

Island County Comprehensive Plan

7. Parks and Recreation Element



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3rd Grade
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ISLAND COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2010, Island County and the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (Land Trust) formed a collaborative partnership to update the Parks and Recreation Plan for Island County. In a context where many different



jurisdictions are involved in protecting habitat, natural areas, and providing recreation opportunities, the plan identifies Island County’s “niche” 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 for the community. It addresses declining funding, which has made it difficult

for the County to adequately care for its resources and sets up a vision for the next 10 to 20 years.

As an update to the 1998 Parks and Recreation Element of the Island County Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan, this Plan synthesizes existing data from a variety of sources to create a County inventory of habitat and recreation lands. It incorporates public involvement findings to identify a vision for County park land—a system of recreation and conservation Park Lands that together maintain the long-term health of the County and its residents. Based on this vision, the Plan includes specific goals and policies for developing, protecting, and maintaining the park system to address recreation and conservation needs in a fiscally-sound, sustainable manner. Most importantly, this Plan 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, it 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.

1.1 PLANNING PROCESS

The development of the Parks and Recreation Plan included three major phases (Figure 1). This process is described below:

- *Phase 1: Where Are We Now?*
To provide a foundation for the planning process, Phase 1 included a demographic review and overview of agencies and jurisdictions involved

1 in recreation, natural areas, and habitat conservation services on
2 Whidbey and Camano Islands. County lands and facilities were
3 inventoried, mapped, and evaluated in the context of other agencies to
4 document existing roles and resources. Phase 1 efforts were summarized
5 in the Planning Context Summary Memo and the Existing Resources
6 Summary Memo.

7 **Figure 1: The Planning Process**



- *Phase 2: Where Do We Want to Be?*
Phase 2 focused on public outreach to assess the preferences and priorities of residents and key stakeholders in Island County. In addition, it included an operations and funding analysis that questioned the County’s role in providing parks and habitat, evaluated its available resources and level of investment, and identified potential management and operations strategies for the future. Combined with community feedback, this analysis was used to identify recreation and conservation needs and define the County’s vision, mission, and role for the future. Phase 2 efforts were summarized in the Public Involvement Summary Memo and the Community Needs Assessment.
- *Phase 3: How Do We Get There?*
In Phase 3, key elements of the Parks and Recreation Plan were drafted for review. These included a set of goals and objectives for the park and natural areas land system, as well as short and long-term strategies to achieve the County’s vision. The Draft Plan will be presented to key County staff, the Board of Commissioners, the Land Trust, and County residents for review and refinement. Based on their comments, a final Parks and Recreation Plan will be submitted to the County for adoption and long-term guidance in achieving the desired park and natural areas system.

1.2 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

This document is a replacement of the Parks and Recreation Element in the Island County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 1998. It

1 integrates County efforts to provide recreation opportunities and conserve
2 habitat and natural areas within the park land system. For this reason,
3 many goals, objectives, and implementation strategies noted in this Plan
4 are consistent with the County’s Natural Lands Element. However, the
5 content of this Plan does not supersede the information in the Natural
6 Lands Element, which addresses a broader context than the park land
7 system.

5 This Plan is a
6 replacement of
7 the 1998 Parks
8 and Recreation
9 Element in
10 Island County’s
11 Comprehensive
12 Plan.

As per Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements,
the Parks and Recreation Plan is consistent with the
Capital Facilities Element as it relates to park and
recreation facilities. It includes estimates of park and
recreation demand for a ten-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. The plan is also consistent with
other elements of the County’s Comprehensive Plan,
including the Land Use, Water Resources, Shoreline
Management, Critical Areas, and Capital Facilities

elements.

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

1.3 TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

The Parks and Recreation Plan uses the following definitions throughout
this element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- *Park Lands:* All the lands managed by the Island County which
are formally used for or dedicated to outdoor recreation and/or
conservation. There are three types of properties that make up
Island County Park Lands: 1) Community Parks; 2) Conservation
Areas; and 3) Natural Recreation Areas.
- *Community Parks:* Any area that has been set aside or is
managed for outdoor recreation purposes, has associated built
elements (e.g. boat ramps, picnic tables, playground equipment,
or ballfields), and is consistent with the Capital Facilities
element definition 1.1.3 “Community parks” (owned and
operated by the County).

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- *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. These areas may also support outdoor recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts.¹
 - *Natural Recreation Areas:* Park lands that offer recreational opportunities in a natural setting but do not meet the definition of a Community Park or Conservation Area. Examples of these are beach access sites without built elements, off-leash dog parks and forest areas with a greater focus on outdoor recreational use.
 - *Outdoor Recreation:* Outdoor Recreation refers to a leisure activity (or the act of engaging in a leisure activity) that is 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.
 - *Low-impact Recreation:* Low-impact recreation refers to a leisure activity that typically has minimal impact on the natural environment. Hiking, camping, horseback riding, bicycling, and fishing are examples of low-impact recreation.
 - *High-impact (Active) Recreation:* High-impact or Active recreation is used to describe activities and/or facilities that have a significant impact on the natural environment. Motorized recreational use (dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc), ball fields, playgrounds and tennis courts are examples of high-impact recreation.
 - *Habitat:* Habitat is used in a broad fashion to refer to the area or natural environment in which an animal, plant, or ecological community normally occurs, lives, or grows (also called “Habitat Area”).

¹ A conservation area is one of three types of park land in Island County’s park land classification system. Conservation areas, Natural recreation areas, and community parks are discussed in Chapter 3.

- *Wildlife Corridor:* Wildlife Corridors are connecting habitat that links larger patches of habitat, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants. These are called ‘corridors’ even though they are not always linear. Connecting one habitat with another allows species to flow between larger habitat patches, interbreed, genetically mix, and access food and other resources. It is the long term intent of the Parks & Recreation Element to create corridors with formal permanent protection, typically through fee simple land acquisition or purchase of easements from willing landowners.

- *Natural Lands:* As defined in the Natural Lands Element, Natural Lands include 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 recreation opportunities; preserve historic sites; preserve working agricultural landscapes; or preserve visual quality or scenic vistas along transportation corridors.



To some extent, Parks, Conservation Areas, and Natural Recreation Areas are overlapping terms. To avoid confusion, the term “Natural Lands” is used in this document to refer to the Natural Lands Element. The terms “County Park Lands” or “County Park System” refer to Island County lands that support recreation and conservation. At times, these County lands are also called the “parks and habitat system” (or “parks and habitat areas”) to call attention to the natural areas within parks.

1.4 PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Parks and Recreation Plan is divided into seven chapters and four appendices. Each section is described below.

Introduction describes the purpose of the Plan, the planning process, the relationship of this plan to other planning efforts, key terms, and the organization of this report.

1 *Existing Park System* defines the planning area and the county-wide Park
2 and Natural area inventory. It also describes the County land classification
3 system, the types of existing habitat within this system, and Island
4 County’s recreation facilities.

5 *County Niche* summarizes key findings from the public involvement
6 process and defines a vision, mission, and refined niche for Island County
7 Parks.

8 *Habitat Conservation and Recreation Needs* summarizes the results of the
9 community needs assessment.

10 *Goals and Objectives* notes the long-term goals and objectives that will
11 help Island County achieve its vision for the park system.

12 *Chapter 6: Implementation Strategies* presents short-term and long-term
13 strategies related to park system management and operations, transition,
14 and land acquisition.

15 *Action Plan* identifies specific actions and projects that Island County can
16 pursue to improve, develop, maintain, and steward its park system.

17 *Appendix A: Public Involvement Key Findings* includes an overview of
18 each outreach activity, as well as a consolidated set of key findings.

19 *Appendix B: Inventory by Department/Jurisdiction* includes maps and
20 inventory tables summarizing data for Island County, cities and towns,
21 school districts, and other providers. It also notes Conservation Easements
22 held by Island County, the Land Trust, and National Park Service.

23 *Appendix C: Park/Habitat Inventory by Classification* includes maps and
24 inventory tables showing the Island County inventory classified by site
25 function.

26 *Appendix D: Island County Habitat Inventory* presents USGS Gap
27 Analysis Data to illustrate the types and amount of habitat (acreage) within
28 Island County’s park system.

29 *Appendix E: Habitat Quality Rating Criteria* presents criteria that can be
30 use by Island County Parks to rate the quality of habitat in existing and
31 proposed park areas.

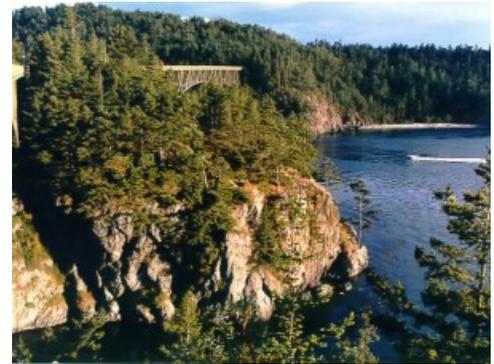
1 County’s need to manage resources on both islands requires considerable
2 time and energy to commute between the two islands.

3 ***CLIMATE***

4 Like most of western Washington, portions of Island County receive
5 considerable precipitation. However, weather patterns and precipitation are
6 strongly influenced by the Olympic Mountains and the Coastal Range on
7 Vancouver Island, which shields parts of the islands from winter storms
8 moving inland from the Pacific Ocean. This creates an uneven pattern of
9 precipitation. While central Island County, near Coupeville, receives an
10 average annual rainfall of 18 inches, southern Whidbey Island receives
11 averages between 30 and 60 inches a year.

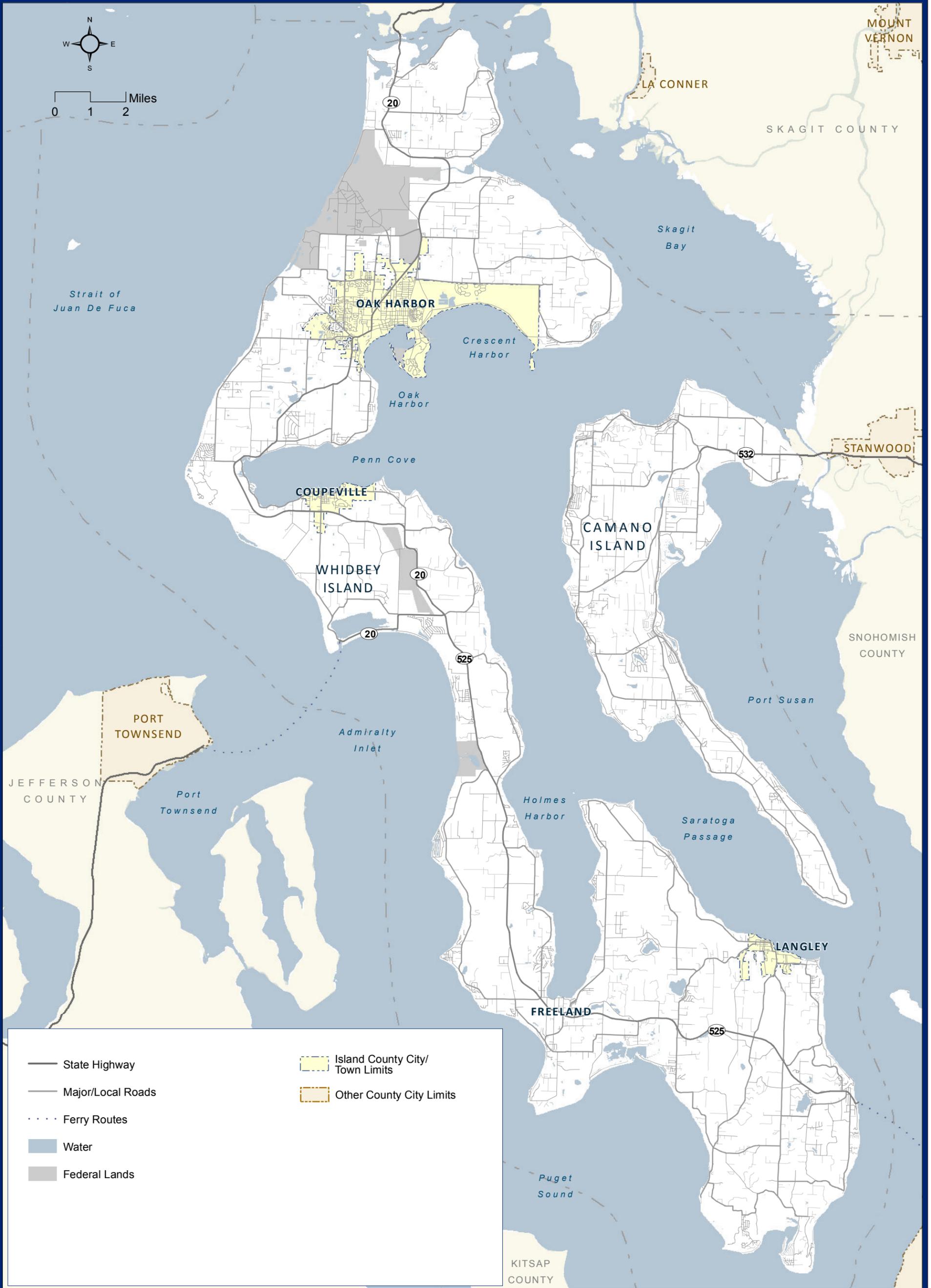
12 ***TOPOGRAPHY***

13 Surrounded by Puget Sound, Whidbey and
14 Camano Islands are generally flat, with low
15 rolling hills and gentle slopes that lead from
16 shoreline to the islands’ interiors. Along the
17 Strait of Juan de Fuca on the west side of
18 Whidbey Island, the shoreline is more rugged
19 and steep, as it is on the southern portion of
20 Camano Island. However, tidal estuaries and
21 bays on the shoreline, as well as large inlets on
22 the eastern side of the islands, provide
23 opportunities for shoreline access.



24 ***NATURAL AREAS AND OPEN SPACE***

25 Despite historic and ongoing development, Island County still has large tracts of
26 undeveloped open space on both islands. Some of this land is protected by
27 various jurisdictions and agencies through parks, preserves, and conservation
28 easements. However, many acres of upland forests, shoreline and tidal habitat,
29 freshwater habitat, and wetlands are privately-owned. In some cases, these lands
30 are (or have been) managed for their agricultural, forest, or mineral values. In
31 other cases, the lands are being held for later development. Whatever the case,
32 Island County and other agencies have an interest in protecting these natural
33 areas to maintain the environmental health, character, and heritage of Whidbey
34 and Camano Islands.



Island County Parks & Recreation Element



10/14/2011 | Data Source: Island County Planning & Community Development, Whidbey Camano Land Trust, USGS & DNR

**Map 1:
Island County Planning Area**

JURISDICTIONS INVOLVED IN PARK/HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Island County is one of many jurisdictions and property owners who are working to provide recreation and conservation services on Whidbey and Camano Islands. For this reason, parks planning requires an understanding of jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities. The land management jurisdictions in Island County are described below. While not an exhaustive list, this list helps illustrate the context within which Island County operates.



Federal

The United States Navy and the National Park Service are both involved in managing parks and habitat lands in the County. The Whidbey Naval Air Station and Ault Field Airstrip on Whidbey Island protect natural acreage and provides recreation opportunities for servicemen and their families. Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve (Ebey’s Reserve), on the west central shore of Whidbey Island, is a non-traditional unit of the National Park Service (NPS). NPS also holds many conservation easements on Whidbey Island.

In addition to Island County, there are many other public and private agencies and organizations that support parks, recreation, and habitat conservation on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

State

The State of Washington supports recreation and habitat conservation through the efforts of several agencies. Washington State Parks operates nine state parks in Island County. In addition, fishing and shellfish harvest areas are managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Although some forest lands are still owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), DNR does not currently manage any land in Island County.

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 extensive park land inventory. Langley has several small parks and natural areas, and the Town of Coupeville manages ten sites.

Park Districts

There are two park and recreation districts in Island County: North Whidbey Park and Recreation District (NWPRD) and South Whidbey Park and Recreation District (SWPRD). NWPRD manages and operates Clover Valley Park, including the John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool. SWPRD manages the Community Park & Sports Complex, as well as Trustland Trails.

Port Authorities

1 Island County has three port authorities; the Port of Coupeville, the Port of South
2 Whidbey, and the Port of Mabana. The Port of Coupeville operates the
3 Coupeville Wharf and owns the Greenbank Farm. The Port of South Whidbey
4 provides several parks, waterfront sites, and a marina.

School Districts

4 Island County’s four school districts (Coupeville, Oak Harbor, South Whidbey,
5 and Stanwood 205) provide recreation and play facilities at local schools.

Non-Profits

6 The Whidbey Camano Land Trust
7 (Land Trust) plays an important
8 role in the conservation and
9 protection of land in Island County.
10 The Land Trust acquires land and
11 conservation easements through
12 donations and purchase in order to
13 protect coastal areas, wetlands and
14 streams, wildlife habitat, working
15 farmlands, scenic vistas, natural areas, and trails. The Land Trust then
16 provides ongoing stewardship on its lands, or in some cases, transfers
17 ownership to other jurisdictions, such as Island County, with a
18 conservation easement in place to restrict future use. In addition to the
19 Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy also owns a large parcel of
20 protected land in Island County.



2.2 PARK AND HABITAT INVENTORY

14 Island County and the agencies noted above provide more than 14,500
15 acres of park land and habitat areas, as calculated using available GIS data.
16 Table 1 summarizes this data, which is presented in its entirety in
17 Appendix B. While this inventory is not comprehensive, it helps paint a

17 All agencies and
18 organizations together
19 provide more than
20 14,500 acres for
21 habitat conservation
22 and recreation. They
23 protect another 3,100
acres through
easements.

picture of the major landholders and
extensive landholdings for parks, natural
recreation areas, and conservation areas.

As shown in Table 1, the State of
Washington and non-profits (including the
Land Trust) provide over 4,500 acres of
park and habitat areas. Island County is the
third largest provider, with 3,372 acres in
its park system.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

In addition to the land owned outright by
the County and other jurisdictions,

1 additional habitat areas are protected through conservation easements.
 2 Conservation easements may be purchased and held on privately-owned
 3 lands to protect them from development or to preserve specific
 4 conservation values, such as farmland or forest.

5 As shown in Table 2, the Land Trust (1,064 acres) and the National Park
 6 Service (2,023 acres) are major holders of conservation easements in
 7 Island County. In comparison, Island County currently protects less than
 8 200 acres through conservation easements.

9 **Table 1: Parks and Habitat Land Inventory in Island County**

Jurisdiction	# of Sites	Acres*
Island County		
Parks Department	46	1,807.1
Public Works	9	934.0
Unassigned	44	293.1
Other	10	337.8
Subtotal	109	3,372.0
Towns and Cities		
Coupeville	10	29.8
Langley	32	76.0
Oak Harbor	32	159.2
Subtotal	74	265.0
School Districts		
Coupeville School District	6	50.2
Oak Harbor School District	8	160.4
South Whidbey School District	7	190.7
Stanwood Camano School District	2	39.9
Subtotal	23	441.2
Other Jurisdictions		
National Park Service	13	491.8
State Government	21	4,726.8
Port Authorities	8	181.0
Parks & Recreation Districts	4	308.6
Non-Profits	11	4,677.0
Others/Private	4	269.4
Subtotal	61	10,654.7
Total	267	14,732.9

10 Note: This inventory is based on GIS data available for this planning process.

Table 2: Conservation Easements in Island County

Jurisdiction	# of Easements	Acres
National Park Service	24	2,023
Land Trust	28	1,064.1
Island County	9	191.3
Total	61	3,278.4

COUNTY LAND BY DEPARTMENT

Island County manages +/- 3,372 acres of park land. Most of this acreage is managed by the Parks Department or Public Works (Table 3). In addition, 293 acres of open space properties are held as potential parks or habitat areas, but currently not assigned to a particular department for management. A full inventory is presented in Appendix B.

Table 3: Island County Park Land by Department

Department	# of Sites	Acres	% of Total
Parks Department	46	1,807.1	53.6%
Public Works	9	934.0	27.7%
Unassigned	44	293.1	8.7%
Special Maintenance Areas	3	6.3	0.2%
School Trust Lands (Leased)	7	331.8	9.8%
Total	109	3,372.3	100%
Other County Sites *	5	46.0	

* This category includes the County Fairgrounds (managed by the General Services Department) and four County buildings where landscaping is maintained by the Parks Department.

- The *Parks Department* is responsible for more than half of the acreage associated with Parks and Habitat Conservation Areas in Island County (1,800 acres). Examples include Rhododendron Park and the Four Springs Lake Preserve.
- 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 293 acres (44 parcels) that are not assigned to a particular department or division for

Island County Parks and Public Works manage or maintain 3,372 acres for habitat conservation and

1 management. These unassigned sites include wetlands, beach
2 access, and a number of tax-title lands.²

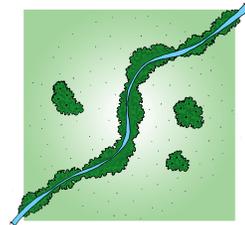
- 3 • As special maintenance areas, the *Parks Department* maintains
4 three sites through inter-local agreements. These include the
5 Clover Valley Off-Leash Area (owned by North Whidbey Parks
6 and Recreation District), Oak Harbor Dog Park (owned by the City
7 of Oak Harbor), and a section of Freeland Park (owned by the Port
8 of South Whidbey).
- 9 • Through long-term lease agreements, *Island County* manages over
10 330 acres of School Trust Lands. Owned by the Washington State
11 Department of Natural Resources, these sites include Elger Bay
12 Preserve, High Point Trust land, Strawberry Point Trust Land,
13 Swantown Trust Land, Skyline West Trust Land, Smuggler’s Cove
14 Trust Land, and Wahl Road Trust Land.

15 In addition to these sites, several non-park areas are noted separately in
16 Table 3. The Parks Department is responsible for the maintenance of four
17 non-recreational sites, such as the Coupeville Campus and the North
18 Whidbey Family Resource Center. The Public Works Department also
19 coordinates with the General Services Department regarding operations of
20 the County Fairgrounds.

21 ***2.3 COUNTY PARK LAND CLASSIFICATION***

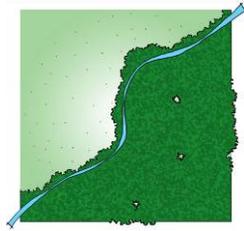
22 To better understand Island County’s park system, each site was classified
23 based on its physical characteristics, level of recreation, habitat value,
level of development, and management needs. The park classification
system includes three types of properties:

- 24 ○ *Community Parks*: Community Parks typically have high
25 levels of recreation and/or facility
26 development, leaving only remnant
27 habitat areas, such as native tree stands
28 or un-built waterfront. Freeland Park,
29 Dave Mackie Park (also known as
30 Maxwellton Beach), and the Maple
31 Grove Boat Ramp are examples of
32 community parks.



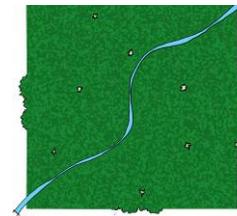
² The County has 18 tax title lands, which are held for repayment of back taxes.

- *Natural Recreation Areas:* Natural Recreation Areas protect more extensive habitat areas, in addition to providing low-impact outdoor recreation facilities, such as trails. They differ from Conservation Areas in that these



sites typically support relatively higher recreational use. Rhododendron Campground and Trails, Dan Porter Park, and West Beach Vista are examples of Natural Recreation Areas.

- *Conservation Areas:* Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation and protection but may provide low-impact outdoor recreational uses that are secondary to and do not conflict with conservation values. Examples of conservation areas are Ethyl Taylor property, Swantown Lake, High Point Trust Land, and Greenbank South.



- *Other:* The County also owns several properties that do not fit into the Park Land Classification system. They are identified in the inventories and Tables as “Other” properties. Examples are the Coupeville and Camano campuses and Pioneer Cemetery. Two of these “Other” properties are managed by community organizations and are not considered part of the County park system (Freeland Hall and Island County Fairgrounds).

Parks are classified as Community Parks, Natural Recreation Areas or Conservation Areas based on each site’s primary focus.

Table 4 presents the inventory according to this classification system. Appendix C is the Island County inventory by classification. The appendix includes maps that illustrate the distribution of these park types.

Table 4: Island County Park Land by Classification

Classification	# of Sites	Acres	% of Total
Community Parks	20	125.7	3%
Natural Recreation Areas	38	2560.6	75%
Conservation Areas	30	665.3	20%
Subtotal	88	3351.6	
Other	27	66.7	2%
Total	115	3,418.3	100%

Source: Island County, 2010

As noted in the table, the majority of County park land (75%) is classified as Natural Recreation Areas. Conservation Areas account for about 20% of the entire system. About 13% is categorized as Community Parks. Approximately 2% of county-owned properties are classified as “other”. These sites include a mix of undeveloped open space and properties with other uses. Undeveloped “other” sites will be evaluated to determine if and how they fit into the County’s park land system.

Approximately 20% of current County park land acreage is focused primarily on habitat conservation while 75% is focused on recreation and habitat conservation.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

One way to measure the amount of land provided by Island County is to calculate the number of acres provided for every 1,000 residents. This measurement has traditionally been called level of service (LOS). In 1998, when the Parks and Recreation Element was adopted, Island County had an existing level of service of 2.9 acres per 1,000 residents. The 1998 plan established park standards at a desired LOS of 3.5 acres per 1,000 residents.

In 1998, the Parks and Recreation Element considered all lands managed by the Parks Department as Parks and calculated the County’s LOS accordingly. However, to be consistent with other elements of the County’s GMA Comprehensive Plan, this plan is updating the classification of County-owned properties. Community Parks now represent approximately 125 acres of the park land system. Based on 2010 Census data, the unincorporated Island County population is 53,565 which equates to a LOS of 2.34 acres (of Community Parks) per 1,000 residents. Natural Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas are more appropriately identified and are consistent with definitions found in the Natural Lands Element of the comp plan. The Natural Lands Element does not apply a

1 LOS to these types of lands. So, although park land acreage has increased,
2 the LOS has actually decreased based on the new
3 classification system proposed with this plan
4 update.

5 As detailed in Chapter 3, the County is shifting its
6 focus from active recreation properties (those
7 including ball fields and playgrounds) to low-
8 impact outdoor recreation properties (properties
9 with natural vegetation and trails). The adopted
10 LOS for trails is 0.5 miles/1,000 population as
11 state in the Capital Facilities Element. However,
12 it's unclear how the existing inventory compares
13 since a full County trails inventory is not available

Island County has
increased the
number of park
land acres.
However, the LOS
has slightly
decreased. This is
consistent with
niche that the
County wants to
fulfill.

2.4 EXISTING COUNTY HABITAT

10 As noted in the classification system, all County parks protect habitat—
11 although the amount varies greatly from site to site. To better understand
12 how much and what types of habitat are protected by Island County,
13 habitat types were identified using the United States Geological Survey
14 Northwest Regional Gap Analysis data.³

15 The USGS Northwest Regional Gap Analysis uses remote sensing data
16 from satellite and aerial images to identify different types of land cover in
17 the Pacific Northwest. Although the usefulness of this data for smaller
18 parcels is limited, the data can be used to make generalized conclusions
19 regarding the types of habitat protected in Island County.⁴

20 Appendix D summarizes the methodology of this analysis and presents the
21 habitat inventory. The data identifies twenty-five habitat types in Island
22 County. Working with the Land Trust, the Project Management Team
23 grouped these habitat types into seven categories, as shown in Table 5.

³ <http://gap.uidaho.edu/index.php/gap-home/Northwest-GAP>

⁴ The smallest area that the Gap Analysis can measure is 0.22 acres.

Table 5: Island County Habitats

Habitat Category	Habitat Sub-group
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Water
Developed Parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed, Open Space • Developed, Low Intensity • Developed, High Intensity
Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture/Hay • Cultivated Cropland
Shoreline/ Tidal Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pacific Shrub Swamp • North Pacific Intertidal Freshwater Wetland • Temperate Pacific Freshwater Emergent Marsh • North Pacific Bog and Fen • North Pacific Hardwood-Conifer Swam
Prairie & Oak Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pacific Herbaceous Bald and Bluff • Willamette Valley Upland Prairie and Savannah • North Pacific Oak Woodland

Using these categories, a County habitat inventory was compiled using Gap Analysis data, and refined through extensive work by the Land Trust. Land Trust staff evaluated and refined the habitat acreage at each site using higher resolution aerial photographs and knowledge of on-site conditions. Their analysis, particularly of smaller sites, was integral to providing an accurate habitat inventory.

Table 6 summarizes Island County park acreage in each of the seven habitat categories. As noted in the table, approximately three-fourths of the County’s park acreage is forested. Approximately 14% of the



park system 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.

Table 6: Habitat Acreage by Park Classification (# of Acres)

Land Classification	Water	Developed Parkland	Farmland	Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	Forest	Freshwater Habitat	Prairie & Oak Woodlands	Total Acreage*
Community Parks	0.6	32.2	-	8.3	54.3	-	-	95.4
Natural Recreation Areas	117.7	31.3	-	332.8	2,060.9	43.1	-2.0	2,587.8
Conservation Areas	37.9	4.5	36.3	159.1	378.2	49.6	-	665.6
Other	-	42.1	0.5	.2	22.2	-	-	65
Total	156.2	110.1	36.8	500.4	2,515.6	92.7	2.0	3,413.8
Percentage	4.6%	3.2%	1.1%	14.7%	73.7%	2.7%	0.0%	100%

*The total acreage is based on a USGS Groundcover Analysis of vector areas, which differs from total park acreage. See Appendix D for more information.

2.5 COUNTY RECREATION FACILITIES

Even though Island County has an extensive land base, few sites are heavily developed with recreation facilities. Table 7 summarizes the number and type of outdoor recreation facilities in Island County. A comprehensive inventory by site is included in Appendix B.



Island County provides recreation facilities that mainly support outdoor, passive recreation opportunities. The most common is public beach access (25 sites), followed by picnic areas and tables (20 sites). Sixteen

1 sites include unpaved (natural-surfaced) trails. Twelve sites provide public
 2 boat access. Twelve sites have picnic shelters. Dog parks are provided at
 3 five sites.

3 In comparison, relatively few sites provide
 4 active use facilities or traditional recreation
 5 opportunities. Four sites include sport courts or
 6 sport fields (Rhododendron Park, Dave Mackie
 7 Park, Dan Porter Park, and Camano Park). The
 8 County also maintains five playgrounds (at
 9 these sites and Freeland Park). There are open
 10 turf play spaces at six sites. And maintained
 11 lawn areas can support activities such as playing
 12 catch, throwing a Frisbee, or sunbathing.



8 Indoor facilities are provided at four sites. Four Springs Lake Preserve
 9 includes three reservable indoor areas for events: the main house, Meadow
 10 Room, and barn. Camano Park has a multi-purpose center managed by
 11 Island County’s Facilities Department. Freeland Park includes Freeland
 12 Hall, a reservable multi-purpose hall with a kitchen and stage.⁵ The
 13 Crockett Blockhouse site includes a historic structure.

12 **Table 7:** Island County Park and Recreation Facilities

Outdoor Recreation Facilities	# of Sites
Beach (Swimming or Waterfront Access)	25
Boat Facilities ¹	12
Camping Areas	1
Dog Park	5
Garden	2
Picnic Area Tables	20
Picnic Shelter	12
Playground	5
Sport Court (Basketball, Volleyball, Tennis)	3
Sport Fields: Open Turf Play Area ²	6
Sport Fields: Base/Softball	3
Sport Fields: Soccer, Football, Lacrosse	0
Trails (unpaved)	16

20 ¹This includes Boat Launch, Boat Ramp, and Boat Dock /
 21 Marina.

²Although called sport fields, these facilities are multi-
 22 purpose turf areas that could support a variety of activities.

23 ⁵ Freeland Hall is managed by the Holmes Harbor Activities Club.

1 Table 7 also identifies trails within 16 park sites. The length of these trails
2 varies widely, but they are all developed, natural-surfaced trails. These
3 trails are located in several recreation areas, such as Rhododendron Park,
4 English Boom, and Four Springs Lake Preserve. In addition, several
5 Natural Recreation Areas include trails, such as Putney Woods, Saratoga
6 Woods, Ala Spit, and Camano Ridge.

7 In addition to the trails noted above, Appendix B includes an overview of
8 trails within Island County, including details on the trail type (pedestrian,
9 equestrian, bike, water, etc.), trail surfacing (hard or soft), and the
10 associated amenities and facilities provided (trailheads, boardwalks,
11 viewing blinds, picnic areas, etc.). As noted in Appendix B, most trails
12 support pedestrian, equestrian, and mountain-bike use. Few trails are
13 considered interpretive trails.

14 In 2006, Island County adopted a Non-Motorized Trails Plan. This plan
15 represented efforts by Island County Public Works to increase non-
16 motorized transportation and recreation trails. The plan addresses trails
17 within parks, which are also under the purview of the Island County Parks
18 and Recreation Element of the comp plan, as well as trails and bikeways
19 within transportation corridors.



1
2 **CHAPTER 3 - COUNTY NICHE**

3 The Island County Board of Commissioners adopted a County-wide
4 vision, mission, and set of guiding principles to define its direction for
5 services. While relevant to recreation and habitat conservation, these
6 policy statements are not specific to the Parks Department role in
7 providing parks, facilities, and services. Using findings from the public
8 involvement activities conducted as part of this planning process, a new
9 vision, mission, and niche were defined for the Parks Department.
10 Described in this chapter, these elements are consistent with community
11 priorities for recreation and habitat conservation.

12 ***3.1 DIRECTION FOR COUNTY-WIDE SERVICES***

13 Island County Government provides a variety of public services for
14 residents to improve their quality of life. These services are guided by the
15 County’s existing mission, vision, and guiding principles.



16 ***COUNTY MISSION:***

17 Quality services for a quality life.

18 ***COUNTY VISION:***

19 We exemplify sustainable, healthy, safe,
20 and prosperous, rural island communities.
21 Through widespread collaboration, we
22 steward our natural environment, celebrate
23 our heritage, foster our community spirit
and promote citizenship.

24 ***GUIDING PRINCIPLES:***

- 25 • Provide for the long term health and safety of the people, the
26 economy and our natural resources.
- 27 • Assure customer service and promote operational excellence and
28 efficiencies of Island County.
- 29 • Promote active participation in government.
- 30 • Fulfill our constitutional responsibilities, holding ourselves to a
31 high standard of accountability, transparency, ethics and fairness.
- 32 • Maintain agricultural and recreational opportunities while
33 strengthening our economic vitality.

34 The mission, vision, and guiding principles provide overall direction on
35 service provision. They indicate that the County values environmental
36 stewardship, recreation, and protection of its agricultural lands and rural

1 heritage. All of these elements can be advanced through parks
2 conservation and outdoor recreation.

3 **MANDATED COUNTY SERVICES**

4 As part of ongoing discussions related to the budget shortfall, Island
5 County went through a process of evaluating all of its services to
6 determine whether they are mandated, essential, or non-mandated.

- 7 • *Mandated* refers to a program or service that the County is required
8 to provide under state or federal law.
- 9 • *Essential* refers to those programs and services that while not
10 legally mandated, would be difficult to do without. For example,
11 the County is not mandated to have computer systems. However, it
12 is essential to have effective computer systems in order to provide
13 efficient, cost-effective services.
- 14 • *Non-mandated* refers to all non-mandated, non-essential services.

15 Within Public Works, mandated activities were
16 identified as County road construction,
17 maintenance, and preservation; surface water
18 drainage and management; and solid waste
19 management. County parks, boat ramps, ball
20 fields, tennis courts, paths and trails, Four Springs
21 Park, and grounds maintenance were considered to
22 be non-mandated services. No recreation-related
23 services were determined to be “essential.”

Some habitat protection or management is
mandated. For example, planning for critical areas
and shorelines (including regulating these areas) is
a mandated. Protecting the safety of food and
drinking water, protecting shellfish, and salmon
recovery efforts are also mandated. These efforts are funded through other
departments, and the role that Parks and Habitat Areas play in providing
these services has not been recognized. Given that 95% of the park system
includes habitat areas (and only 3% is considered developed land), Island
County parks—and the habitat they conserve—are important to Island
County’s health, safety, and general welfare.

Despite budget cuts, land and services that support public health and safety, salmon recovery, the protection of critical areas and shoreline are important.

3.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

While Island County has an overarching vision and mission for services, it is important to further define the community’s vision and goals for parks,

recreation, and habitat conservation. For this reason, the planning process included a variety of public outreach activities to involve as many residents as possible and to represent the diverse community interests in the development of a planning framework. Outreach activities were conducted on both islands and targeted a range of stakeholders, residents, County visitors, park users, and natural area enthusiasts. The intent of this extensive effort was to develop a deeper understanding of the issues facing Island County and to identify the needs and priorities of County residents.

Approximately 960 people participated in the preliminary phases of the planning process (Table 8). The public involvement efforts to date are summarized in Appendix A, which includes an overview of the outreach activities and consolidated key findings.

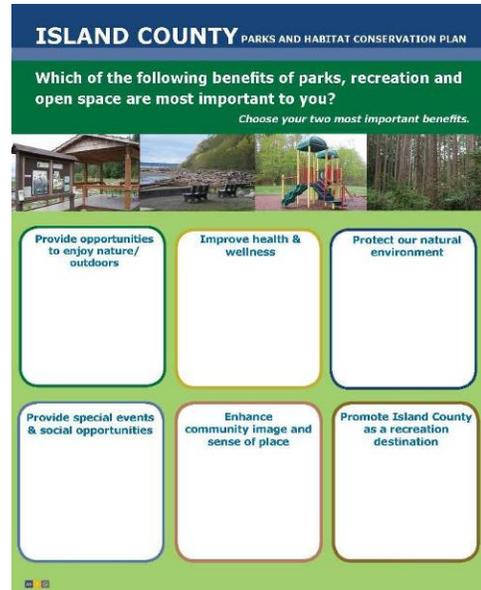


Table 8: Participation in Public Involvement Activities

Public Involvement Activity	# of People
Community Questionnaire (online)	666
Community Intercept Events (3)	245
Focus Group Meetings (Whidbey & Camano)	20
Stakeholder Interviews	30
Total	961

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

The clear message from residents who participated in public involvement activities was that they value parks for the role these sites play in conserving habitat and providing outdoor recreation opportunities. According to questionnaire respondents, the top two benefits of parks and habitat are providing opportunities to enjoy nature/the outdoors (79% of respondents) and protecting the natural environment (66%).

Outdoor Recreation

In terms of recreation, findings suggested that residents and visitors used outdoor, nature-based recreation facilities more frequently than those that

1 support more traditional active recreation opportunities, such as playing
2 soccer, basketball, or tennis. Water access and trails appeared to be most
3 important. For example:

- 4 • According to questionnaire respondents, the most frequently used
5 facilities (more than once a month) are beaches (59%) and trails
6 (56%). Nearly 88% of respondents have visited beaches and 87%
7 trails at least a few times a year.
- 8 • The majority of respondents (65%) noted that more trails were
9 needed. The top two reasons to develop more trails include
10 recreation (28.4%) and nature experiences (27.8%).
- 11 • Based on participation frequency in various activities, the five most
12 popular recreation activities noted by respondents are (in ranked
13 order): 1) Walking for exercise or pleasure; 2) Wildlife watching;
14 3) Bird watching/feeding; 4) Nature walks; and 5) Dog
15 walking/dog parks.
- 16 • From a list of 25 possible recreation activities, 10 of the top 11
17 most popular recreation activities are (or can be) supported by
18 trails.
- 19 • If respondents had unlimited time and resources, they indicated
20 that they would spend far more time canoeing or kayaking,
21 camping, taking beach walks, and to a slightly lesser extent,
22 boating (sailing), and clamming or crabbing. Water access is
23 important to most of these activities.

Habitat Conservation

16 In terms of habitat conservation, residents expressed a need to continue to
17 protect and steward habitat areas. For example:

- 18 • Most respondents (91%) felt that conserving
19 habitat and natural areas is important or very
20 important. All three intercept events and the
21 stakeholder interview showed a similar high
22 level of interest in conserving habitat and
23 natural areas.
- Over 71% of respondents indicated that more
park land or habitat areas should be acquired
by Island County.
- Inland conservation lands (33%), shoreline



1 conservation areas (20%), and public access to water for recreation
2 (11%) are the community’s highest priorities for acquisition.
3 Intercept event participants noted similar top responses, but in a
4 different ranked order.

- 5 • From a list of ten different types of recreation opportunities, most
6 respondents (54%) felt that nature preserves or conservation areas
7 are the most needed in the County, followed by public access to
8 water (29%). The intercept events had similar top results, although
9 in different ranked order.

6 ***Maintenance, Operations, and Funding***

7 Despite strong desires for trails, shoreline access, and habitat conservation areas,
8 stakeholders, focus group participants, and questionnaire respondents all
9 expressed reservations about how to fund and maintain the existing and future
10 park system. Participants acknowledged that the County would have to focus its
11 resources and cut non-core service. For example:

- 12 • Recognizing that the County struggles financially to maintain the
13 parks, habitat areas, and resource lands it has, respondents were
14 willing to support the following for land maintenance and
15 management.
 - 16 ○ Volunteer efforts (74%)
 - 17 ○ Non-profits (62%)
 - 18 ○ County tax dollars (49%)
 - 19 ○ User fees (40%)
 - 20 ○ A new park district with its own tax base (35%)
- 21 • At stakeholder interviews and focus
22 group meetings, participants
23 recognized that funding is the greatest
concern for the Parks Department.
They noted that a shortage of funds
affects the County’s ability to acquire,
develop, maintain, and operate Park
Lands.
- According to stakeholders and focus
group participants, the County should
leave the responsibility of traditional
recreation programming and sports
(including the provision of facilities) to
other providers, such as cities, park
districts, and schools.



- Stakeholder and focus group respondents suggested a variety of ideas about the role Island County should play in providing parks and habitat areas. While a variety of ideas were suggested, there was some agreement that the County should focus more heavily on providing passive, outdoor recreation opportunities.
- According to several stakeholder and focus group respondents, there is a need for a vision that unifies park and habitat conservation efforts.

3.3 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Community feedback obtained through the public involvement activities was used to identify a vision, mission, and set of core values for the Island County Parks Department. These elements provide a planning framework for the acquisition, disposition, management, and maintenance of County-owned parks and habitat areas. As such, they are a guiding force for the Parks and Recreation Plan.

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS

The community's vision, mission, and core values for park lands are described below.

A vision describes a broad picture of success:

We envision an interconnected system of park lands that provide the best recreation, conservation, and sustainability in the state.

A mission describes the approach the Parks Department will take in conducting business.

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



1 Five community values support the vision and mission of the plan:

2 *Sustainability:* We value efficient and effective management and
3 stewardship of our natural resources and County park lands to sustain
4 them for current and future generations.

4 *Quality of Life:* We value the role that park lands play in supporting the
5 long-term health, well-being, and safety of our residents, economy, and
6 natural resources.

6 *Recreation:* We value healthy opportunities for outdoor play and
7 relaxation, supported through the provision of accessible park lands, trails,
8 shorelines, natural areas, and outdoor recreation facilities.

8 *Habitat Conservation:* We value maintaining and protecting the integrity
9 of our islands' significant natural areas.

9 *Long-Term Success:* We value vibrant thriving park lands and will strive
10 for excellence in our efforts to create a better future for Island County
11 residents.



15 **3.4 NICHE**

16 Residents and visitors to Island County have many different needs and
17 desires associated with parks, recreation facilities, trails, and habitat areas.
18 Given its limited resources, Island County cannot meet all of these needs.

17 Island County's
18 niche, or role, is to
19 provide sites that
20 conserve habitat
21 and provide
22 outdoor recreation
23 opportunities.

For this reason, Island County Parks Department has defined a specific niche for itself within the context of other agencies and groups who provide recreation opportunities and habitat conservation areas on one or both islands.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Island County will position itself as a habitat and outdoor recreation provider, reflecting a desire to protect habitat and meet the community's outdoor, low-impact recreation needs. Based on public feedback and direction from the Board of County Commissioners, Island County will begin to take a more balanced approach toward

addressing outdoor recreation and habitat conservation priorities. This will require conscientious acquisition, design, development, maintenance, and stewardship of parks to protect critical areas from development while supporting passive recreation opportunities. As noted in the park classification system, individual areas may be focused on habitat conservation recreation, or both, according to the County’s niche.

Figure 2: The County’s Niche



Island County will focus its resources on providing outdoor recreation opportunities that are compatible with habitat conservation goals. This means 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 its investment 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 them for public use. The County will limit any new facilities that support active, organized, indoor or high-impact recreational opportunities, such as sports fields, basketball or tennis courts, skate parks, community centers, swimming pools, etc. However, the County will maintain the current facilities until other providers—such as towns, cities, and recreation districts—can meet these needs, should the community desire these types of opportunities.
- **Conservation Areas with no Recreational Uses:** As defined in this Plan, Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation purposes but may provide low-impact 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 low-impact outdoor recreational opportunities. Other Island County departments may continue to protect Conservation Area lands (as

1 provided for in the Natural Lands Element of the Comprehensive
2 Plan) that are not appropriate for recreational uses.

3 ***COUNTY'S ROLE IN PARK DEVELOPMENT***

4 In areas that are suitable for low-impact outdoor recreation, Island County
5 will support facilities that provide self-directed outdoor activities. These
6 include opportunities such as walking, biking, hiking, wildlife viewing,
7 horseback riding, camping, boating, clamming, hunting, swimming and
8 beach activities, and picnicking. The County
9 will avoid high-impact park uses that could
10 damage natural resources. It will limit
11 temporary, high-intensity activities (such as
12 large group gatherings) to appropriate sites.



13 Table 9, beginning on the next page,
14 summarizes the types of outdoor recreation
15 facilities that are consistent with the County's
16 niche and provides a general overview of

17 major considerations for site selection. The table lists amenities and
18 facilities in three categories:

- 19 • *Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:* These amenities and
20 facilities are consistent with the County's niche. The County may
21 develop parks with any of these amenities unless a site-specific
22 design or resource protection issue makes that amenity impractical
23 or undesirable for a particular site.
- *Amenities and Facilities to Consider:* These facilities are
consistent with the County's niche, but, because of their greater
impact, should be carefully planned and considered before
development.⁶
- *Amenities and Facilities to Avoid:* Amenities to avoid are those
that are not consistent with Island County's niche. These types of
amenities and facilities should not be included in County park
development.

24 While not a comprehensive list of allowable or unpermitted uses, Table 9
25 is intended to provide guidance regarding the County's niche. Site
26 characteristics and habitat needs will affect facility location, design, and
27 development.

⁶ When new amenities and facilities are being planned, the County should consider making them universal access facilities.

The County’s niche 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 niche. 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 niche. Following Table 9, Table 10 provides an overview of these management and operation considerations.

Table 9: Habitat and Outdoor Recreation Provider Niche

<p>Description:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County park lands include Community 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.
<p>Site Selection:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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.) • Sites should be well-distributed on both islands to meet the recreation needs of all County residents. • 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.
<p>Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site identification and interpretive signs • Appropriate site furnishings for the intended scale and use of the park (benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash receptacles) • Seasonal or permanent restrooms • Off-street parking • Trail and pathway system • Trailhead or entry/kiosk • Viewpoints or viewing blinds • Equestrian trailheads and staging areas • Motorized boat ramps and hand carry boat launches • Swimming beaches • Water access areas (for clamming, beach walks, etc.) • Shelters (small or medium sized) • Picnic areas (group areas or dispersed tables)

<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog parks and off-leash dog areas • Primitive campgrounds (no electricity, showers, etc.) • Deer hunting areas • Restoration areas for natural resource protection or regeneration • Other amenities compatible with the County's niche
<p>4</p> <p>5 Amenities and</p> <p>6 Facilities to</p> <p>7 Consider:</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gathering and event space to support large-group gatherings (e.g., community festivals, outdoor weddings, trail races, waterfront events, farmer's markets) • Facilities, concessions, or vendor space to support low-impact, outdoor recreation (e.g., boat storage, boat moorage, boat rental, bike rental, outdoor ropes course, riding stables, etc.) • Outdoor interpretive or environmental educational facilities (e.g., small amphitheaters, fire rings, shelters/kiosks for environmental programming, etc.) • Outdoor recreation facilities reflecting character of site (e.g., nature play areas, horseshoe pits, disc golf) • Temporary/permanent caretaker's residences • Storage and maintenance buildings • Community gardens • Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), u-pick farms and orchards, leased agricultural lands, etc.
<p>12</p> <p>13 Amenities and</p> <p>14 Facilities to Avoid:</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional active use facilities (sports fields, sport courts, skate parks, etc.) • Indoor facilities, including community centers, recreation centers, nature centers, and museums • Restaurants or indoor concessions that do not support low-impact, outdoor recreation • High-impact outdoor facilities, such as full service marinas, RV campgrounds, ATV/OHV areas, swimming pools, golf courses, miniature golf courses, BMX race tracks, equestrian arenas, event amphitheaters, etc. • High maintenance landscaping, such as turf areas, annual plantings, or ornamental gardens • Other uses and programs that conflict with the County's niche

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Table 10: Management and Operations Habitat/Recreation Provider Niche

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 niche. 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 niche 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 niche. 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.

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CHAPTER 4 - HABITAT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION NEEDS

The planning team conducted a Community Needs Assessment to identify outdoor recreation and conservation needs in Island County that enhance the County’s niche. 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 niche. This chapter summarizes the methodology and findings of the Community Needs Assessment.



4.1 HABITAT CONSERVATION NEEDS

Many entities in Island County are involved in land and natural resource conservation, each with its own focus and priorities. As defined through this planning process, Island County’s niche is protecting significant Conservation Areas and Natural Recreation Areas. Island County Parks will limit its focus on habitat areas that have the capacity

to address low impact, outdoor recreation needs. As noted in Chapter 2, Island County already owns and manages lands that already support this niche 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.

DEFINING HABITAT CONSERVATION CRITERIA

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Over the last several years, there have been a variety of resource conservation and environmental studies conducted in Island County. For example, the Whidbey Camano Land Trust has been identifying its organization’s priority habitats and targeted protection areas in Island County. The Washington Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program has conducted an inventory of high priority rare plants and ecosystems found in Island County. At the writing of this document, Island County is in the process of updating its Shoreline Master Program and identifying priority areas for protection of shoreline resources. In addition, past County planning efforts have identified rare habitats and critical areas, such as wetlands and aquifer recharge areas.

1 Through the planning process, Island County and WCLT discussed key
2 criteria for determining habitat conservation needs and priorities. Because
3 so many agencies and organizations are working on conservation in Island
4 County, Island County will focus on using existing data to be an effective
5 steward of public resources. To evaluate priorities on a countywide scale,
6 data that is consistent across the entire County is needed. Using existing
7 data in Island County, these criteria are as follows:

- 8 • *Identified as a Whidbey Camano Land Trust Priority Habitat:* As
9 part of the Land Trust’s efforts to permanently protect the most
10 important and irreplaceable lands and waters on Camano and
11 Whidbey Islands, the organization has developed a Land Protection
12 Plan and Protection Priorities Map. First created
13 in 2003 based on known data and input from
14 experts, the Land Protection Plan Map
15 highlights the Land Trust’s identified target
16 areas.
- 17 • *Adjacent to Other Conservation Lands:* Larger
18 protected areas provide better habitat than
19 smaller isolated parcels. For this reason, the
20 criterion included any land within 1,000 feet of
21 an Island County park land; Non-Profit habitat and easements;
22 State Parks; and National Park Service sites and easements. These
23 parcels would allow existing conservation lands to expand.
- *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.
- *Contains Rare Habitat:* Prairies and Oak Woodlands were
identified by the Project Management Team as priority rare habitat
in Island County.
- *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 Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage
Program as potentially containing rare plants and ecosystems.
- *Prioritized in the Shoreline Master Program:* This includes those
shoreline areas designated as Natural Environments, Conservancy
Environments, or Aquatic Conservancy Environments within



1 Island County, or otherwise identified for habitat conservation in
2 the 2010 update of the Shoreline Master Program.⁷

3 These criteria are intended to be dynamic, not to paint a static picture of
4 habitat needs across the County. As newer or better information is
5 developed, the County can continue to refine its habitat conservation
6 priorities. As the County makes decisions about specific parcels, site
7 specific data can be incorporated if it is available.

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

9 Map 2 depicts an illustrative habitat conservation concept for Island
10 County, created by applying the criteria described in the section above.
11 This illustration presents an overall concept, but does not identify specific
12 needs or priorities for habitat acquisition.

13 The habitat concept
14 illustrates the
15 location of habitat
16 areas using criteria
17 to distinguish rare,
18 significant, or
19 priority habitat
20 areas identified in
21 other studies.

The habitat conservation concept is described below, by geographic area.

- *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.
- *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.
- *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 corridor for movement of wildlife around Oak Harbor should be considered.

⁷ Island County Planning & Community Development. 2010. Island County Shoreline Designations – GIS data. Note: Specific recommendations for shoreline protection and conservation will be included in the revised Shoreline Master Program.

- 1 • *Swantown Lake:* The area near Swantown Lake contains important
2 aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local importance, prime
3 farmland, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, mature forests, rare
4 habitat, critical shoreline, prairie soils, unstable
5 slopes, and wetlands. It provides the opportunity
6 for protection of a wildlife corridor around Oak
7 Harbor on the west side of Whidbey Island.



- 5 • *Penn Cove Area:* The area north and west of
6 Coupeville contains small aquifer recharge
7 areas, habitats of local importance, rare habitat,
8 wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmlands,
9 critical shoreline, significant prairie soil areas,
10 some protected plant communities, some unstable
11 slopes, and some
12 wetlands. This extends from coast to coast,
13 potentially providing an important corridor
14 across Whidbey Island.



- 10 • *Coupeville South:* The area south of Coupeville
11 contains aquifer recharge areas, habitats of local
12 importance, rare habitat, important wildlife
13 habitat, extensive critical shoreline, scenic and
14 historic vistas, prairie and grassland habitat, oak
15 woodlands, protected plant communities, prime
16 working farmlands, significant prairie soil areas, some unstable
17 slopes, and wetlands.

- 14 • *Greenbank:* The area immediately around Greenbank has
15 important plant communities, and there is an important aquifer
16 recharge area to the northeast of Greenbank. Much of this area is
17 protected by various agencies or owned by the US Navy. Because
18 Whidbey Island is relatively narrow from the area south of
19 Coupeville to the Freeland area, this region is vulnerable to
20 blockage of north-south wildlife movement over the long term. A
21 protected wildlife corridor should be considered.

- 19 • *Trillium Community Forest/Bush Point:* This elongated area on the
20 west side of Whidbey Island contains aquifer recharge areas, rare
21 habitat, large areas of wildlife habitat, critical shoreline (on the
22 north side of Bush Point landform), protected plant communities,
23 unstable slopes, and wetlands.

- 22 • *Freeland:* The area around Freeland, particularly south of Freeland
23 between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay, includes important aquifer
recharge areas, habitats of local importance, fish and wildlife

1 habitat, scenic vistas, prime farmland, critical shoreline, some
2 unstable slopes, and wetlands. As Freeland develops, protection of
a wildlife corridor should be considered.

- 3 • *Putney Woods:* This area north includes important aquifer recharge
4 areas and wetlands (especially around Lone Lake and Goss Lake),
rare habitat, large areas of forest, wildlife habitat, and unstable
5 slopes.



- 6 • *Bayview Area:* This area of South Whidbey
7 contains important aquifer recharge areas
8 and wetlands.

- 9 • *South Whidbey:* The area in South Whidbey
10 includes important aquifer recharge areas,
11 wetlands, critical shoreline, unstable slopes,
12 and habitat of local importance.

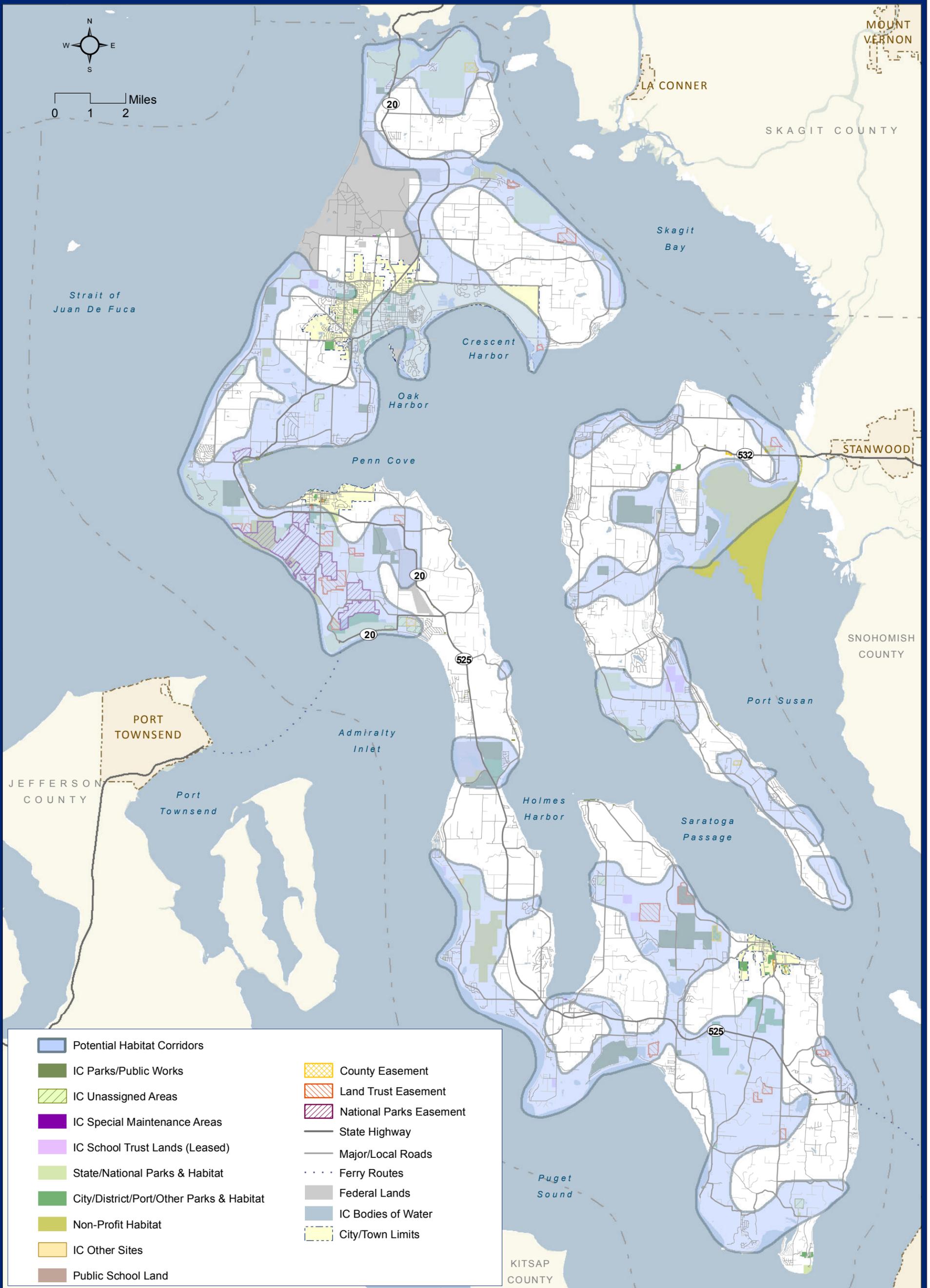
- 13 • *Livingston Bay:* This shoreline area on
14 Camano Island includes some important aquifer recharge areas and
15 wetlands. This area is also identified as Tier 1 in the county
16 Salmon Recovery Plan.

- 17 • *Four Springs:* The area around the Four Spring Lake Preserve has
18 some wetlands and important aquifer recharge areas.

- 19 • *Central Camano:* There are wetlands habitat and smaller aquifer
20 recharge areas between Elger Bay Trust Land, Camas Beach State
21 Park, and Camano Island State Park, however the primary reason
22 this area is highlighted is for expanding these three larger protected
23 areas.

- *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area:* Camano Island has large aquifer
recharge areas northwest of Tillicum Beach.

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.



Island County Parks & Recreation Element

Map 2: Illustrative Habitat Conservation Concept



10/19/2011 | Data Source: Island County Planning & Community Development, Whidbey Camano Land Trust, USGS & DNR

1
2 **4.2 RECREATION NEEDS**

3 For Island County Parks, providing quality low-impact outdoor recreation
4 opportunities is as important as providing quality habitat areas on
5 Whidbey and Camano Islands. The most critical needs, highly prioritized
6 by the community countywide, are for water access and trail activities. A
7 variety of other outdoor recreation needs were identified through the
8 public involvement process. These recreation needs are discussed below.

9 **GEOGRAPHIC NEEDS ANALYSIS**

10 Through the public involvement process, two critical needs were identified
11 and evaluated using a GIS access analysis:

- 12 • *Nature Trails:* Combining their desire for protected habitat with
13 public access, community members most desired nature trails. For
14 analysis purposes, this was defined as a hard or soft-surfaced trail
15 that provides at least a one-mile walk in nature.
- 16 • *Beach Access:* Community members indicated that public water
17 access is desired. More than just a road end, boat ramp, or
18 viewpoint, residents want places where they can touch the water
19 and engage in beachfront recreation activities, such as boating,
20 clamming, fishing, beach strolling, wading,
21 etc. For analysis purposes, beach access was
22 defined as a waterfront site at least one acre
23 in size to allow space for activities.

Both of these opportunities are integral to the provision of outdoor recreation in Island County, and are primary recreation needs for all residents. This means that all County residents should have beach access and an opportunity for a nature walk within 15-20 minutes from home.

To gauge community needs for these recreation opportunities, GIS data used to map service areas around sites that provide beach access or existing trails based on a three-mile travel distance.⁸

According to the community, the most critical needs are for trails and water access. Opportunities to go for a walk in nature or play on the beach are desired.

⁸ The three-mile distance assumes that residents can reach these sites within 15- 20 minutes while traveling a safe rate of speed from anywhere on both islands.

Trail Access and Needs

As noted in the park and habitat inventory (Appendix B), 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 cities, ports, and recreation districts.

Map 3 illustrates trail access and service areas (following the road network), where residents can engage in a one-mile walk in nature. Given this threshold, 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.

To see if existing sites could help meet trails needs in unserved areas, GIS data were also used to map service areas around “trail opportunity areas.” These opportunity areas are sites of a sufficient size (more than 10 acres), level of development, and habitat type to perhaps provide a one-mile walk in nature—if a trail was appropriate. Both County-owned sites and sites owned by other agencies were considered as potential opportunities for trail development.



Map 3 illustrates service areas around “trail opportunities” in a hatched purple color on the map. Keep in mind that the County may not want to build trails at each of these sites—because of site limitations, habitat protection needs, or different strategies for site development and use. Furthermore, trail development may require providing road access and making a variety of other improvements, it may require replacing an existing use (e.g., agricultural land, sports fields), or sharing a site use (e.g., with a dog park, campground, or publicly restricted habitat conservation area).⁹ Additional factors besides trail needs should be considered before trail development is

⁹ Since the minimum site size for a trail opportunity area is 10 acres, trails do not need to be developed on the entire site or crisscross the site to provide a one-mile walk in nature, especially for sites that are several hundred acres in size. Habitat conservation needs should be respected, particularly on Trust Lands.

1 pursued. However, trail opportunity areas were identified to help the
2 County consider opportunities to use existing lands to meet recreation
needs before acquisition needs are determined.

3 The remaining white areas on Map 3 reflect unserved areas. It is important
4 to note that some areas are unserved because they have limited or no road
5 access or residential development. If and when these areas develop, trail
6 needs will have to be re-evaluated. The development pattern will affect
7 residents' access to trails in these areas. On the other hand, trail
opportunities are needed in several areas. These are described below.
Where areas overlap to some extent with conceptual habitat areas, the
same general geographical descriptor is used.

7 Whidbey Island has several areas where nature trail access is needed, as
8 noted below. Where existing sites could help meet needs, trail opportunity
areas are noted.

- 9 • *Northeast Whidbey.* As indicated on the map, the area between
10 Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved
and no trail opportunity areas are present.
- 11 • *Penn Cove North:* As indicated by the purple hatches, several trail
12 opportunity areas are present in this unserved area. These include
13 Site E (currently undeveloped), Monroe Landing Trust Land
(currently lacks an access road), and/or Scenic Heights Trust Land
(is currently farmed and forested).
- 14 • *Coupeville South:* While this area in Central Whidbey is unserved,
15 trails developed in one of two opportunity areas (shaded in purple)
would improve service. These are sites B and D.
- 16 • *Greenbank/Trillium (East-Central Whidbey):* Gaps in the road
17 network to the north of Greenbank, to the north of South Whidbey
18 State Park, and around the Trillium Community Forest creates
several unshaded areas. However, existing sites are sufficient to
provide service here if these areas are further developed.
- 19 • *Freeland South,* between Mutiny Bay and
20 Useless Bay. Much of south Whidbey is
21 documented as unserved. While the
County inventory does not include formal
22 trails at Deer Lagoon, trail improvements
at the 378-acre site could support a one-
23 mile walk in nature. A trail opportunity is
also noted at the Wahl Road Trust Land.



- 1 • *Putney Woods North:* While trail needs are met around Putney
2 Woods and Saratoga Woods, areas to the northwest (adjacent to
3 Holmes Harbor) are unserved. While much of this area lacks road
4 access, needs could be met by developing appropriately-located
5 trails at one of the following trail opportunity areas: Brainers, High
6 Point, and Skyline West Trust Land.

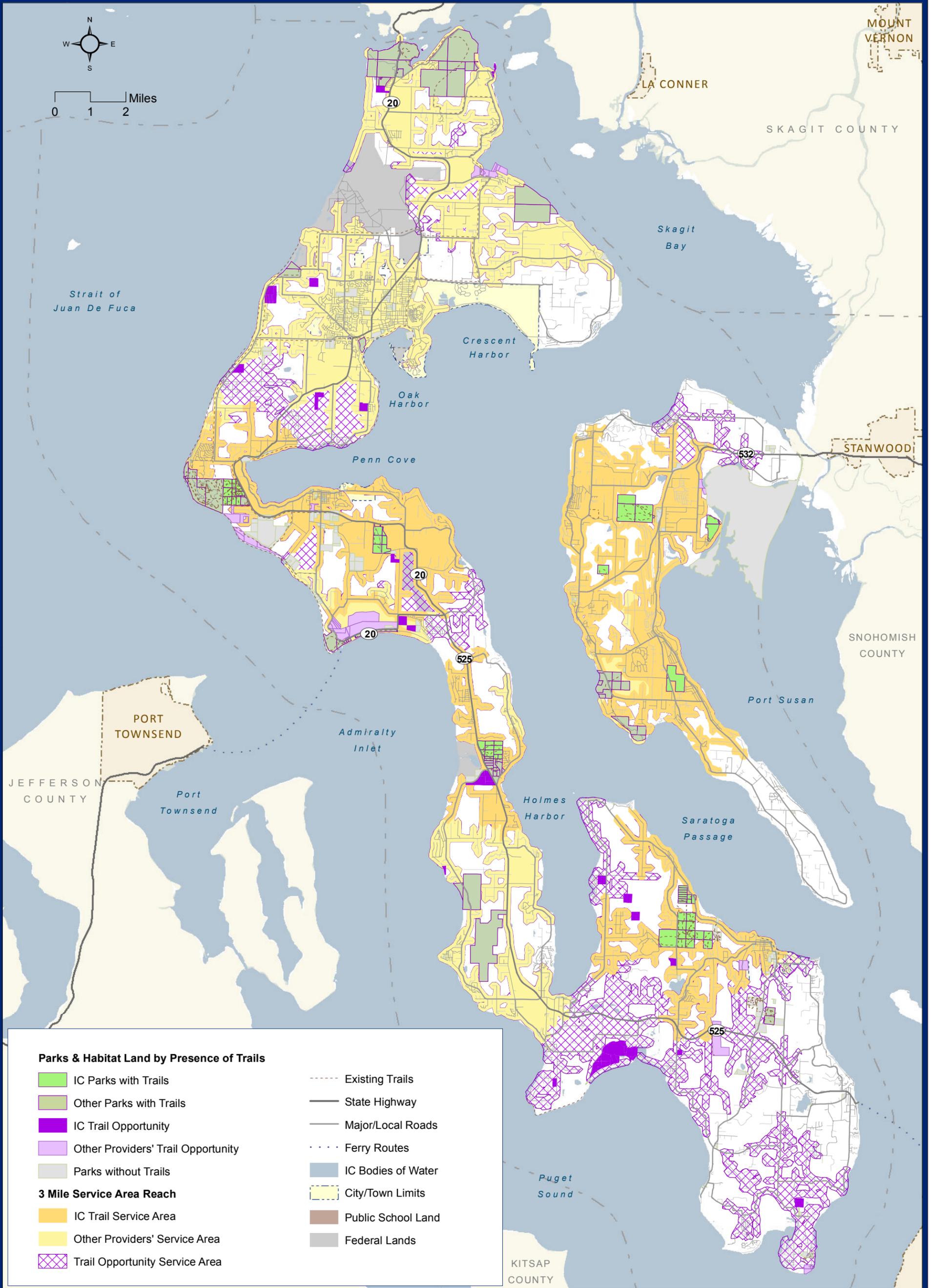
- 7 • *Bayview Area:* The area around the Trustland Trails’ site (owned
8 by the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District) and
9 Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park is mapped as lacking nearby
10 access to nature trails. However, both of these sites have a potential
11 to address this need. The dog park at Marguerite Brons should be
12 maintained, which limits opportunities for a nature trail at that site.

- 13 • *South Whidbey/Clinton:* All of South Whidbey lacks access to a
14 one-mile walk in nature, according to the parameters of this
15 analysis. While there are two opportunity areas for trail
16 development, Glendale Trust Land and Possession Point State
17 Park, new parks and/or habitat conservation areas are needed
18 around Clinton to address nature trail needs.

19 Camano Island has good access to nature trails throughout the central
20 portion of the island. Only the north and south ends are unserved, as noted
21 below.

- 22 • *Livingston Bay/North Camano:* North Camano is unserved by
23 nearby nature trails. Although English Boom is located in this area
24 and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail
25 opportunity. No other trail opportunity areas exist here, so a new
26 park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail
27 needs.

- 28 • *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area & South Camano:* The southern
29 end of Camano Island lacks trail access. Although Walter G.
30 Hutchinson Park is in this area and has trails, this site is too small
31 to provide the desired trail opportunity. No other trail opportunity
32 areas exist here, so a new park or habitat conservation areas is
33 needed to address nature trail needs.



Parks & Habitat Land by Presence of Trails

- IC Parks with Trails
- Other Parks with Trails
- IC Trail Opportunity
- Other Providers' Trail Opportunity
- Parks without Trails
- 3 Mile Service Area Reach**
- IC Trail Service Area
- Other Providers' Service Area
- Trail Opportunity Service Area

- Existing Trails
- State Highway
- Major/Local Roads
- Ferry Routes
- IC Bodies of Water
- City/Town Limits
- Public School Land
- Federal Lands



Island County Parks & Recreation Element



10/14/2011 | Data Source: Island County Planning & Community Development, Whidbey Camano Land Trust, USGS & DNR

**Map 3:
Trail Access/Service Areas**

Beach Access and Needs

As noted in the park and habitat inventory, Island County provides some type of water access at 25 sites. Other providers own or manage 18 sites that provide water access. These sites include boat ramps, boat docks and marinas, swimming beaches, and other types of water access. Many of these sites are small. In fact, 60% of County-owned water access sites are less than one acre in size. In addition, Island County has a number of small beach access points that are not inventoried as providing existing waterfront access, as they lack support facilities and infrastructure to support



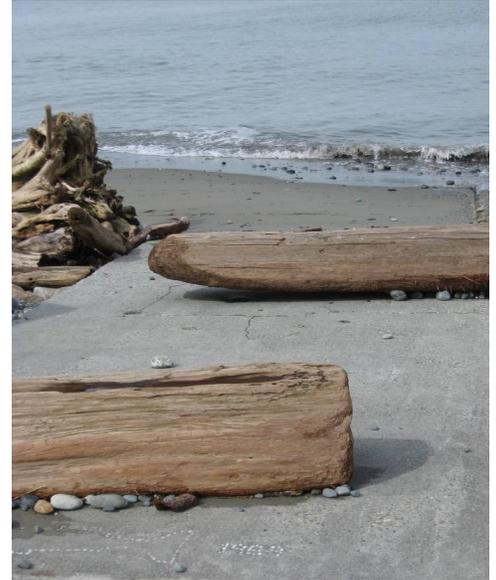
this use.¹⁰ As this plan was being prepared, the Island County Shoreline Master Program is being updated. The Planning and Community Development Department and the Public Works Department are working collaboratively to insure the inventory of county-owned water access sites is updated.

As indicated by public involvement findings, residents desire access to public beaches with room for waterfront activities. A beach access analysis was conducted to evaluate areas where recreation opportunity may be available, as well as where opportunities are needed.

Map 4 illustrates areas service areas around sites that provide beach access. These include County parks and habitat conservation areas, as well as similar public sites provided by other jurisdictions. On this map, 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. Whidbey Island has several areas where beach access is needed, as noted below. Where areas overlap to some extent with conceptual habitat areas, the same geographical descriptor is used.

- *Northeast Whidbey.* As indicated on the map, the area between Crescent Harbor and Skagit Bay near Strawberry Point is unserved.
- *Penn Cove:* Gaps on the north side of Penn Cove are caused by gaps in the road network in this area.

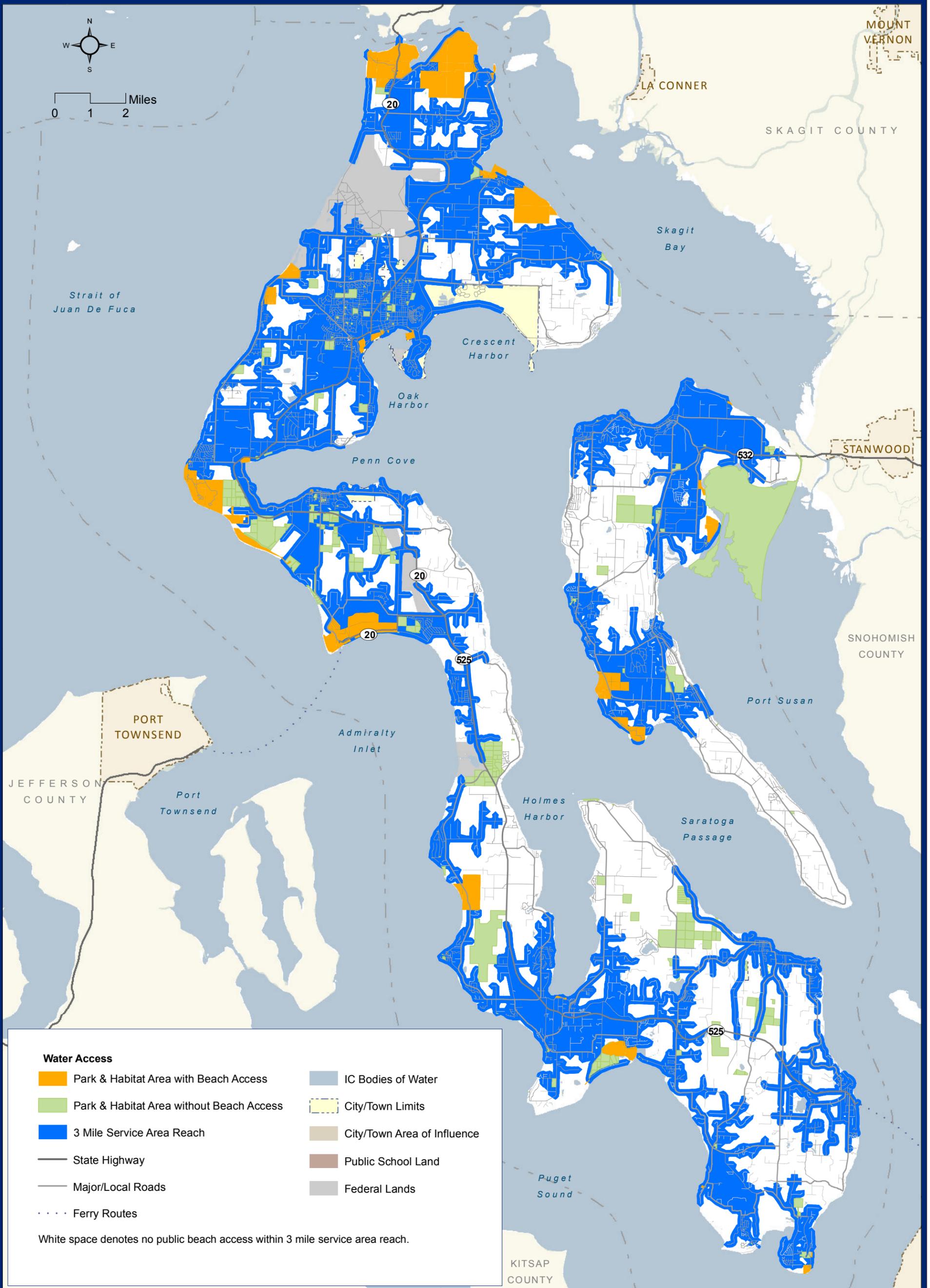
¹⁰ This includes Shore Meadow Beach Access (0.1 acres), Limpet Lane Road End (0.1 acres), Sandpiper Lane Beach Access (0.2 acres), and Sunlight Beach Accesses (0.4 acres).



- 1 • *Greenbank (Central Whidbey):* Much of
2 Central Whidbey Island is unserved,
3 especially on the east coast from Coupeville
4 to Greenbank and nearly to Freeland. The
5 area north of Greenbank on the west coast is
6 unserved as well.
- 7 • *Freeland South,* between Mutiny Bay and
8 Useless Bay. Access to Double Bluff is
9 limited by the road network in this area,
10 which creates a large part of the gap noted
11 here. The Limpet Lane Road End (0.1 acres)
12 is in this area, but is too small of a site to
13 meet primary recreation needs.
- 14 • *Putney Woods:* The area north and west of Putney Woods, between
15 Holmes Harbor and the Saratoga Passage, lacks beach access.
16 While Baby Island Heights is here, the site is only accessible by
17 water.
- 18 • *South Whidbey/Clinton:* The entire eastern shoreline of South
19 Whidbey is unserved by beach access areas, with the exception of
20 areas near Possession Point State Park.

21 Camano Island has four areas that lack beach access, as noted below:

- 22 • *Livingston Bay:* Parts of the Livingston Bay area lack beach access,
23 mainly because of road limitations. This area is also noted for its
extensive mudflats, which limit opportunities for beach activities.
- *Four Springs:* Central Camano on the west side of the island and
north of Henry Hollow is unserved. The County may consider
improvements to the undeveloped Henry Hollow property to
partially address this need. Access to this site is limited because of
adjacent residential development. A stretch of the central east coast
area of the island is also unserved.
- *Camano Aquifer Recharge Area:* This area lacks beach access.
- *South Camano:* South Camano is unserved by beach access areas.
However, this highly-vegetated, feeder bluff may not provide an
opportunity for beach access.



Island County Parks & Recreation Element

**Map 4:
Beach Access/Service Areas**



10/20/2011 | Data Source: Island County Planning & Community Development, Whidbey Camano Land Trust, USGS & DNR

1
2 **ADDITIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS**

3 A variety of additional recreation opportunities are important to residents.
4 Some are consistent with the County’s niche. According to its role as an
5 outdoor recreation provider, Island County should support the following
6 needs:

- 7 • Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)
- 8 • Dog Parks
- 9 • Camping
- 10 • Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)
- 11 • Deer Hunting

12 ***Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)***

13 According to the inventory, Island County provides 6 hand-carry boat
14 launches, 9 boat ramps, and 2 docks. Other providers in Island County
15 have one additional hand-carry boat launch, 6
16 boat ramps, and 6 docks and marinas. These
17 facilities are pretty well dispersed throughout
18 the County, with the exception of Central
19 Whidbey, north and south of Greenbank.



20 As noted in public involvement findings,
21 boating is less popular than many other
22 recreation activities in Island County. However,
23 there is a significant latent demand for canoeing
or kayaking, meaning it is an activity that residents would like to engage in
more frequently. In fact, the results of Community Questionnaire suggest
that canoeing or kayaking would be one of the top ten most popular
outdoor recreation activities in Island County if residents could participate
as frequently as desired.

Island County staff reports that demand for motorized boat ramps is quite
high. Fees were recently instituted at three boat ramps on Camano Island
to discourage use and alleviate capacity issues. It is not clear if the issue is
the high demand for boat ramps, as much as the lack of sufficient parking,
access, and support amenities at existing boat ramps. While improvements
could be made at several sites (if funding was available), some sites are
too small or poorly located for the types of improvements needed. A
similar issue of functionality regarding boat moorage exists at Cornet Bay
Dock, where some of the slips go dry. Boating needs include
improvements to existing facilities, including boat ramps, additional boat

1 moorage, as well as additional boat storage.¹¹ New sites should be built to
2 support a higher Level of Service. There are no existing waterfront sites
that could address the needs for a boat ramp on Central Whidbey.

3 In addition to boat ramps, there is a need for more non-motorized boat
4 launches to support kayaking and canoeing in Central Whidbey and
5 central/south Camano. Of seven existing hand-carry boat launches in
6 Island County, three are in Oak Harbor/North Whidbey, three are in
7 Freeland/South Whidbey, and one is on north Camano Island (Maple
Grove). In addition to adding non-motorized launches in Central Whidbey
and central/south Camano, the high demand for canoe and kayak
opportunities may reflect a need to partner with a boat concessionaire for
boat rentals.¹²

8 ***Dog Parks***

9 Island County and other providers provide six off-leash dog areas in Island
County:

- 10 • Double Bluff (Island County)
- 11 • Marguerite Brons Memorial Park (Island County)
- 12 • Patmore Pit (Island County)
- 13 • Clover Valley Off-Leash (Island County and NW Parks &
Recreation District)
- 14 • Oak Harbor Dog Park (Island County with the
City of Oak Harbor)
- 15 • Greenbank Farm (Port of Coupeville)

16 Of these, two are in North Whidbey (Oak Harbor
17 area), two in Central Whidbey, and two in South
18 Whidbey. None are on Camano Island.

19 In partnership with the Island County Parks, FETCH!
20 (Free Exercise Time for Canines and Humans!)
21 maintains the off-leash parks at Double Bluff Beach, Marguerite Brons
22 Memorial Park, Patmore Pit, Clover Valley Dog Park, and Oak Harbor
Dog Park (also known as Technical Park). In two cases, the dog parks are
owned by other providers and maintained or managed by Island County
and FETCH!

23 FETCH! is a nonprofit organization that works with Island County staff to
establish and maintain off-leash parks on Whidbey Island. Except for the
beach park at Double Bluff, all FETCH! parks are fenced and provide a



¹¹ Boat storage is allowed at the Maple Grove Boat Ramp and considered to be a problem at the Utsalady Boat Ramp.

¹² This would require a site with more space than a hand-carry boat launch alone.

1 mix of amenities, such as picnic tables, shelters, a rinse station, portable
2 toilets, and sheltered bulletin boards. FETCH! volunteers ensure that the
3 parks are maintained in good condition. While anyone can use the dog
4 parks, membership in FETCH! is encouraged to help cover the cost of
doggie bags, park improvements, a bi-annual newsletter, and educational
brochures and materials. This partnership has been a highly successful
arrangement for Island County.

5 On Whidbey Island, most residents live within a 6-7 mile radius of an
6 existing dog park. Two dog parks on Camano Island would provide a
7 similar Level of Service based on travel distance. However, demand for
8 dog parks has been less on Camano. Therefore, one dog park in a
centralized location on Camano Island would appear to meet the need.
Existing County-owned properties could potentially be used to meet this
need.

9 If the demand for dog parks increases, another off-leash dog area may be
10 needed in the future on Whidbey—either between Coupeville and Oak
Harbor or between Greenbank Farm and Double Bluff. The County should
continue to work with FETCH! to monitor dog park needs.

11 *Camping*

12 Island County currently allows RV and tent camping at Rhododendron
13 Campground. This primitive campground on Whidbey Island has ten pay
14 campsites, vault toilets, and fresh water. Other providers have six



15 additional public campgrounds in Island County. These include five sites at State Parks (one on
16 Camano Island and four on Whidbey Island), as well as one provided by the City of Oak Harbor at
17 Windjammer Park. The campgrounds owned by other agencies tend to be larger and busier than
Rhododendron Campground. For example, Camano Island State Park offers 88 tent spaces,
five cabins, one dump station, two restrooms, two
showers, and a group area that can accommodate

18 100 people. Deception Pass State Park provides 167 tent sites, 143 utility
19 spaces, five hiker/biker sites, three group sites, two dump stations, 20
restrooms, and ten showers. South Whidbey State Park provides 46 tent
20 spaces, eight utility spaces, a dump station, two restrooms, four showers,
and a group site for up to 60 people.

21 In addition to campgrounds, other types of overnight sites are available at
22 public parks in Island County. Cama Beach State Park provides 31
reservable cabins plus a 15-room retreat lodge and dining hall. In addition,
23 six sites in Island County provide water trail campsites, which are

1 available to campers who arrive by kayak or canoe. According to the 2006
2 Island County Non-Motorized Trail Plan, these campsites are at Joseph
3 Whidbey State Park, Fort Ebey State Park, Possession Point State Park,
4 Captain Coupe Park (Coupeville), Dugualla State Park, and Camano
5 Island State Park (the only one on Camano Island).

6 County staff has noted that many state campgrounds are filled to capacity
7 during summer months. As per its niche, Island County could play a larger
8 role in meeting the demand for primitive camping by providing smaller
9 tent camps, more dispersed natural camp sites, or canoe and kayak camps
10 that provide a quieter camping experience in nature.¹³ Currently, South
11 Whidbey (east and south of Freeland) is lacking camping facilities and
12 does not appear to have an existing site suitable to meet this need. Several
13 areas lack kayak campgrounds, including North Camano, East Camano,
14 and Central and South Whidbey.

15 *Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)*

16 Public involvement findings also suggest a need for more equestrian and
17 mountain bike trails. These trails should be longer than one-mile nature
18 trails, and they need to include trailheads with appropriate support
19 amenities.



20 Currently, opportunities for horseback trail riding
21 are provided at Trustland Trails, Greenbank Farm,
22 Kettles, Trillium Community Forest, and Putney
23 Woods/Saratoga Woods/Metcalf Trust Trails.
24 These trails are intended to be multi-purpose
25 trails; serving hikers and mountain bikers as well.
26 They lack equestrian trailheads with room for
27 horse trailer parking, a staging area, hitching rails,
28 or other amenities. There are no similar
29 opportunities on Camano.

30 Based on population trail needs on Whidbey Island are greater than on
31 Camano Island. On Whidbey Island, three geographically dispersed sites
32 (north, central, and south) are needed to support equestrian and mountain
33 bike trail use. These sites should include trailheads to support these uses.
34 There are several sites that could be improved to support this need,
35 including the Kettles (where Cookin' in the Kettles Mountain Bike Race is
36 held each year), Saratoga Woods, Greenbank Farm, and potentially the
37 Trillium Community Forest (depending on the decisions within a
38 management plan now under development). Another trail is needed on

¹³ A site that offers solitude is desired, but it should be located in an otherwise visible or well-used area. Secluded sites are more likely to need a camp host and/or caretaker to watch over the premises.

1 north Whidbey. On Camano, two sites are needed to support mountain
2 biking and horseback riding. Elger Bay and Camano Ridge have the
3 capacity to support trails (if appropriate trailheads and support amenities
4 were added).

5 Ideally, at least one mountain bike and equestrian trail on each island
6 would be at a site where deer hunting (the discharge of firearms) is not
7 allowed. Otherwise, equestrian and mountain biking needs are not met
8 during hunting season (see below). At this time, most of Island County's
9 large sites that support mountain biking and equestrian trails are also open
10 to hunting. However, South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District's
11 Trustland Trails (located on the south end of Whidbey) does not allow
12 hunting and is open year around for hikers, bike riders, and equestrian
13 activities.

8 *Hunting*

9 The State of Washington and not Island County regulates hunting. Deer
10 hunting is allowed in season at Camano Ridge, the Kettles, Putney Woods,
11 and South and North Greenbank. In addition, hunting is allowed at the
12 Trillium Community Forest, which is owned by the Land Trust. In North
13 Whidbey, the US Navy allows hunting for staff and residents who have
14 access to the naval base.

15 There is a hunting history and culture in Island County that some residents
16 would like to see preserved. The challenge is to be able to safely maintain
17 this use while also addressing other growing recreation needs. Since Island
18 County does not regulate hunting, the discharge of firearms is allowable
19 unless the County identifies safety concerns at a particular site.¹⁴

20 The County's approach to providing public safety is to close sites to other
21 uses when allowing
22 hunting. The parcels need
23 to be large enough to
accommodate safe
firearms discharge during
hunting season. Properties
that should be considered
for hunting are Greenbank
South, Putney Woods,
Camano Ridge, and other
park lands determined
appropriate.



¹⁴ These safety concerns are based on state and county policies and regulations. Park design and development guidelines cannot be used as criteria to regulate the discharge of firearms.

Summary of Additional Recreation Needs

Table 11 summarizes outdoor recreation needs, including the capacity of existing sites to meet these needs.

Table 11: Summary of Outdoor Recreation Needs

Recreation Activity/ Facility	Areas of Additional Need	Existing Sites to Consider
Trails		
Trails/Trailheads for Equestrian Use and Mountain Biking	2 on Camano Island 3 on Whidbey Island (north, central and south)	Camano Ridge. Greenbank Farm, Kettles, Trillium Community Forest, Putney Woods/Saratoga Woods/Metcalf Trust Trails, Trustland Trails
Water Access		
Boat Launch (Hand-carry)	1 additional in Central or South Camano (May be paired with kayak camp) 1 additional in Central Whidbey (Consider a partnership with a concessionaire for rentals)	Tillicum Beach Hidden Beach
Boat Ramp (Motorized)	1 additional in Central Whidbey	
Camping		
Primitive Campground	1 in South Whidbey	
Kayak Camp	1 or 2 additional on Camano 1 or 2 additional in Central and/or South Whidbey	
Other Opportunity		
Dog Park	1 in Central Camano Consider 1 additional in Central Whidbey	Henry Hollow
Hunting	Based on current policy, - hunting is allowed where a site is of sufficient size to allow safe discharge of firearms.	Continued policy of temporal separation of hunting and other uses

CHAPTER 5 - GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies noted in this chapter 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 niche.



These goals and policies were developed based on input from staff and community members. They provide policy direction for the implementation strategies and actions that

appear in this Plan. All goals, policies, strategies, and actions flow from the vision for park and recreation services and advance the County's niche.

5.1 GOALS

Goals are broad statements of intent that define the outcomes to be achieved by implementing the Parks and Recreation Plan.

- *Park System:* Provide a quality, diversified, and sustainable system of park land that addresses low-impact recreation and conservation needs.
- *Land Protection:* Acquire priority lands that conserve habitat and natural resources, preserve open spaces, maintain island character, and improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.
- *Stewardship and Maintenance:* Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, maintain and protect ecological functions and habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.
- *Beach Access:* Increase public access to the County's beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.
- *Outdoor Recreation:* Provide low-impact recreation outdoor opportunities on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

- 1 • *Funding:* Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to
2 develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and
3 recreation facilities.
- 4 • *Partnerships and Collaboration:* Foster partnerships and
5 countywide collaboration among park and habitat providers to
6 improve the provision of habitat conservation and recreation
7 services.
- 8 • *Community Engagement and Volunteerism:* Engage Island County
9 residents in the planning and stewardship of parks and facilities,
10 and provide effective communication to improve awareness and
11 support of County services.

5.2 POLICIES

12 Policies set forth directions for providing services to help determine when
13 the County’s goals have been attained. The policies presented in this
14 section are listed below the goal they support.

PARK SYSTEM

15 Provide a quality, diversified, sustainable system of park land that
16 effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs.

17 POLICY 1. Provide park lands that support the
18 mission and vision of Island County
19 Parks, providing outdoor recreation
20 experiences and protecting habitat on
21 both islands.

22 POLICY 2. Support a comprehensive, county-
23 wide park and habitat system that
integrates Island County lands within
a larger system supported by multiple jurisdictions,
organizations, and public and private agencies.

POLICY 3. 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.



LAND PROTECTION

Acquire priority lands that conserve habitat and natural resources, preserve open space, improve beach access, maintain island character, and improve and expand outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.

POLICY 4. Protect 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 addressing identified recreation needs without causing degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

POLICY 5. Maintain and protect the important ecological functions of parks lands, including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors, shoreline systems, and forests.



POLICY 6. 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.

POLICY 7. Cooperate with other public and private agencies to protect habitat and provide recreation opportunities before the most suitable sites are lost to development.

POLICY 8. Evaluate unassigned County lands to determine which sites do or do not support the vision and goals of this plan. Consider divestment of public land that have little value for conservation or outdoor recreation.

POLICY 9. Only accept land donations that support the County’s niche, as well as the goals and objectives noted in this plan.

POLICY 10. Should an existing County land with resource restrictions on its title be considered for divestment, the County shall honor those restrictions. Additionally, should any existing County land with significant conservation value (that does

1 not have any encumbrance on title) be considered for
2 divestment, the County should consider placing
3 conservation restrictions on title before divestment.

3 **STEWARDSHIP AND MAINTENANCE**

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

6 POLICY 11. Maintain the important ecological functions of park lands,
7 including those provided by wetlands, stream corridors,
8 shoreline systems, and forests.

8 POLICY 12. Increase the County’s maintenance investment in terms of
9 funding and staffing to significantly improve the
10 maintenance level of service for parks and recreation
11 facilities.

11 POLICY 13. Consider a higher level of habitat stewardship to address
12 invasive species removal, natural area restoration, and
13 habitat preservation needs.

13 POLICY 14. Renovate or replace capital facilities
14 that support the County’s niche, as
15 well as the goals and objectives noted
16 in this plan.

15 POLICY 15. Create a transition strategy that defines
16 an appropriate level of maintenance
17 investment in facilities that do not
18 support the County’s niche. Define a
19 funding threshold for repairs, but do not engage in a major
20 capital reinvestment.

19 POLICY 16. Avoid providing or accepting from others new parks and
20 habitat areas (together with planned or built facilities) if the
21 County or other provider is unable to pay for the
22 subsequent annual operating and maintenance costs of
23 facilities at the site. (Non-capital alternatives may be
pursued if operating and maintenance cost restrictions
prohibit capital construction.)¹⁵



¹⁵ This policy is consistent with CFP Objective 2.3 Operating and Maintenance Costs in the Capital Facilities Element of the Island County Comprehensive Plan.

BEACH ACCESS

Increase public access to the County’s beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.

POLICY 17. Plan, design, and develop beach access areas adhering to the goals and policies set forth in the County’s Shoreline Master Program.

POLICY 18. 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 clear County title is

established, physical location is established, a viable view is established or a viable tidal access is established, the County should identify sites with signs (including from the water side for kayak and canoe pullouts) where appropriate and consistent with the Non-Motorized Trails Plan (updated in 2009) and the Shoreline Master Program



(currently being updated)¹⁶.

POLICY 19. Identify opportunities to increase public waterfront access through the recovery of public road ends where public access is being blocked, provision of 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.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Provide outdoor, low-impact outdoor recreation opportunities on both Whidbey and Camano Islands.

POLICY 20. Invest in amenities and facilities that support passive, outdoor recreation activities, such as walking, biking, boating, camping, wildlife watching, horseback riding, beach activities, hunting, fishing, clamming, etc.

¹⁶ Prioritization Policy is being addressed in the Shoreline Master Program update.

1 POLICY 21. Strive to provide shoreline access for beach activities and a
2 one-mile walk in nature within a 15-20 minute drive from
3 most County residents.

3 POLICY 22. Provide additional recreation opportunities that are
4 consistent with the County’s niche, such as dog parks, boat
5 ramps, camping, and hunting, in dispersed locations
6 countywide where safe and appropriate opportunities exist
7 to support these activities.

6 POLICY 23. Provide diverse, non-motorized trail opportunities,
7 including both hard and soft-surfaced trails, water trails,
8 looped trail systems, and trails with variety of lengths and
9 access points consistent with the Island County Non-
10 Motorized Trails Plan. Include appropriate amenities to
11 support a variety of trail uses, including pedestrians,
12 equestrians, bikes, non-motorized watercraft, and other
13 appropriate uses.

10 POLICY 24. Incorporate opportunities for historical and environmental
11 interpretation into the park system to educate the public
12 about the local, regional, and ecological context.

12 POLICY 25. Increase the level and quality of development in park lands,
13 where appropriate, to enhance the County’s image as a
14 premier provider of outdoor recreation opportunities in the
15 Puget Sound area and in Washington State.

15 POLICY 26. Monitor community demand for additional outdoor
16 recreation services as the population in Island County
17 continues to grow.

17 POLICY 27. Assure recreational uses and development does not result in
18 significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative
19 degradation.

19 ***FUNDING***

20 Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate,
21 maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.

21 POLICY 28. Actively seek innovative funding methods to retain
22 financial flexibility and increase facility services.

1 POLICY 29. Consider and maintain diverse funding sources to meet
2 community needs and provide high-quality parks and
3 facilities. Consider impact fees; real estate excise taxes
4 (REET) and tourism taxes; conservation futures; bonds and
5 levies; grants, donations, and sponsorships; facility/site use
6 fees and rentals; land leases; sustainable resource
7 harvesting; concessions and vendor agreements, and other
8 options that may be available in the short and/or long term.

9 POLICY 30. Reinvest revenue and/or resources obtained from park
10 lands, back into recreation and habitat conservation
11 services, whether directly or through a dedicated fund for
12 system-wide conservation and recreation services. This
13 includes any proceeds from facility/site rentals, user fees,
14 leases, vendor or concessionaire agreements, and land
15 divestment (sale or trade).

16 POLICY 31. Foster Island County’s economic vitality by protecting
17 productive resources and park lands that support economic
18 activity in industries such as tourism, agriculture, and
19 forestry.

20 POLICY 32. Explore partnerships with vendors, for-profit
21 concessionaires, and non-profit groups to provide
22 programs, events and services consistent with the County’s
23 niche and goals of this plan.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

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

17 POLICY 33. Continue to cooperate with state and
18 federal agencies, local governments,
19 special purpose districts, non-profits and
20 other organizations to achieve the goals
21 set forth in this plan.

22 POLICY 34. Acquire and manage park lands in ways
23 that complement other public and
private recreation and conservation
efforts.



1 POLICY 35. Accept land donations from other providers that are
2 consistent with the County’s niche and can be sustainably
3 managed and maintained with identified funding resources,
such as a stipend, long-term stewardship fund, revenue-
generation strategy, etc.

4 POLICY 36. Continue to coordinate with other County departments and
5 jurisdictions in consolidating and defining the methods to
6 identify, retain, and conserve natural lands and habitat areas
7 within the County.

8 POLICY 37. Collaborate with others to promote Island County as a
9 recreation destination, using a variety of public relations
10 and marketing techniques to increase awareness of the
11 County’s parks and recreation facilities.

12 POLICY 38. Partner with community groups, concessionaires and others
13 to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events
14 consistent with the vision and goals in this plan. This may
15 include but is not limited to low-impact outdoor community
16 events, environmental education, campground programs,
17 facility-based programming (e.g., related to boating,
18 hunting, trail use), etc.

19 ***COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM***

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



23 POLICY 39. Promote volunteerism to enhance
community ownership and
stewardship of parks, recreation
facilities, and natural resources.
In particular, encourage citizen
involvement and participation in
maintaining, improving, and
restoring parks and natural areas.

POLICY 40. Increase volunteer coordination
and administration to ensure that
volunteers have sufficient direction, support and
recognition.

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- POLICY 41. Provide opportunities for public input in park planning and design decisions to keep tabs on local park and recreation preferences, needs, and trends.

- POLICY 42. Enhance customer service and increase site use by making information more accessible to residents and visitors.

1
2
3 **CHAPTER 6 - IMPLEMENTATION**
4 **STRATEGIES**

5 The Island County park system is similar to an ecological system in
6 transition. A new management approach is needed to achieve the County’s
7 vision and provide services within the niche identified in this plan. This



8 will require short-term and long-term strategies to
9 address Island County’s current inventory and
10 successfully transition to a future system.

11 The financial constraints faced by Island County
12 have disrupted the current park system and left it
13 in a temporary crisis. Not unlike a forest fire, this
14 crisis will allow the County to reconsolidate and
15 refocus its energy and resources to support new
16 growth and regeneration, including new system
17 development, park and habitat restoration, and
18 sustainable improvements in the future. This chapter outlines the strategies
19 that will help the County thrive during this transition.

20 ***6.1 MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS STRATEGIES***

21 Despite acquiring an extensive inventory of land, the County has fallen
22 short in its ability to fund the management of its resources, and is reaching
23 a point of crisis. Achieving Island County’s vision for outdoor recreation
and renewing its focus on the County’s niche will require a change in the
current manner of operating. The following strategies are intended to guide
the transition of Island County Parks to a sustainable land manager,
stewarding a park and habitat system that is known throughout the State of
Washington.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

The following short-term strategies should be implemented in the first one
to two years to improve system management and operations.

STRATEGY 1. 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.

STRATEGY 2. County Niche: Beginning immediately, evaluate all
funding, actions, and projects by their fit with the County’s defined

1 niche. Pursue projects that support this niche, and re-evaluate plans
2 that do not. For example, put immediate hold on any plans to improve
3 active use facilities, such as sport fields, sports courts, and indoor
4 facilities. Do not accept any new lands or renew any maintenance or
5 site use agreements until a transition plan is in place (See transition
6 strategies).

7 STRATEGY 3. Partnership Roles: Formalize the County’s role with
8 ongoing and new potential partners. There are many other providers in
9 Island County who play a variety of roles in conserving habitat and
10 providing recreational opportunities. If one of these providers is better
11 positioned to meet identified needs, let them. If a partnership or
12 collaborative effort is proposed with Island County, clearly define the
13 County’s role according to its niche including spelling out financial
14 and management responsibilities for both parties.

15 STRATEGY 4. Revenue Tracking: Revise the accounting and budgeting
16 process for collecting and spending revenues generated through the
17 outdoor recreation system. Rather than
18 establishing independent funds for specific
19 sites (such as Cornet Bay Dock) or projects
20 (such as Camano Island boat ramp
21 improvements), create two funds: Camano
22 Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund and
23 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.



16 STRATEGY 5. Fund Reinvestment: Ensure that all funds collected at
17 Island County parks are reinvested into the park system (through
18 capital projects, maintenance, or operations). This applies to all lease
19 agreements, user fees, vendor fees, facility and site rentals, etc.

20 STRATEGY 6. Public Information Campaign: Prior to instituting boat
21 ramp and trailhead parking fees (see below), create press releases,
22 website information, and Email notifications with messages about
23 “Investing in Our Parks.” Create an Email address where residents can
send their recommendations regarding specific small-scale improvements that are needed (and fit the County’s niche). 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.

1 STRATEGY 7. County Park System Identity: Improve the image of
2 County park lands. In the short-term, start with small projects, such as
3 providing attractive uniform identification signs at site entrances.



4 STRATEGY 8. Land and Facility
5 Stewardship: In the short term, increase
6 the level of facility maintenance and land
7 stewardship at the most-frequently used
8 County-owned sites.

9 STRATEGY 9. Volunteer Coordination:
10 When funding is available (in the short
11 or long term) provide staff time for
12 volunteer coordination, direction,
13 recognition, and general involvement.
14 Initially, this may be a part-time position
15 that grows in the long term. Ensure that
16 volunteers are not engaging in undirected

17 activities, such as new trail development, without permission or
18 guidance to do so.

12 ***LONG-TERM STRATEGIES***

13 The following long-term strategies should be implemented in the next
14 three to six years to improve system management and operations. In some
15 cases, these strategies will require phasing in over a longer period.

16 STRATEGY 10. Land Stewardship: Increase the level of land stewardship
17 at all County-owned sites. Few (if any) natural lands in Island County
18 are in a pristine state. Most have been and continue to be affected by
19 past or nearby uses, which has created a need for stewardship and
20 restoration. In the past, habitat stewardship and restoration needs
21 typically were not addressed—unless a volunteer group was created to
22 take on these tasks. Many volunteers, however, lack specialized
23 training in habitat management, maintenance, and restoration. In the
24 long term, the County should evaluate and budget for habitat
25 stewardship needs. Chapter 7 of this plan presents preliminary cost
26 estimates (per acre) for natural area maintenance and stewardship. The
27 County should use these cost estimates as a starting point in
28 calculating a maintenance budget for habitat stewardship.

29 STRATEGY 11. Habitat Evaluation: As part of stewardship efforts,
30 evaluate the condition of natural lands within County parks and habitat
31 conservation areas. Identify which sites would benefit most from

1 stabilization and restoration efforts. Based on available resources,
2 target sites where stabilization is achievable, since maintenance needs
3 will decrease after the ecosystem is stabilized. Maintain other sites at a
4 minimum level for hazard mitigation.

5 STRATEGY 12. Budgeting for Maintenance: Increase the per-acre
6 maintenance budget, which is needed even though the County is re-
7 focusing the park system on low-maintenance facilities.

8 STRATEGY 13. Low Maintenance by Design: Implement low-
9 maintenance landscaping techniques in all existing and new park sites.
10 Remove turf areas that do not support specific recreational uses. Avoid
11 high-maintenance plantings.

12 STRATEGY 14. Inventory Tracking: Continue to update
13 the County's facility inventory to have an accurate
14 count of facilities within all parks, including the
15 length of trails (in linear feet or miles) that are
16 developed and maintained both inside and outside of
17 parks and habitat areas.



18 STRATEGY 15. Volunteer Coordination: In the long
19 term, increase volunteer coordination through more
20 specifically defined volunteer programs and
21 opportunities, including written volunteer guidelines for specific tasks,
22 such as habitat restoration, trail building and site maintenance.

23 STRATEGY 16. County Park System Image: In the long-term, improve the
image of County parks through sensitive site design and development
that reflects Island County's character. Prior to the development of any
new minor feature or facility, consider its design and placement within
the park. 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.

STRATEGY 17. Revenue Generation: In the long-term, identify and
implement other resource-based funding strategies, tied into a
marketing campaign to advertise County resources (see below).

STRATEGY 18. Marketing Campaign: In addition to the short-term
marketing campaign, 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

1 marketing coordinator position at Four Springs Lake Preserve with a
2 system-wide marketing specialist who oversees all facilities.

3 STRATEGY 19. Reservations: Establish an online system for campsite and
4 other facility reservations. Other agencies use online reservation
5 providers that are paid for by the user.

6 STRATEGY 20. Programs and Events: Coordinate or partner with non-
7 profit groups, vendors, businesses, or other agencies to provide
8 outdoor recreation programming consistent with the County's niche.

6.2 TRANSITION STRATEGIES

9 One of the first steps toward achieving the vision is to evaluate the
10 capacity of existing sites to support the County's defined niche and meet
11 identified needs (as noted in Chapter 4). Once the County begins
12 implementing its short-term management and operations strategies, it
13 should also start developing transition strategies for sites that do not fit
14 this niche.

EVALUATION OF EXISTING RESOURCES

15 Table 12 lists sites within conceptual habitat areas (Map 2); have facilities
16 that support desired recreation opportunities; and have the capacity to meet
17 identified needs, based on the site's size and location. All existing County
18 sites have been evaluated against these criteria, and are checked where
19 each criterion is met.



20 County sites that are not checked in Table 12
21 should be further evaluated to determine if they
22 fit within the County's service niche. This table
23 does not suggest that every unchecked site
should be divested. Instead, it is a preliminary
screening tool to evaluate County park sites for
their overall fit and function within the County's
service niche.

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

PROPERTY NAME	Acres	In Habitat Concept Area	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments
			Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park	Hunting	
PARKS DEPARTMENT												
Ala Spit	16.7	H	1	C	1							Seasonal porta-potty
Baby Island Heights	9.9		1*									* Access from water only
Camano Park	5.9	H								C		Multi-purpose center
Camano Ridge	404.8	H		1			C				1	Parking along road
Cavalero Beach	0.6					1						Seasonal porta-potty
Cornet Bay Dock	0.2	H										Limited parking
Crockett Blockhouse	0.0	H										Historical Building
Dan Porter Park	9.4	H										
Dave Mackie Park	4.9	H	1		1	1						
Double Bluff	2.7	H	1								1	Off-leash dog area
Driftwood Park	0.7	H										Seasonal porta-potty
Dry Lake Trailhead	4.3	H										Undeveloped
English Boom	5.2	H	1		1							ADA accessible boardwalk
Ethyl Taylor Property	35.2	H		C								Undeveloped
Four Springs Lake Preserve	50.1	H		1								Meeting rental space, available for special events (i.e., weddings, family reunions, etc)
Freeland Hall	5.2	H	1									Hall operated by community group
Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp	0.1	H				1						
Henry Hollow	7.3	H										Undeveloped. No public access
Hurt Property	26.0	H		1								
Iverson Preserve	115.1	H	1	1								Seasonal porta-potty
Kristoferson Property	0.9	H										
Lagoon Point North	0.3		1									Limited parking. Seasonal porta-potty
Lagoon Point South	0.3	H	1									Very limited parking

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

PROPERTY NAME	Acres	In Habitat Concept Area Habitat	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments	
			Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park	Hunting		
Ledgewood Beach	0.6												Very limited parking
Libbey Beach Park	2.7	H	1										
Livingston Bay	0.2	H											Road end
Maple Grove Boat Ramp	0.8	H				1							
Marguerite Brons Memorial Park	13.7	H		1					1	1			
Mariner's Cove	0.5					1							
Monroe Landing	0.4	H		C		1							Road end. 25-year use agreement
Moran Beach	0.4	H			1								Road end
Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	0.1	H			1	1							Seasonal porta-potty
Park Shop	8.5	H											
Patmore Pit	27.5	H		C					1	1			
Pioneer Cemetery	1.9												
Putney Woods	598.8	H		1								1	Seasonal porta-potty
Rhododendron Park	184.5	H		1					1				Open April 1 - Oct 31. No hook-ups
Saratoga Woods	117.0	H		1			1						Conservation easement 113 acres
Scenic Heights	0.4	H											Lot
Scenic Heights Trust Land	36.5	H		C									
Swantown Lake	97.7	H		C									
Tillicum Beach	0.2	H			C								Very limited parking
Utsalady Boat Ramp	1.5	H	1			1							Very limited parking
Utsalady Vista	0.2	H											Very limited parking
Walter G Hutchinson Park	5.0	H											
West Beach Vista	2.0	H	1										Limited public access and parking
Subtotal	1807.1		12	14	6	8	2	0	3	4	2		

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

		In Habitat Concept Area	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments	
PROPERTY NAME	Acres		Habitat	Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park		Hunting
PUBLIC WORKS													
Deer Lagoon	377.6	H	1	C									
Greenbank North	198.8	H		1			1					1	
Greenbank South	114.4	H		C			1					1	
Hidden Trail - Camano View	0.3												
Kettles	140.8	H		1			1					1	
Kettles - ER&R	101.4	H		1			1					1	
Limpet Lane Road End	0.1	H											
Sandpiper Lane Beach Access	0.2	H											
Sunlight Beach Accesses	0.4	H											
Subtotal	934.0		1	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
UNASSIGNED													
Brainers Trust Land	38.9	H		C									Purchased from WSDNR
Brighton Beach Access	0.4	H											
Bush Point	3.9	H											
Glendale Trust Land	40.6	H		C									Purchased from WSDNR
Hidden Beach	0.6												
Hillside Park	0.6	H											
Keystone	10.9	H											
Monroe Landing Trust Land	45.2	H											Purchased from WSDNR
Penn Cove	1.6	H											
Shore Meadow Beach Access	0.1	H											
Swantown Outfall	0.2	H											
Tidelands	0.0	H											

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

		In Habitat Concept Area	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments
PROPERTY NAME	Acres		Habitat	Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park	
Site A	10.7	H										No formal parking; wide gravel shoulder. Tax Title Property
Site B	39.8	H		C								Tax Title Property
Site C	16.0	H										Tax Title Property
Site D	25.4	H		C								Tax Title Property
Site E	38.5	H		C								Tax Title Property
Site K	0.1	H										Tax Title Property
Site L	0.0											Tax Title Property
Site M	0.0											Tax Title Property
Site N	0.2											Tax Title Property
Site O	0.0	H										Tax Title Property
Site P	0.2											Tax Title Property
Site Q	0.2											Tax Title Property
Site R	0.2											Tax Title Property
Site S	0.0											Tax Title Property
Site T	0.9											Tax Title Property
Site U	0.4	H										Multiple small sites. Tax Title Property
Site V	0.6											Tax Title Property
Site Z	0.3	H										Tax Title Property
Site AA	1.2											Tax Title Property
Site BB	0.1											
Site DD	0.2											
Site EE	0.2											
Site FF	0.7	H										
Site GG	0.4											
Site HH	0.8											
Site II	0.5	H										

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

		In Habitat Concept Area	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments
PROPERTY NAME	Acres	Habitat	Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park	Hunting	Comments
Site JJ	6.6	H										
Site KK	2.1	H										
Site LL	0.2	H										
Site NN	0.4	H										
Site OO	2.6	H										
Site PP	0.5	H										
Subtotal	293.1		0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

Table 12: Evaluation of Existing Resources by Site (Needs Met or Capacity to Meet Needs)

PROPERTY NAME	Acres	In Habitat Concept Area	Recreation Access		Specialized Facilities							Comments
			Beach Access	Nature Trail	Boat Launch (Hand Carry)	Boat Ramp (Motorized)	Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trail	Camping (Canoe/Kayak)	Camping (Primitive)	Dog Park	Hunting	
SPECIAL MAINTENANCE AREAS												
Clover Valley Off-Leash (NW Parks & Rec District)	2.1									1		County maintains dog park.
Freeland Park (Port of South Whidbey)	3.1	H	1		1	1						Port operates dock and boat ramp
Oak Harbor Dog Park (Oak Harbor)	1.2									1		Island County Parks maintains grounds and pays half of porta-potty cost
Subtotal	6.3		1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	
SCHOOL TRUST LANDS (LEASED)												
Elger Bay Trust Land	173.5	H		1			C					Leased from WSDNR
High Point Trust Land	39.2	H		C								Leased from WSDNR
Skyline West Trust Land	37.4	H		C								Leased from WSDNR
Smuggler's Cove Trust Land	11.2	H										Leased from WSDNR
Strawberry Point Trust Land	11.6	H										Leased from WSDNR
SwantownTrust Land	40.1	H		C								Leased from WSDNR
Wahl Road Trust Land	18.4	H		C								Leased from WSDNR
Subtotal	331.5		0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
PARKS AND HABITAT TOTAL	3372.0		14	29	7	9	7	0	3	6	6	
OTHER SITES (NON PARKS)												
Island County Camano Campus	23.6											
Island County Courthouse Campus	4.9											Small pocket park on campus
Island County District Court	1.5											
Island County Fairgrounds	14.0											
North Whidbey Family Resource Center	0.9											
Subtotal	44.8		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	3416.9		14	29	7	9	7	0	3	6	6	

Key: "H" indicates a site within a habitat cluster. "1" notes amenity/facility present. "C" indicates site may have capacity to meet this need (with future development and improvements).

ADDITIONAL LAND NEEDS

Existing sites address needs for trails, beach access, and other recreation opportunities, but these sites do not address all needs. Table 13 identifies areas where additional park land will be needed to meet habitat and recreation needs.

Table 13: Land Needs for Habitat and Recreation

Area	Nature Trail Needs	Beach Access Needs	Other Facility Need
Northeast Whidbey	✓	✓	
Penn Cove North	✓		
Greenbank (East-Central Whidbey)		✓	Boat ramp (motorized) and boat launch (hand carry)
Trillium/Bush Point		✓*	Equestrian trails/mountain bike trails and trailhead; dog park.
Freeland (South)		✓	
Putney Woods (North)		✓	
South Whidbey/Clinton	✓	✓	Campground
Livingston Bay	✓**	✓***	Boat launch/kayak camp; dog park
Four Springs		✓	
Camano Aquifer Recharge Area	✓	✓	
South Camano	✓	✓	Boat launch (hand carry)

* Beach access is needed on the northeast side of this habitat concept area.

** Trail access is needed in North and Northeast Camano.

***Beach access is needed near the proposed Barnum Point acquisition area.

Keep in mind that land needs may change, depending on changing countywide growth and development patterns and the actions taken by other jurisdictions. Also, the physical attributes of the islands make it difficult to meet needs equally in all areas. For example, providing water access in South Camano may be difficult if not impossible because of the cliffs and unstable slopes in those areas. Further evaluation of potential parcels and opportunities will be needed to take into account site specifics and the time of acquisition and development.

Short and long-term strategies related to this preliminary site evaluation are noted below.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

The following short-term strategies should be implemented in the first one to two years to transition to the new service niche.

1 STRATEGY 21. Site Evaluation: Using Table 12 as a base, further
2 evaluate existing sites to determine which sites are suitable for
3 increased facility development. Prioritize projects using the
4 prioritization criteria presented in Chapter 7, and add these projects to
5 the County's CFP.

6 STRATEGY 22. Transition Plan: Create a transition
7 plan for sites or facilities which do not fit within the
8 County's niche. Identify which sites (if any) can be
9 sold or immediately transferred to other
10 jurisdictions, and which sites should be held until a
11 long-term transition is feasible. On existing County
12 owned properties with existing resource restrictions
13 on the title, the County shall honor those
14 restrictions. Additionally, should any existing
15 County land with significant conservation value
16 (that does not have any encumbrance on title) be considered for
17 divestment, the County should consider placing conservation
18 restrictions on title before divestment.



11 STRATEGY 23. Non-Niche Facility Repair: Identify a cost threshold,
12 agreeable to the Island County Board of Commissioners, under which
13 facilities that do not fit the County's new niche will be maintained and
14 repaired. For example, continue to irrigate sports fields and mend
15 damaged backstops, but do not renovate turf or resurface tennis courts.

16 STRATEGY 24. Enterprise Facilities: Discuss with the Board of
17 Commissioners whether the County should continue to own and
18 operate any special non-niche facilities, such as Freeland Hall and the
19 Four Springs Lake Preserve. Create strategies or a business plan for
20 these facilities to recover costs sufficient to support their maintenance
21 and operations. For example, at Freeland Hall either charge fees for
22 grounds maintenance or create an agreement where the Holmes Harbor
23 Activities Club provides all site and grounds maintenance and
improvements.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

The following long-term strategies should be implemented in the next three to six years to transition to the refined service niche. In some cases, these strategies will require phasing in over a longer period.

STRATEGY 25. Site Divestment Transition Plan: Continue to implement the site transition plans.

1 STRATEGY 26. Site Master Plans: Create site master plans for non-niche
2 parks that are not accepted by other jurisdictions. Involve site users,
3 nearby residents, and interest groups to create a new plan or design that
4 notes what new facilities will be developed at these sites, when older
5 non-niche facilities age or deteriorate to the point where they are
6 unsafe for future use. For example, consider removing the tennis court
7 and softball field at Camano Park and providing a dog park at this
8 facility instead.

6.3 ACQUISITION AND LAND EVALUATION CRITERIA

9 Once the County's transition is underway and a firm foundation is in place
10 for cost-effective park management, maintenance, and operations, the
11 County may consider acquiring land to meet additional recreation and
12 habitat needs. Acquisition may involve the purchase, acceptance, or trade
13 of properties and interests.¹⁷ Before acquiring a site, the County should
14 consider several site selection criteria. These criteria can also be used to
15 further evaluate existing County lands for their fit within the refined niche.



LAND EVALUATION CRITERIA

16 The future acquisition of new sites shall involve
17 the careful evaluation of a proposed site's habitat
18 quality, recreation potential, jurisdictional
19 situation, and management and operational
20 considerations. These criteria are described below.

Habitat Quality

21 When site is proposed for conservation, the
22 County should use best available habitat data to
23 see if the parcel is situated within a conceptual
24 habitat area (as noted on Map 2).¹⁸ If so, the County should more
25 specifically evaluate the habitat quality of the site. In terms of habitat, the
26 following criteria should be considered:

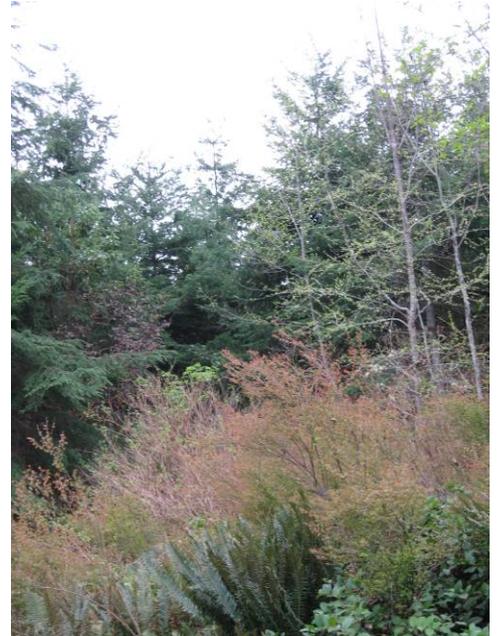
- 27 CRITERION 1. County Adjacency: The site is adjacent to a County-
28 owned park land so that acquisition would create a larger park land
29 and/or the site is adjacent to a trail and will provide a longer trail
30 corridor.

¹⁷ According to its niche, the County Parks Department should no longer invest in conservation easements that prohibit recreational use, since these efforts will not support both habitat and recreation.

¹⁸ Keep in mind that the boundaries of these conceptual areas may change as new habitat data becomes available. Using the Illustrative Habitat Conservation Concept Map, the County can overlay new data, such as the new conservancy areas identified in the Shoreline Master Program Update, to see how habitat clusters are affected.

1 CRITERION 2. Adjacency to Other Protected Sites: The site is
2 located near park lands owned by other entities.¹⁹ Unlike County
3 adjacency, the parcel must be large (e.g., five acres or more), or
4 contain important habitat, or meet a specific recreational need or
5 wildlife corridor need to justify the County’s role in this area.

6 CRITERION 3. Site Size: Larger sites
7 typically have higher habitat value,
8 greater recreation capacity, and a greater
9 maintenance cost efficiency. The County
10 should avoid acquiring small habitat
11 parcels, unless these sites contribute to a
12 larger protected area, contain important
13 habitat, or provide a wildlife corridor
14 between protected areas. Also, the
15 County should avoid acquiring sites just
16 large enough to address recreation
17 needs, without space to protect habitat.



18 CRITERION 4. Habitat Quality and
19 Resource Value: The County should
20 strive to acquire land that is considered
21 to have a high or medium resource
22 value, to minimize restoration
23 requirements.²⁰ Habitat quality can be measured by considering
factors such as habitat age/maturity, presence of rare species,
absence of invasive species, and level of degradation (e.g.,
development, soil compaction, pollution, impacted vegetation,
etc.). Sample habitat quality criteria are presented in Appendix E.

CRITERION 5. Adjacent Habitat and Land Uses: 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.

¹⁹ A site that creates a larger habitat area by combining several sites owned by other agencies is also important. However, without nearby County land, it is likely that another agency or County Department other than the Parks Department is better positioned to acquire and manage the site.

²⁰ If another jurisdiction or agency restores habitat and then offers the site to the County, this would change the County’s decision-making process.

1
2 **Recreation Potential**

3 The County should consider the recreational potential of any proposed
4 site to determine if recreational use at a site is appropriate due to
5 habitat sensitivity, what recreational needs could be met, that the site
6 can appropriately support the use, and that the use does not result in
7 significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.
8 Assuming that identified recreational uses do not adversely impact site
9 habitat, the following acquisition criteria should be considered:



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CRITERION 6. Trail or Beach
Access: The site meets a need for a one-mile walk in nature (or longer nature trail) or beach access for recreation opportunities.

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CRITERION 7. Additional Recreation
Need: The site meets another low-impact outdoor recreation need, such as a boat ramp, boat launch, dog

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park, primitive camp, or equestrian and mountain biking trail and trailhead.

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CRITERION 8. Site Character and Capacity: 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.

CRITERION 9. Adjacent Land Uses and Zoning: The site has (or has a potential for) access and anticipated site use without disturbing nearby neighbors.²¹ Zoning restrictions, neighborhood or community character, and access limitations should all be considered when developing public facilities, particularly if these facilities support large-group gatherings.

Jurisdictional Situation

Thirdly, the County should consider whether another agency is better positioned to acquire, manage, or protect the site based on location,

²¹ For example, a kayak and canoe camp (with a campsite, picnic table, and fire ring) would not be well situated between two houses in a residential neighborhood, even if a vacant lot allows room to put one there

1 jurisdiction, land ownership, or interests. Island County Parks should
2 consider sites based on the following acquisition criteria:

3 CRITERION 10. County Jurisdiction: The site is not located within
4 the service area of another town, city, or recreation district. The
5 County should strive to address conservation and recreation needs
6 in areas that are not served by another jurisdiction.

7 CRITERION 11. Site Adjacency:
8 The site is not adjacent to a site
9 protected by another jurisdiction. If
10 another jurisdiction is in a better
11 position to manage and protect a
12 site, the County may partner to
13 support the other jurisdiction's
14 acquisition of this land.



15 CRITERION 12. Funding Position: If
16 another public agency or non-profit is in a better position to
17 leverage funding for site purchase or a conservation easement, the
18 County should allow them to protect this land, particularly if the
19 provider is also able to meet recreation needs.

20 CRITERION 13. Active-Use Recreation Needs: If the site is in a
21 service area with active recreation needs as well as outdoor
22 recreation needs, the County should consider collaboration with
23 another provider who would acquire the site. The County does not
want to be in the business of supporting active recreational uses on
its lands.

CRITERION 14. Conservation and Recreation Capacity: To be
managed by the Island County Parks Department, the site needs to
have the capacity to address both habitat conservation and outdoor
recreation needs.

CRITERION 15. Conservation or Recreation Needs: 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.

Management and Operational Considerations

In evaluating potential acquisition opportunities, a variety of operations factors should first be considered. The following acquisition criteria should be considered:



CRITERION 16. Acquisition Costs:
A site can be acquired with minimal cost by the County, such as through donation or grants.

CRITERION 17. Operations Funding: 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.²² 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 5-6 years.²³ That will give Island County time to put a different funding strategy in place.

CRITERION 18. Revenue-Generation Capacity: 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.

CRITERION 19. Development Restrictions: 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.

CRITERION 20. Other Costs: 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.

These site evaluation criteria can be applied each time a parcel is evaluated for acquisition. It can also apply to tax title lots, where the

²² This policy is consistent with CFP Objective 2.3 Operating and Maintenance Costs in the Capital Facilities Element of the Island County Comprehensive Plan.

²³ The amount should be based on estimated costs per acre for site stewardship and maintenance.

Parks Department may consider incorporating tax title properties that support the County niche into their land management strategy.

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CHAPTER 7 - ACTION PLAN

Island County must take a firm course of action to achieve its vision and niche. Using the implementation strategy presented in Chapter 6, this chapter identifies the projects, prioritization criteria, and funding strategy that together form an action plan to create the desired park and habitat system in Island County's future.

7.1 CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN

To achieve the vision, goals and objectives of this plan, improvements are needed throughout the park system. These improvements range from



renovating existing sites to acquiring, planning and developing new sites. It also may include divesting of sites that do not fit the County's niche or support its vision for the future. However, regarding sites with important ecological value, the County should consider an accompanying legal instrument that assures long-term protection and management of the site.

Table 14 presents a ten-year capital improvement plan to meet the needs identified in the Parks and Recreation Plan. However, the actual timeline for development will vary, depending on the County's timing and progress in implementing the transition, operations and management strategies noted in the last chapter. Those strategies are critical to providing a foundation for future park projects. The success of new projects depends, in a large part, on having the staffing and funding resources to appropriately evaluate new projects, design and develop new sites, and maintain, operate, and steward those assets.

As noted in Table 14, Island County's action plan is summarized in several tasks:

- *Acquire Land:* Existing park land does not have the capacity to meet desired recreation and habitat conservation needs. The table notes areas where land will need to be acquired to meet these needs. Acreage needs for new sites will be driven by the type and amount of habitat to be protected and the size and scale of any recreation facilities to be developed.
- *Plan/Design Park:* New sites and existing sites with non-niche facilities (that are to be renovated) will need site designs or site

1 master plans to ensure that any facilities are well-placed to support
2 habitat protection and recreational use.

3 • *Develop New Facilities:* Many existing park lands and all new park
4 lands will require the development of new facilities to meet
5 recreation needs. This may include signing County road ends
6 adding water access, a trail and trailhead, a boat ramp, boat launch,
7 primitive campground, dog park, etc.

8 • *Improve Existing Facilities:* Nearly all sites that are meeting
9 existing needs require improvements to achieve the County’s
10 vision of being the best park system in Washington. These include
11 improvements to boat ramps, boat launches, campgrounds,
12 trailheads and trails, picnic areas, etc. In general, all parks also
13 need general site enhancement improvements, such as restroom
14 upgrades, consistent site identification signage,
15 parking improvements, accessible facilities and
16 pathways, landscaping improvements, added
17 amenities such as benches, tables, and bike racks,
18 and general image improvements.

19 • *Consider Trade or Divestment:* Several County sites
20 support non-niche uses that may be better managed
21 by another agency. Some County sites are not well
22 positioned to meet habitat or recreation needs. Very
23 small sites don’t appear to have a capacity to meet
the County niche. In these cases, it is recommended
that the County further evaluate these sites and
consider divestment. This recommendation is
especially applicable to the many small, unassigned,
undesignated sites in the inventory. Site divestment may involve
selling properties, trading them for different parcels, assigning or
giving them to another agency or County department for
management. On existing County owned properties with existing
resource restrictions on the title, the County shall honor those
restrictions. Additionally, should any existing County land with
significant conservation value (that does not have any
encumbrance on title) be considered for divestment, the County
shall place conservation restrictions on title before divestment.

• *Maintain and Steward Site:* Sites in this category are not noted for
major facility upgrades. However, maintenance at all publicly
accessible park lands should be performed at a higher level of
service. Also, many sites need enhanced stewardship of their
habitat areas. As noted above, all park lands also need general site

County parks need
general site
enhancements,
improved
maintenance, and
some level of habitat
stewardship to
achieve the
community’s vision
for the future.

1 enhancement improvements, such as restroom upgrades, consistent
2 site identification signage, parking improvements, accessible
3 facilities and pathways, landscaping improvements, added
amenities such as benches, tables, and bike racks, and general
image improvements.

- 4 • *Evaluate for Future Use:* While some Island County sites are
5 meeting habitat needs, further site specific evaluation is warranted
6 to determine if public access can be improved and recreation
facilities can be added. In addition, some sites will need a
transition plan to determine how to address non-niche facilities.

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Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
EXISTING ISLAND COUNTY PARKS AND HABITAT AREAS										
PARKS DEPARTMENT										
Ala Spit	16.7				X				Improve existing trail and boat launch. Replace porta-potty with vault toilet.	Seasonal porta-potty
Baby Island Heights	9.9							X	Evaluate site to determine if access can be improved to meet needs for nature trails and water access in this area.	Access from water only
Camano Park	5.9					X		X	Evaluate to determine if there is another jurisdiction to support this active-use site. If not, replace non-niche facilities in long term.	Multi-purpose center
Camano Ridge	404.8		X	X					Develop equestrian/bike trailhead and improve trails at this site.	Parking along road
Cavalero Beach	0.6				X				Improve existing boat ramp	Seasonal porta-potty
Cornet Bay Dock	0.2				X				Improve dock	Limited parking
Crockett Blockhouse	0.0							X	Consider management by a historic preservation group.	Historical Building
Dan Porter Park	9.4							X	Evaluate future use for this site. It is a park in an area where nature trails are needed. Current active uses would have to be removed to re-develop this site. Consider a transfer to another jurisdiction if more appropriate.	
Dave Mackie Park	4.9		X	X	X				Redevelop site as waterfront access and event site. Remove ballfields in long term.	
Double Bluff	2.7							X	Maintain as dog park/beach.	Off-leash dog area
Driftwood Park	0.7							X	Maintain water access.	Seasonal porta-potty
Dry Lake Trailhead	4.3							X	Evaluate recreation potential.	Undeveloped
English Boom	5.2							X	Maintain boat launch and interpretive area.	ADA accessible boardwalk
Etheyl Taylor Property	35.2					X			Consider transfer to State Parks	Undeveloped
Four Springs Lake Preserve	50.1							X	Maintain as an enterprise site. Evaluate future long-term use when indoor structures deteriorate.	Meeting rental space, available for special events (i.e., weddings, family reunions, etc)
Freeland Hall	5.2							X	Renegotiate use agreement. County should charge for maintenance and facility use or have other provider maintain building and landscaping.	Hall operated by community group
Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp	0.1				X				Improve boat ramp and associated facilities.	
Henry Hollow	7.3		X	X				X	Investigate access issues. Create master plan, remove existing structures, and develop for beach access.	Undeveloped. No public access
Hurt Property	26.0							X	Consider acquisition of a connection to Putney Woods.	
Iverson Preserve	115.1			X					Develop additional trails for hiking and birding at this site.	Seasonal porta-potty
Kristoferson (Can Ku Road)	0.9					X			Consider divestment to another entity or Island County Dept. of Natural Resources	
Lagoon Point North	0.3							X	Maintain water access. Replace porta-potty with vault toilet.	Very limited parking. Seasonal porta-potty.
Lagoon Point South	0.3							X	Maintain water access.	Very limited parking
Ledgewood Beach	0.6							X	Maintain water access.	Very limited parking
Libbey Beach Park	2.7			X					Provide picnic shelter; acquire adjacent tidelands	
Livingston Bay	0.2							X		Road end

Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PPROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
Maple Grove Boat Ramp	0.8				X				Improve boat ramp and associated facilities.	
Marguerite Brons Memorial Park	13.7						X		Maintain as dog park.	
Mariner's Cove	0.5				X				Improve boat ramp and associated facilities.	
Monroe Landing	0.4				X				Improve boat ramp and associated facilities.	Road end. 25-year use agreement with DFW
Moran Beach	0.4				X				Improve boat launch.	Road end
Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	0.1				X				Improve boat ramp and associated facilities. Replace porta-potty with vault toilet. Pursue opportunities to connect this site with Sites NN, OO, PP, and Z.	Seasonal porta-potty
Park Shop	8.5						X			
Patmore Pit	27.5						X		Maintain as dog park.	
Pioneer Cemetery	1.9					X			Consider divestment	
Putney Woods	598.8				X				Improve trails and develop specialized trailhead. Replace porta-potty with vault toilet.	Seasonal porta-potty
Rhododendron Park (Ballfields and Playground)	32.0					X	X		Evaluate to see if transfer sport fields to another jurisdiction.	
Rhododendron Park (Campground and Trails)	127.2				X		X	X	Improve campground and trails.	Open April 1 -Oct 31. No hook-ups
Rhododendron Park (Conservation Area)	25.3						X			
Saratoga Woods	117.0				X				Improve trails.	Conservation easement 113 acres
Scenic Heights	0.4					X			Consider divestment.	Lot
Scenic Heights Trust Land	36.5						X	X	Maintain site; evaluate lease/use agreement for farmland.	
Swantown Lake	97.7	X		X					Add an interpretive nature trail at this site. Acquire adjacent land	
Tillicum Beach	0.2			X					Add a boat launch.	Very limited parking
Utsalady Boat Ramp	1.5				X				Improve boat ramp, boat storage, and associated facilities.	Very limited parking
Utsalady Vista	0.2						X		Maintain.	Very limited parking
Walter G Hutchinson Park	5.0				X				Improve trails and trailhead.	
West Beach Vista	2.0				X				Improve access to beach.	Limited public access and parking
Subtotal	1807.2	1	3	7	16	6	16	14		

Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
PUBLIC WORKS										
Deer Lagoon	377.6			X					Develop nature trails and a trailhead at this site.	
Greenbank North	198.8				X		X		Improve trails and trailhead.	
Greenbank South	114.4						X			
Hidden Trail - Camano View	0.3						X	X	Maintain water access.	
Kettles	140.8			X					Develop equestrian trailhead. Consider regulating firearm discharge.	
Kettles - ER&R	101.4			X			X		Improve trails.	
Limpet Lane Road End	0.1							X	Evaluate for habitat and water access.	
Sandpiper Lane Beach Access	0.2							X	Evaluate for habitat and water access.	
Sunlight Beach Accesses	0.4							X	Evaluate for habitat and water access.	
Subtotal	934.0	0	0	3	1	0	4	4		
UNASSIGNED										
Brainers Trust Land	38.9			X					Develop trailhead and nature trails as appropriate.	Purchased from WSDNR
Brighton Beach Access	0.4							X	Evaluate for habitat and water access.	
Bush Point	3.9						X	X	Evaluate for recreation potential	
Glendale Trust Land	40.6		X	X					Develop trailhead and nature trails as appropriate.	Purchased from WSDNR
Hidden Beach	0.6			X				X	Evaluate site and existing structures for future use. Consider a boat launch and associated facilities.	
Hillside Park	0.6						X		Keep because of proximity to Iverson Preserve.	
Keystone	10.9					X			Transfer to another Keystone landholder.	
Monroe Landing Trust Land	45.2	X		X					Acquire property to provide public access. Develop trailhead and nature trails.	Purchased from WSDNR
Penn Cove	1.6		X				X		Hold for nearby acquisition to join with Sites JJ and KK.	
Shore Meadow Beach Access	0.1							X	Evaluate for restoration potential.	
Swantown Outfall	0.2							X	Evaluate for restoration potential.	
Tidelands	0.0							X	Evaluate for restoration potential.	
Site A	10.7					X			Property being acquired by Whidbey Camano Land Trust	Tax Title Property
Site B	39.8					X			Property being acquired by Whidbey Camano Land Trust	Tax Title Property
Site C	16.0					X			Property being acquired by Whidbey Camano Land Trust	Tax Title Property
Site D	25.4					X			Property being acquired by Whidbey Camano Land Trust	Tax Title Property
Site E	38.5						X	X	Evaluate recreation potential of this site.	
Site K	0.1	X					X		Designate Site K as park land (currently tax title sites). Acquire land around these sites and Driftwood Park. In long-term master plan and develop sites.	Tax Title Property
Site L	0.0					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site M	0.0					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site N	0.2					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site O	0.0	X					X		Hold for habitat conservation.	Tax Title Property
Site P	0.2					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property

Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PPROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
Site Q	0.2					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site R	0.2					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site S	0.0					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site T	0.9					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site U	0.4	X					X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	Multiple small sites. Tax Title Property
Site V	0.6					X			Consider divestment of tax title property.	Tax Title Property
Site Z	0.3						X		Plan sites NN, OO, PP, and Z together. See if there is a potential to acquire land between here and Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	
Site AA	1.2						X		Tax Title Property; near Green bank properties.	Tax Title Property
Site BB	0.1					X			Consider divestment.	
Site DD	0.2					X			Consider divestment.	
Site EE	0.2					X			Consider divestment.	
Site FF	0.7						X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	
Site GG	0.4					X			Consider divestment.	
Site HH	0.8					X			Consider divestment.	
Site II	0.5						X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	
Site JJ	6.6						X	X	Hold for nearby acquisition to join with Penn Cove and Site KK.	
Site KK	2.1						X	X	Hold for nearby acquisition to join with Site JJ and Penn Cove.	
Site LL	0.2							X	Evaluate for restoration potential.	
Site NN	0.4						X		Plan sites NN, OO, PP, and Z together. See if there is a potential to acquire land between here and Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	
Site OO	2.6						X		Plan sites NN, OO, PP, and Z together. See if there is a potential to acquire land between here and Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	
Site PP	0.5						X		Plan sites NN, OO, PP, and Z together. See if there is a potential to acquire land between here and Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	
Subtotal	293.1	4	2	4	0	19	16	13		

Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PPROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
SPECIAL MAINTENANCE AREAS										
Clover Valley Off-Leash (NW Parks & Rec District)	2.1						X		Continue to maintain as dog park.	County maintains dog park.
Freeland Park (Port of South Whidbey)	3.1							X	Evaluate options to transfer this site to another jurisdiction who will continue to support the boat ramp and water access.	Port operates dock and boat ramp
Oak Harbor Dog Park (Oak Harbor)	1.2						X		Continue to maintain as dog park.	Island County Parks maintains grounds and pays half of porta-potty cost
Subtotal	6.3	0	0	0	0	0	2	1		
SCHOOL TRUST LANDS (LEASED)										
Elger Bay Trust Land	173.5		X	X					Partner with the State DNR to plan, design, and develop an equestrian/mountain bike trailhead and trails at this site.	Leased from WSDNR
High Point Trust Land	39.2						X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	Leased from WSDNR
Skyline West Trust Land	37.4						X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	Leased from WSDNR
Smuggler's Cove Trust Land	11.2						X	X	Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	Leased from WSDNR
Strawberry Point Trust Land	11.6						X			Leased from WSDNR
Swantown Trust Land	40.1						X		Hold for habitat conservation; evaluate for future recreation use.	Leased from WSDNR
Wahl Road Trust Land	18.4			X					Partner with the State DRN to develop nature trails and a trailhead at this site.	Leased from WSDNR
Subtotal	331.5	0	1	2	0	0	5	3		
PARKS AND HABITAT TOTAL	3372.1	5	6	16	17	25	43	35		
OTHER SITES (NON PARKS)										
Island County Camano Campus	23.6						X			
Island County Courthouse Campus	4.9						X			Small pocket park on campus
Island County District Court	1.5						X			
Island County Fairgrounds	14.0						X			
North Whidbey Family Resource Center	0.9						X			
Subtotal	44.8	0	0	0	0	0	5	0		
TOTAL	3416.9	5	6	16	17	25	48	35		
PROPOSED ISLAND COUNTY PARK LANDS										
WHIDBEY ISLAND										
Northeast Whidbey Water Access/Trail	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land for habitat conservation, nature trail and water access.	
Penn Cove (North) Trail/Trailhead	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land for habitat conservation and nature trail.	
Penn Cove (East)	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land around Penn Cove, Site KK, and Site JJ to connect these sites.	
Central Whidbey Water Access #1	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land in Central Whidbey, north of Greenbank to support beach access. Develop a boat ramp and appropriate support facilities.	

Island County Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element

Table 14: Capital Improvement Plan, 2011-2021

Park Lands or Habitat Area		Action							Project	Comments
PPROPERTY NAME	Acres	Acquire Land	Plan/Design Park	Develop New Facility	Improve Existing Facility	Consider Trade or Divestment	Maintain and Steward Site	Evaluate for Future Use	Project Description	Inventory Comments
Central Whidbey Water Access #2	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land in Central Whidbey near/south of Greenbank to support beach access. Develop a boat launch and appropriate support facilities.	
Central Whidbey Dog Park	TBD							X	Coordinate with FETCH to determine if needed.	
Trillium Community Forest	661.7	X	X	X					Acquire property and develop a trailhead to accommodate	
South Freeland (Mutiny Bay)	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land around Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp, Sites NN, OO, PP, and Z. Create a joint master plan for these sites as one park/habitat area. Develop site as a beach access point and trailhead with nature trails.	
South Whidbey Campground and Trails	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land for a primitive campground and nature trails. Master plan and develop the site.	
South Whidbey Water Access	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire approximately land for beach access in South Whidbey. Develop the site with parking and appropriate support facilities.	
CAMANO ISLAND										
Livingston Bay Water Access/Trail	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire, plan and develop site or sites for beach access, boat launch, kayak camp, trails/trailhead, and habitat conservation. Consider Barnum Point for potential to address some of these needs.	
West-Central Camano (Four Springs)	TBD	X	X	X					Acquire land for beach access if feasible.	
Camano Trail (Aquifer Recharge Area)	TBD	X	X	X				X	Acquire land for nature trail/trailhead. Evaluate sites for potential to also meet water access needs.	
South Camano Beach Access	TBD							X	Determine if beach access is feasible. Area needs include water access, boat launch, parking and appropriate support facilities.	
Subtotal	661.7	12	12	12	0	0	0	3		

TBD: Acreage to be acquired will be determined by habitat conservation and recreation needs.

7.2 PROJECT PRIORITIES

All projects noted in Table 14 will assist Island County in meeting Plan goals and objectives. However, not all of these projects are likely to be implemented within the next two, six, or even ten years, given the County's limited funding resources. When the County has sufficient capital and operations funding, it will need to evaluate projects to determine which ones to implement first. For this reason, a set of criteria was developed to assist in the decision-making process. By applying these criteria, Island County Parks can make decisions about which projects should move forward first in alignment with its vision, niche, and goals.

PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

The following prioritization criteria apply to small and large capital investments and site actions—even projects that are too small to be noted individually in the Capital Facilities Plan. Projects that meet more than one of the eight criteria described below should be given preference.

Prioritization criteria can help determine what projects to implement first.

- *Improves revenue collection.* Projects that enhance the County's ability to collect revenue at existing sites should be given high priority. These projects will help make the existing system more self-sustaining and generate funds for future improvements. This includes projects such as the installation of trailhead collection posts, signage, or campground improvements to attract more visitors.
- *Improves maintenance efficiency or reduces maintenance costs.* Projects that improve maintenance efficiency or reduce life-cycle costs should be given high priority. This includes site divestment, the removal of deteriorated non-niche facilities, turf removal (where not supporting recreational use), or facility upgrades that decrease ongoing maintenance costs. This also includes restoring habitat areas to a sustainable state, which will require less maintenance than the constant care of degraded areas.
- *Is supported by an active and organized stewardship group.* Projects that have strong volunteer support to offset capital and operations costs should receive higher priority. (Note: Groups that form to support a particular project may not be as strong or successful as long-term groups who have been invested in a particular area.)
- *Utilizes alternative funding or partnerships.* Projects that have a potential to be funded through grants, donations, or partner

1 contributions should receive higher priority than projects without
2 other funding opportunities.

- 3 • *Provides the biggest bang for the buck.* Projects where the
4 cost/benefit ratio is favorable should have a higher priority. In
5 other words, projects that are less costly but serve a broader
6 population are desired. In comparison, a project that is costlier,
7 meets a localized need, or serves a limited number of residents
8 would be assigned a lesser priority, even though these projects are
9 still valuable. For example, a trail typically has a higher demand,
10 serves a broader user group, and is less costly than a motorized
11 boat launch.



- 12 • *Provides a water access opportunity in an underserved area.* Priority consideration
13 should be given to projects that provide
14 needed water access where other
15 opportunities may not be available.²⁴
- 16 • *Links nearby park lands.* Priority
17 consideration should be given to land
18 acquisition opportunities that connect
19 existing County park lands to create larger
20 parcels. Larger park lands typically
21 provide enhanced habitat protection and
22 expanded recreation opportunities.
- 23 • *Enhances community safety and health.*
24 Lastly, any project that directly supports or
25 improves community safety and health,
26 whether through existing park upgrades or
27 the acquisition of new park land sites, should receive priority.

28 By applying these criteria, Island County Parks can rate each project,
29 assigning point for each criterion a project meets. Generally speaking,
30 projects with higher scores are typically higher priorities. However, current
31 economic circumstances cause some criteria to outweigh others. For
32 example, any project that is supported by available capital and operations
33 funding is most likely to move forward first.

²⁴ This criterion assumes that the site is sufficiently large, is publically accessible, and meets other land acquisition criteria in this plan. The County should not prioritize road ends or sites that cannot support beach activities or similar needs.

SETTING COUNTY PRIORITIES

1 Even with prioritization criteria and land acquisition/evaluation criteria,
2 Island County may find it difficult to weigh different priorities against
3 each other. It may seem difficult to decide whether the protection of rare
4 species is more important than the protection of aquifer recharge areas. At
5 first, it also may seem difficult to prioritize projects that fit the County’s
6 niche, and avoid those that do not—especially where critical or significant
7 habitats are involved. How should the County respond to requests to meet
8 non-niche needs? How should the County weigh habitat values against
9 recreation demand, especially when evaluating land donations and
10 acquisition potential?

11 It is important to note that land acquisition and facility management for
12 Island County is as much a management question right now as it is a
13 question of ecology or even public priorities. Most people agree that there
14 is no point in buying a car if you can’t afford to put gas in it, change the
15 oil, and buy the required insurance. The capital investment requires that
16 you have the resources to support ongoing operations and maintenance.
17 Similarly, park development and conservation requires that the County
18 have the staffing and financial resources to support ongoing facility
19 maintenance and land stewardship. The planning
20 process helped the County understand how
21 underfunded and understaffed the current system is. It
22 is time for the County to focus on expanding its
23 operations and maintenance to provide the same high
24 level of service that it does for land acquisition.



25 When resources are available to acquire new sites, the
26 County will find a balance between recreation and
27 habitat conservation needs. For example, the results
28 of Community Questionnaire indicated that the County should focus on
29 the acquisition and protection of inland conservation lands (top priority)
30 and shorelines (second highest priority). Given the dual desire to provide
31 recreation and habitat conservation, both recreation and conservation
32 needs may help determine what types of recreation are provided and
33 habitat protected and where. For example, shoreline protection becomes a
34 priority where beach activities are needed and critical shoreline is present.
35 The protection of inland forests becomes a priority where recreational
36 trails are needed and a significant wetland or aquifer recharge area has
37 been identified.²⁵

38 Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships for site management also
39 affect how and where Island County will focus its habitat conservation

²⁵ In both cases, this assumes that recreation needs can be met without damaging habitat or natural resources. If not, another suitable site should be found.

1 efforts. For example, a site that meets both habitat conservation and
2 recreation needs, plus is donated to the County with a guaranteed 20-year
3 endowment for site maintenance and stewardship could easily be an
4 acquisition priority, regardless of whether it protects high-quality forests,
5 prairie, oak woodlands, shoreline or wetlands. Similarly, opportunities to
6 partner with a concessionaire who is willing to operate a site for public
7 benefit, provide a niche-related service, pay capital costs for facility
8 development, and share proceeds with the County would identify what
9 types of projects could move forward.

6 For the reasons noted above, habitat needs in Island County are not driven
7 entirely by an ecological evaluation of the most important habitat types or
8 high-value resource areas in Island County. Instead, land acquisition needs
9 are based on a spatial understanding of where important habitat is located,
10 as well as where recreation opportunities are needed. Additional criteria,
11 such potential partnerships, ownership and management considerations,
12 will affect future acquisitions and the County's ability to meet these needs.

10 **7.3 FUNDING STRATEGIES**

11 The funding strategy to implement priority projects in the Capital
12 Facilities Plan is multi-faceted. In general, it includes the following:

- 13 • *Apply for grants.* The adoption of the Parks and Recreation Plans
14 will make Island County eligible to apply for State grants to
15 support habitat conservation and recreation for next six years. In
16 addition, the 2006 Non-Motorized Trails Plan has made the County
17 eligible for non-motorized transportation funding from the State
18 until 2012. The County should take advantage of these application
19 windows and continue to take advantage of other grants and federal
20 funds, especially those for trail
21 development that are available at this
22 time.
- 23 • *Increase revenue generation.* The
Operations and Funding Analysis
completed as part of this planning process
noted a number of ways that Island
County could increase revenue by
broadening its market, using existing
resources to generate revenue, and
developing its tax base to support new
opportunities. The County should not be
in the business of subsidizing group
events or facility use, especially where the

16 Island County is
17 just beginning to
18 recognize the
19 value of its own
20 resources. Parks
21 and facilities can
22 help generate
23 revenue to invest
back into the park
system.

1 uses do not support the County’s niche. A new cost recovery
2 strategy should be implemented that increases the revenue
3 generated through facility rentals, facility use, land leases, park use
4 for special events, sustainable resource harvesting, tourism, etc.
5 Greater fees can be charged for non-residents and non-niche
6 activities.

- 7 • *Build on successful efforts.* The County should build on successful
8 funding strategies, reinvesting funds into land and facilities that
9 will continue to support this success. Similarly, the County should
10 continue to build on its successful partnerships and the relationship
11 it has with volunteers, agencies, and groups who have helped fund
12 or complete capital projects and ongoing maintenance efforts. The
13 County should continue to support “model” efforts that will help
14 build support for future park efforts.
- 15 • *Ensure maximum dollars from traditional funding sources.* The
16 County’s existing funding resources should be monitored to ensure
17 that the Parks Department is receiving the maximum funds
18 possible from these sources.
- 19 • *Engage volunteers.* Volunteers can help
20 move a variety of projects forward.
21 However, as noted in the planning process,
22 Island County volunteers need more
23 guidance and direction than they have right
now. While the County cannot afford to
dedicate staff time or fund a volunteer
coordinator position in the short term, it may
require that land donations are accompanied
by a funded and filled volunteer coordinator
position. The person in this position could increase, oversee, and
manage the use of volunteers for capital development, park land
stewardship, maintenance, and programming. This coordinator will
be able to provide more oversight to ensure projects are built to
County standards and maintained in the long term.
- *Evaluate other funding options for priority projects.* As economic
circumstances change, other funding options may be considered for
large-scale projects. For example, a General Obligation Bond, tax
levy, utility tax, increased hospitality tax, or similar measure may
find increased voter support in the future.
- *Develop and market trails:* Because of the level and frequency of
trail use, trail development is one of the best and most cost-



1 effective ways for Island County to increase the number of people
2 in parks. If Island County can position itself as having the best and
3 most scenic hiking and biking trails in the State of Washington, it
4 will open the door for more events and self-directed activities that
5 appeal to tourists who anticipate paying fees to explore the Puget
6 Sound.

7.4 NEXT STEPS

6 From this point onward, Island County will continue its search for a
7 brighter future and a better quality of life. Park lands for recreation, and
8 habitat conservation will play an integral role in creating this future. As
9 new projects enter the County's scope, staff must carefully evaluate its
10 options and determine whether the value of the project is worth the cost of
11 the effort to obtain it. In the short and long term, the County should
12 carefully identify and weigh these costs. These include:

- 10 • *Capital Costs:* Changing land values and construction costs, as
11 well as variables such site size, site character and condition, habitat
12 quality and mitigation needs, facility styles, size, and access needs,
13 will all affect capital costs associated with projects in the Capital
14 Facilities Plan. Because of these variables, capital costs should be
15 determined when the County is considering project

16 implementation. In assessing costs, the
17 County should be prepared to invest
18 more in facility development than it
19 has in the past, so that it can create the
20 signature parks that the community
21 desires.

- 20 • *Operations Costs:* The amount of
21 money invested in Island County park
22 maintenance is not comparable to the
23 amounts invested by many other
providers in the Pacific Northwest.
Island County has a unique park
system. Therefore, no specific
financial guidelines have been
proposed for increasing the park
maintenance budget. However, the
County should consider more than
doubling the amount it spends per acre

on facility maintenance and increasing that amount steadily as the
level of park development increases. In addition, the County should



1 consider habitat stewardship needs, since funds have not been
2 budgeted consistently for this purpose in the past.

- 3 • *Community Costs:* The cost of community support is intangible
4 and unquantifiable. We often talk about community support in
5 terms of its value. The reality is that there can be a cost as well.
6 The County needs to pursue projects that will foster community
7 support for parks. On the other hand, the County should
8 temporarily avoid projects that will stretch County resources even
9 more thinly. The County cannot afford the social costs for such
10 undertakings, and may have a hard time justifying major new
11 expenses.
- 12 • *Recovered Costs:* In calculating costs, it is also important to factor
13 in the potential capacity of a site or project to generate revenue.
14 Cost recovery is extremely important in developing a self-
15 sustaining system. While charging facility use fees may seem
16 controversial, it sends a consistent message that Island County
17 values its land and facilities, which are assets and investments to
18 be sustained for future generations. In return for the facility use
19 fees and charges, Island County promises to invest this money
20 efficiently and wisely into site improvements.

21 The Parks and Recreation Plan proposes several new policies, strategies
22 and actions to enhance the current park system, and support recreation and
23 habitat conservation into the future. While the strategies and actions may
sound new, the desire to protect habitat and support recreation is firmly
rooted in current and past County traditions. This plan gives Island County
Parks the direction it needs to continue to foster those important traditions
countywide. Parks conservation and outdoor recreation will continue to
thrive in Island County, improving the quality of life for all residents.

1 Parks, Open Space & Trails Element. December, 2009. City of Langley.
www.langleywa.org/documents/pos_element_1.pdf

2 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. March, 2009. City of Oak Harbor,
3 Whidbey Island, Washington.

4 Policy Plan/Land Use Element. Adopted September 28, 1998 (updated
11/10/98). Island County Comprehensive Plan. Island County, Washington

5 Saratoga Woods Management Plan. draft Whidbey Camano Land Trust.

6 Selected Economic Characteristics: 2006-2008. Data Set: 2006-2008
7 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. Geographic Area: Island
County, Washington. American Community Survey.

8 Selected Social Characteristics in the United States: 2006-2008. Data Set:
9 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. Geographic
Area: Island County, Washington. American Community Survey.

10 Shoreline Management Element. Shoreline Master Program Goals and
11 Policies. Adopted by Resolution for DOE Approval on September 28,
1998. updated 2001, Island County Comprehensive Plan.

12 South Whidbey Parks and Recreation Plan. 2010-2015 Comprehensive
13 Plan. http://www.swparks.org/park_business.html. South Whidbey Parks
and Recreation District.

14 Town of Coupeville Comprehensive Plan. October 1994. Rev 7/03. Town
15 of Coupeville.

16 Visitor Counts (1996-2009). Island County State Parks. Compiled by
17 Island County EDC from data provided by Washington State Parks
Commission Public Affairs Office.

18 Water Resources Element. Adopted September 28, 1998. Island County
19 Comprehensive Plan.