide a wildlife corridor between protected areas. Also, the County should avoid acquiring sites just large enough to address recreation needs, without space to protect habitat.
  - PR 4.7.4. The County should strive to acquire land that is considered to have a high or medium resource value, to minimize restoration requirements. Habitat quality can be measured by considering factors such as habitat age/maturity, presence of rare [versus protected](#) species, absence of invasive species, and level of degradation (e.g., development, soil compaction, pollution, impacted vegetation, etc.). A sample habitat quality criterion is presented in [section 7.4.3](#) of this Parks and Recreation Element.
  - PR 4.7.5. The land uses and quality of habitat on adjacent or nearby parcels should not negatively impact the scenic and aesthetic value and natural character of the site. The County should consider whether adjacent site characteristics or land management practices (e.g., weed control, invasive species removal, erosion and water runoff, soil contamination, etc.) will affect habitat quality on the site being evaluated.
  - PR 4.7.6. The site meets a need for a [one-mile 5-10-minute walk](#) in nature (or longer nature trail) or beach access for recreation opportunities.
  - PR 4.7.7. The site meets another [passive](#) outdoor recreation need, such as a boat ramp, boat launch, dog park, primitive camp, or equestrian and mountain biking trail and trailhead.

PR 4.7.8. The site is well-suited for recreation development, based on site characteristics such as slope, shape, access (motorized and non-motorized transportation), amount of street frontage, amount of non-developable land, water and well availability, existing structures, existing vegetation and soil, etc.

PR 4.7.9. The site has (or has a potential for) access and anticipated site use. Zoning restrictions, neighborhood or community character, and access limitations should all be considered when developing public facilities.

PR 4.7.10. The site is not located within the service area of another town, city, or recreation district. The County should strive to address conservation and recreation needs in areas that are not served by another jurisdiction or viable sponsor including Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD).

PR 4.7.11. The site is not adjacent to a site protected by another jurisdiction. If another jurisdiction is in a better position to manage and protect a site, the County may partner to support the other jurisdiction's acquisition of this land. Where a site is adjacent to another jurisdiction the County may partner or support that jurisdiction where it is more effective or efficient for that jurisdiction to protect and manage the site.

PR 4.7.12. If another public agency or non-profit is in a better position to leverage funding for site purchase or a conservation easement, the County may partner or support ~~should allow them~~ the agency to protect this land. ~~particularly if the provider is also able to meet recreation needs.~~

PR 4.7.13. If the site is in a service area with ~~active recreation needs as well as~~ outdoor recreation needs, the County should consider collaboration with another provider who would acquire, administer, manage, and maintain outdoor recreation more effectively. ~~the site. The County does not want to be in the business of supporting active recreational uses on its lands.~~

PR 4.7.14. To be considered for acquisition by the ~~managed by the~~ Island County Parks Department, ~~the~~ a site must satisfy ~~needs to have the capacity to address both~~ habitat conservation and ~~or~~ any proposed outdoor recreation needs.

PR 4.7.15. ~~The site should be in an area of habitat conservation and recreation needs.~~ If a site is in an area where recreation and recreation needs are already met by existing park land, the County should direct its resources to other priority areas where recreation and/or conservation efforts are needed. ~~Another jurisdiction may be better positioned to meet needs in this area.~~

PR 4.7.16. ~~A site can be acquired with minimal cost by the County, such as through donation or grants.~~

PR 4.7.16. The County or other provider is able to pay the annual operating and maintenance costs for the site. The County should avoid providing or accepting from others new park lands where the County is unable to fund site stewardship. If a site is transferred to the County with an operational endowment, this stipend should be on-going or sufficient to cover site land and facility maintenance costs ~~for a minimum of 5 years. That will give Island County time to put a different funding strategy in place.~~

PR 4.7.17. The site can be sustainably managed using approved revenue-generating strategies to generate funds to support operations and maintenance. This may include user fees, facility rental fees, leases, and other strategies.

PR 4.7.18. The site does not have management or development restrictions in place that limit desired opportunities for revenue-generation, operation, and management within the scope of the County's ~~niche~~ purview, administrative capacity, and jurisdiction.

PR 4.7.19. There are no excessive or hidden costs or efforts needed to address site clean-up, structure removal, habitat restoration, the provision of road access, or facility development.

PR 4.7.20. Avoid providing or accepting new parks and habitat areas if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of facilities at the site.

PR 4.8. Secure access to private lands and private roads for community trail corridors thorough use licenses, easements, or other agreements using the following criteria:

PR 4.8.1. The corridor provides a recreational experience in nature or links to multimodal transportation, schools, urban development, places of employment, neighborhoods, or recreational facilities.

PR 4.8.2. A site can be acquired with minimal cost by the County such as ( e.g. PBRS), donations, or grants.

PR 4.8.3. Construction and maintenance will be performed predominantly by volunteers with specialized assistance from the County as resources permit.

**Goal 5. Divest in parks lands that are not in conformance with the County's Comprehensive Plan and stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals. ~~consistent with the County's area of focus.~~**

PR 5.1. Evaluate County lands to determine which sites do or do not support the vision and goals of this Parks and Recreation Element. Consider divestment of public lands that have little value for conservation or ~~passive~~ outdoor recreation.

- PR 5.2. Should an existing County property with resource restrictions (such as a conservation easement) on its title be considered for divestment, the County shall honor those restrictions. Additionally, should any existing County property with significant conservation value (that does not have any encumbrance on the title) be considered for divestment, the County should consider placing conservation restrictions on the title before divestment.
- PR 5.3. Prior to any divestment of County land, the County should consider transfer of those lands to agencies that will maintain the land for uses that meet recreation or habitat needs **which conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals that are outside the County's area of focus**, including, but not limited to, transferring **active** recreation sites to park districts or transferring habitat land without potential for recreational use to a land trust to protect.
- PR 5.4. Create a transition plan for sites or facilities which do not fit within the County's **Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals defined area of focus**. Identify which sites (if any) can be sold or immediately transferred to other jurisdictions, and which sites should be held until a long-term transition is feasible.
- PR 5.5. Evaluate **all** funding, actions, and projects by **their** **the** fit with the County's **Comprehensive Plan or its stated Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals defined area of focus**. Pursue projects that support this area of focus and re-evaluate plans that do not. **For example, put immediate hold on any plans to improve active use facilities, such as sport fields, sports courts, and indoor facilities. Do not accept any new lands or renew any maintenance or site use agreements until a transition plan is in place.**
- PR 5.6. **Discuss with the Board of Commissioners whether the County should continue to own and operate any special properties not consistent with the County's area of focus; for example facilities such as Freeland Hall and the Four Springs Lake Preserve.**
- PR 5.6. Create site master plans for properties not consistent with the County's area of focus and parks that are not accepted by other jurisdictions. Involve site users, nearby residents, and interest groups to create a new plan or design that notes what new facilities will be developed at these sites, when older facilities not consistent with the County's area of focus age or deteriorate to the point where they are unsafe for future use. **For example, consider removing the tennis court and softball field at Camano Park and providing a dog park at this facility instead.**

**Goal 6. Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.**

- PR 6.1. Consider a higher level of habitat stewardship to address invasive species removal, natural area restoration, and habitat preservation needs.

- PR 6.2. Increase the level of land stewardship at all County-owned sites. The County should evaluate and budget for habitat stewardship needs. The County should use the funding strategies outlined in ~~section 7.5 of~~ this [Parks & Recreation](#) Element as a starting point in calculating a maintenance budget for habitat stewardship.
- PR 6.3. As part of stewardship efforts, evaluate the condition of natural lands within County parks and habitat conservation areas. Identify which sites would benefit most from restoration efforts. Based on available resources, target sites where restoration is achievable, since maintenance needs will decrease after the ecosystem is stabilized. Maintain other sites at a minimum level for hazard mitigation.

**Goal 7. Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.**

- PR 7.1. Actively seek innovative funding methods to retain financial flexibility and increase facility services.
- PR 7.2. Consider and maintain diverse funding sources to meet community needs and provide high-quality parks and facilities. Consider impact fees; real estate excise taxes (REET); tourism taxes; conservation futures funds; bonds and levies; grants, donations, and sponsorships; facility/site use fees and rentals; land leases; sustainable resource harvesting; concessions and vendor agreements; and other options that may be available in the short and/or long term.
- PR 7.3. Reinvest revenue and/or resources obtained from park lands, back into recreation and habitat conservation services, whether directly or through a dedicated fund for system-wide conservation and recreation services. This includes any proceeds from facility/site rentals, user fees, leases, vendor or concessionaire agreements, and land divestment (sale or trade). This applies to all lease agreements, user fees, vendor fees, facility and site rentals, etc.
- PR 7.4. Increase the County's maintenance investment in terms of funding and staffing to significantly improve the maintenance level of service for parks and recreation facilities.
- PR 7.5. Revise the accounting and budgeting process for collecting and spending revenues generated through the outdoor recreation system. Rather than establishing independent funds for specific sites (such as Cornet Bay Dock) or projects (such as Camano Island boat ramp improvements), create two funds: Camano Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund and Whidbey Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund. ~~This will allow sufficient funds to accumulate to apply them to most needed projects, rather than piecemeal upgrades at individual sites.~~
- PR 7.6. Increase the level of facility maintenance and land stewardship at the most-frequently used County-owned sites.
- PR 7.7.** ~~Even though the County is moving towards low-maintenance Park facilities, the maintenance budget should be increased to ensure the County parks are maintained properly.~~
- PR 7.8. Implement low-maintenance landscaping techniques in all existing and new park sites. ~~Remove turf areas that do not support specific recreational uses. Avoid high-maintenance plantings.~~

PR 7.9. ~~Identify and implement other resource-based funding strategies, tied into a marketing campaign to advertise County resources.~~

PR 7.8. Create a transition strategy that defines an appropriate level of maintenance investment in facilities that do not support the County's area of focus. ~~Define a funding threshold for repairs, but do not engage in a major capital reinvestment.~~

PR 7.9. Renovate or replace capital facilities that support the County's area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this Parks & Recreation Element.

PR 7.12. ~~Avoid providing or accepting new parks and habitat areas (together with planned or built facilities) if the County or other provider is unable to pay for the subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of facilities at the site.~~

PR 7.10. ~~Non-capital alternatives may be pursued~~ If operating and maintenance cost restrictions prohibit capital construction then non-capital alternatives must be pursued.

PR 7.11. Create strategies or a business plan for facilities ~~identified in PR 5.6, such as Freeland Hall and Four Springs Reserve~~ which are not consistent with the County's area of focus, to recover costs sufficient to support their maintenance and operations. ~~For example, at Freeland Hall, either charge fees for grounds maintenance or create an agreement where the Holmes Harbor Activities Club provides all site and grounds maintenance and improvements.~~

**Goal 8. Foster partnerships and county-wide collaboration among park and habitat providers to improve the provision of habitat conservation and recreation services.**

PR 8.1. Support a comprehensive, county-wide park and habitat system that integrates Island County lands within a larger system supported by multiple jurisdictions, organizations, and public and private agencies.

PR 8.2. Continue to cooperate with State and Federal agencies, local governments, special purpose districts, non-profits and other organizations to achieve the vision and goals set forth in this Parks & Recreation Element.

PR 8.3. Acquire and manage park lands in ways that complement other public and private recreation and conservation efforts.

PR 8.4. Continue to coordinate with other County departments and jurisdictions in consolidating and defining the methods to identify, retain, and conserve natural lands and habitat areas within the County.

PR 8.5. Collaborate with others to promote Island County as a recreation destination, using a variety of public relations and marketing techniques to increase awareness of the County's parks and recreation facilities.

- PR 8.6. Partner with community groups, concessionaires, and others to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events consistent with the vision and goals in this Parks & Recreation Element. This may include but is not limited to low impact ~~passive~~ outdoor community events, environmental education, campground programs, facility-based programming (e.g., related to boating, hunting, trail use), etc.
- PR 8.7. Formalize the County's role with ongoing and new potential partners. There are many other providers in Island County who play a variety of roles in conserving habitat and providing recreational opportunities. If one of these providers is better positioned to meet identified needs, let them. If a partnership or collaborative effort is proposed with Island County, clearly define the County's role according to its area of focus including spelling out financial and management responsibilities for both parties.
- PR 8.8. Coordinate or partner with non-profit groups, vendors, businesses, or other agencies to provide outdoor recreation programming consistent with the County's area of focus.
- PR 8.9. Cooperate with other public, ~~and~~ private agencies, and private landowners to protect habitat and provide recreation opportunities before the most suitable sites are lost to development.
- PR 8.10. Explore partnerships with vendors, for-profit concessionaires, and non-profit groups to provide programs, events, and services consistent with the County's area of focus, vision and goals of this Parks & Recreation Element.

**Goal 9. Engage Island County residents in the planning and stewardship of parks, trails, and conservation areas, and provide effective communication to improve awareness and support of County services.**

- PR 9.1. Provide opportunities for public input in park planning and design decisions to keep tabs on local park and recreation preferences, needs, and trends.
- PR 9.2. Promote volunteerism to enhance community support and stewardship of parks, recreation facilities, community trails, and natural resources. ~~In particular~~, Encourage citizen involvement and participation in maintaining, improving, and restoring parks, trails, and natural areas.
- PR 9.3. Increase volunteer coordination and administration to ensure that volunteers have sufficient direction, support and recognition.
- PR 9.4. Enhance customer service and increase site use by making information more accessible to residents and visitors.

- PR 9.5. Prior to instituting ~~boat ramp and trailhead parking~~ park user fees, create press releases, website information, and email notifications with messages about “Investing in Our Parks.” Create [a process](#) [an email address](#) where residents can send their recommendations regarding specific small-scale improvements that are needed (and fit the County’s area of focus). Also, create an online volunteer coordination and recruitment tool where volunteers join a work party to help with identified improvements. The goal of the public information effort is to allow residents to be involved in and see the positive changes that these new funding initiatives will bring.
- PR 9.6. When funding is available, provide staff time for volunteer coordination, direction, recognition, and general involvement. Initially, this may be a part-time position that eventually expands. Ensure that volunteers are not engaging in undirected activities, such as new trail development, without permission or guidance to do so.
- PR 9.7. Increase volunteer coordination through more specifically defined volunteer programs and opportunities, including written volunteer guidelines for specific tasks, such as habitat restoration, trail building and site maintenance.
- PR 9.8. Plan a larger effort to advertise and market County sites as tourism destinations for their scenic value, outdoor facilities, camping opportunities, event capacity, etc. Replace the marketing coordinator position at Four Springs Lake Preserve with a system-wide marketing specialist who oversees all facilities.
- PR 9.9. Establish an online system for campsite and other facility reservations. Other agencies use online reservation providers that are paid for by the user.
- PR 9.10. Incorporate opportunities for historical and environmental interpretation into the park system to educate the public about the local, regional, and ecological context.

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