

Summary Statement

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

Island County's Parks and Recreation Element was first adopted in 1998. In the Spring of 2010, Island County in collaboration with the Whidbey Camano Land Trust updated the Parks and Recreation Element for Island County. Many different jurisdictions are involved in protecting habitat, natural areas, and providing recreation opportunities within Island County. This Element identifies Island County's specific area of focus in managing parks and natural areas for recreation and conservation. It includes policies and strategies for making the best use of existing County resources, including partnering with other providers to ensure that parks and natural areas remain vital assets 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.

This Element synthesizes existing data from a variety of sources to create a County inventory of habitat and recreation lands. It incorporates public involvement findings that were used to identify a vision for County 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, this Element includes specific goals and policies for developing, protecting, and maintaining the Island County park system to address recreation and conservation needs in a fiscally-sound and sustainable manner. Most importantly, this Element provides the County a set of directions to concentrate efforts on core services and improve its land and facility management for current residents and future generations. In doing so, 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.

PARKS & RECREATION GOALS

1. Provide a quality, diverse and, sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs.
2. Provide low-impact/passive outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County.
3. Increase public access to the County's beaches and shoreline areas, creating recreation opportunities that respect the ecological integrity of the shoreline ecosystem.
4. Acquire lands that conserve priority habitat and natural resources, preserve open space, improve beach access, maintain island character, and improve and expand passive outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.
5. Divest in parks lands that are not consistent with the County's area of focus.
6. Develop stewardship and maintenance programs that cost-effectively protect County assets, emphasize sustainable methods and design, support habitat quality, respond to local needs, and sustain resources for future generations.
7. Identify, secure, and develop adequate funding sources to develop, operate, maintain, and sustain County parks, habitat, and recreation facilities.

(Continued on next page)

PARKS & RECREATION GOALS (CONTINUED)

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

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

7.1.1 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

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

As per Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, the Parks and Recreation Element must be consistent with the Capital Facilities Element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. This Element includes estimates of park and recreation demand for a 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. This Element is also consistent with other Elements of the County's Comprehensive Plan, including the Land Use Element, Shoreline Management Element, and the Critical Areas Ordinance.

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

7.1.2 TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

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

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

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

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

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

Park Lands: All the lands managed by Island County which are formally used for or dedicated to outdoor recreation and/or conservation. There are three types of properties that make up Island County Park Lands: 1) Community Parks; 2) Conservation Areas; and 3) Natural Recreation Areas. Many times Parks, Conservation Areas, and Natural Recreation Areas are overlapping terms.

- *Community Parks*: Any area that has been set aside or is managed for outdoor recreation purposes and, has associated built elements (e.g. boat ramps, picnic tables, playground equipment, or ballfields).
- *Conservation Areas*: Park lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation or environmental protection. Conservation Areas may include fish or wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge areas, significant ecosystems, ecologically critical areas, or agricultural or forest resource lands. These areas may also support outdoor recreational uses, where these uses do not conflict with conservation efforts.
- *Natural Recreation Areas*: Park lands that offer recreational opportunities in a natural setting but do not meet the definition of a 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.

Passive (low-impact) Recreation: Leisure activities that typically have minimal impact on the natural environment and minimal disruption to the quality of the natural character. Hiking, camping, horseback riding, bicycling, and fishing are examples of passive recreation.

Wildlife Corridor: Connected habitats that link 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. RCW 36.70A.160 requires identification of open space corridors, which in many respects overlaps with wildlife corridors.

7.2 EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

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

7.2.1 JURISDICTIONS INVOLVED IN PARK/HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Island County is one of many jurisdictions and property owners who are working to provide recreation and conservation services throughout the County. 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.

7.2.1.0.1 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), in Central Whidbey Island, is a reserve managed as a partnership; one of the partners includes the National Park Service (NPS). NPS directly owns and manages approximately 400 acres within Ebey's Reserve.

7.2.1.0.2 State

The State of Washington supports recreation and habitat conservation through the efforts of several agencies. Washington State Parks operates nine state parks in Island County (On Whidbey Island: Deception Pass, Joseph Whidbey, Fort Ebey, Ebey's Landing, Fort Casey, Keystone, Possession Point, and South Whidbey. On Camano Island: Cama Beach and Camano Island). 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 Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), DNR does not currently manage any commercial forest land in Island County. DNR does help manage the Naas Natural Area Preserve. DNR maintains some conservation easements and the water around Smith and Minor Island are an aquatic reserve.

7.2.1.0.3 Cities and Towns

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

7.2.1.0.4 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 both the John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool and the Clover Valley Park. SWPRD manages the Community Park & Sports Complex, Deer Lake, Lone Lake and Goss Lake public beaches and the Trustland Trails.

7.2.1.0.5 Port Authorities

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

7.2.1.0.6 School Districts

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

7.2.1.0.7 Non-Profits

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

7.2.2 PARK AND HABITAT INVENTORY

Island County and other agencies provide more than 14,500 acres of park land and habitat areas, as calculated using available GIS data. Table 7-1 summarizes this data. While this inventory is not comprehensive, it helps paint a picture of the major landholders and extensive landholdings for parks, natural recreation areas, and conservation areas.

As shown in Table 7-1, 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.

Table 7-1. Parks and Habitat Land Inventory in Island County

Jurisdiction	# of Sites	Acres*
Island County		
Parks Department	50	2,663.8
Public Works	7	735.2
Unassigned	40	289.2
Other (Non-Parks)	6	53.4
Subtotal	**103**	**3,741.6**
Towns and Cities		
Coupeville	10	29.8
Langley	15	24.9
Oak Harbor	28	160.4
Subtotal	**53**	**215.1**
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	1	19.9
Subtotal	**22**	**421.2**
Other Jurisdictions		
Federal	2	44.4
State	23	4,787.3
Port Authorities	7	229.4
Parks and Recreation Districts	3	300.0
Non-Profits/Private	7	617.2
Subtotal	**42**	**5,978.1**
Total	220	10,356.0

*This inventory is based on GIS data available for this planning process.

Table 7-2. Parks Inventory by Jurisdiction

Park Name	# of Parcels	# of Acres
ISLAND COUNTY		
Parks		
Ala Spit	5	16.7
Baby Island Heights	3	9.9
Barnum Point	1	24.5
Camano Park	1	5.9
Camano Ridge	4	404.8
Cavalero Beach	1	0.6
Cornet Bay Dock	1	0.2
Dan Porter Park	1	9.4
Dave Mackie Park	1	4.9
Double Bluff	3	2.7
Driftwood Park	4	0.7
Dry Lake Trailhead	2	4.3
Elger Bay Trust Land	1	173.5
English Boom	2	5.2
Etheyl Taylor Property	1	35.2
Four Springs Lake Preserve	1	50.1
Freeland Hall	1	5.2
Freeland Park	8	3.1
Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp	1	0.1
Henry Hollow	1	7.3
Hurt Property	2	26.0
Iverson Preserve	1	115.1
Kristoferson (Can Ku Road)	3	0.9
Lagoon Point North	1	0.3
Lagoon Point South	1	0.3
Ledgewood Beach	1	0.6
Libbey Beach Park	1	2.7
Livingston Bay	2	0.2
Maple Grove Boat Ramp	3	0.8
Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park	1	13.7
Mariner's Cove	1	0.5
Monroe Landing	2	0.4
Moran Beach	1	0.4
Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp	1	0.1
Patmore Pit Dog Park	1	27.5
Pioneer Cemetery	1	1.9
Putney Woods	12	598.8
Rhododendron Campground	7	153.0
Rhododendron Park	1	32.0
Robinson Beach	1	1.3
Saratoga Woods	12	117.0
Scenic Heights Trust Land	1	36.5
Swantown Lake	10	97.7
Tillicum Beach	1	0.2
Trillium Community Forest1	-	-
Utsalady Boat Ramp	2	1.5
Utsalady Vista	1	0.2
West Beach Vista	6	2.0

Park Name	# of Parcels	# of Acres
ISLAND COUNTY, CONT.		
Public Works		
Deer Lagoon	27	377.6
Greenbank South	6	114.4
Hidden Trail - Camano View	1	0.3
Kettles	12	242.2
Limpet Lane Road End	1	0.1
Sandpiper Lane Beach Access	2	0.2
Sunlight Beach Accesses	4	0.4
Unassigned		
Brainers Land Trust	1	38.9
Brighton Beach Access	2	0.4
Bush Point	2	3.9
Glendale Trust Land	1	40.6
Hidden Beach	1	0.6
Hillside Park	1	0.6
Keystone	1	10.9
Monroe Landing Trust Land	1	45.2
Penn Cove	1	1.6
Shore Meadow Beach Access	1	0.1
Site A	1	10.7
Site AA	1	1.2
Site B	1	39.8
Site BB	1	0.1
Site C	1	16.0
Site D	1	25.4
Site DD	1	0.2
Site E	1	38.5
Site EE	1	0.2
Site FF	1	0.7
Site GG	1	0.4
Site HH	1	0.8
Site II	1	0.5
Site JJ	1	6.6
Site K	1	0.1
Site KK	1	2.1
Site L	1	0.0
Site LL	1	0.2
Site M	1	0.0
Site N	1	0.2
Site O	1	0.0
Site P	1	0.2
Site Q	1	0.2
Site R	1	0.2
Site S	1	0.0
Site T	2	0.9
Site U	1	0.4
Site V	3	0.6
Swantown Outfall	1	0.2
Tidelands	1	0.0
Other (Non-Parks)		
Island County Camano Campus	1	23.6
Island County Coupeville Campus	4	4.9
Island County District Court	1	1.5
Island County Fairgrounds	2	14.0
North Whidbey Family Resource Center	2	0.9
Park Shop	1	8.5
Subtotal	**286**	**3,741.6**

Table 7-3. Parks Inventory by Jurisdiction, cont.

Park Name	# of Parcels	# of Acres
OAK HARBOR		
Fireside Park	1	2.0
Flintstone Park	2	20.5
Fort Nugent Park	1	36.8
Freund Marsh	1	1.2
Hal Ramaley Memorial Park	1	0.7
Hawthorne Park	1	0.2
Kimball Memorial Park	1	0.9
Koetje Park	1	1.9
Lueck Park	1	1.4
Meadowridge Park	2	0.5
Neil H Koetje Park	1	2.8
Neil Park	1	3.7
Neil Water Tower	1	0.1
Oak Harbor Dog Park	1	1.2
Oak Harbor Marina / VFW Memorial Park	1	33.8
Redwing Park	1	0.8
Ridgehaven Park	1	1.2
Ridgewood Park	2	1.2
Ruth Cohen Memorial Park	1	2.1
Shadow Glen Park	1	0.8
Smith Park	2	1.3
Spring Tree Park	1	1.6
Sumner Park	2	2.0
Tyhuis Park	1	1.0
Vista Heights Park	1	0.6
Volunteer Park	3	6.5
Well Site #10	1	0.7
Windjammer Park	4	33.2
Subtotal	38	160.4
COUPEVILLE		
Captain Coupe Park	1	1.9
Cook's Corner Park	1	0.1
Coupeville Town Park	3	3.6
Front Street Stairs	1	0.1
Krueger Open Space	1	16.2
Lion's Park	1	1.1
Municipal Parking Lot	1	1.1
OSPC Property	1	3.9
Peaceful Valley Park	1	1.0
Sunset Terrace Park	1	0.9
Subtotal	12	29.8
LANGLEY		
Boy and Dog Park	1	0.7
Cascade Walkway	3	1.6
Cedars Subdivision Tract 100	1	0.7
Debruyn Right of Way	1	0.9
Generation Park	1	0.3
Langley Library	1	0.9
Langley Marina	1	0.7
Langley Park	1	0.2
Langley Well Site Natural Area	1	8.1
Langley-Woodman Cemetery	1	6.1
Meadows Wetland Natural Area	1	2.1
Mildred Anderson and Faye Bangston Park	1	1.4
Park Right of Way	1	0.5
Seawall Park	9	0.7
Thomas Hladkey Memorial Park	1	0.0
Subtotal	25	24.9

Park Name	# of Parcels	# of Acres
STATE		
Beeksma-Gateway Park	1	0.3
Cama Beach State Park	10	304.7
Camano Island State Park	3	172.2
Deception Pass State Park	18	2,011.1
Deer Lake	1	0.6
Dugualla State Park	4	585.4
Fort Casey - Keystone	11	307.0
Fort Casey State Park	3	102.3
Fort Ebey State Park	7	595.6
Goss Lake	1	0.9
Grasser's Lagoon	1	22.5
High Point Trust Land	1	39.2
Joseph Whidbey State Park	2	109.0
Lone Lake	2	8.6
Penn Cove Water Access	1	0.5
Perego's Lagoon	1	17.9
Possession Point State Park	3	31.4
Skyline West Trust Land	1	37.4
Smuggler's Cove Trust Land	1	11.2
South Whidbey State Park	5	359.2
Strawberry Point Trust Land	1	11.6
Swantown Trust Land	1	40.1
Wahl Road Trust Land	1	18.4
Subtotal	80	4,787.3
FEDERAL		
Keystone Ferry	1	23.0
Perrigo's Lagoon	1	21.4
Subtotal	2	44.4

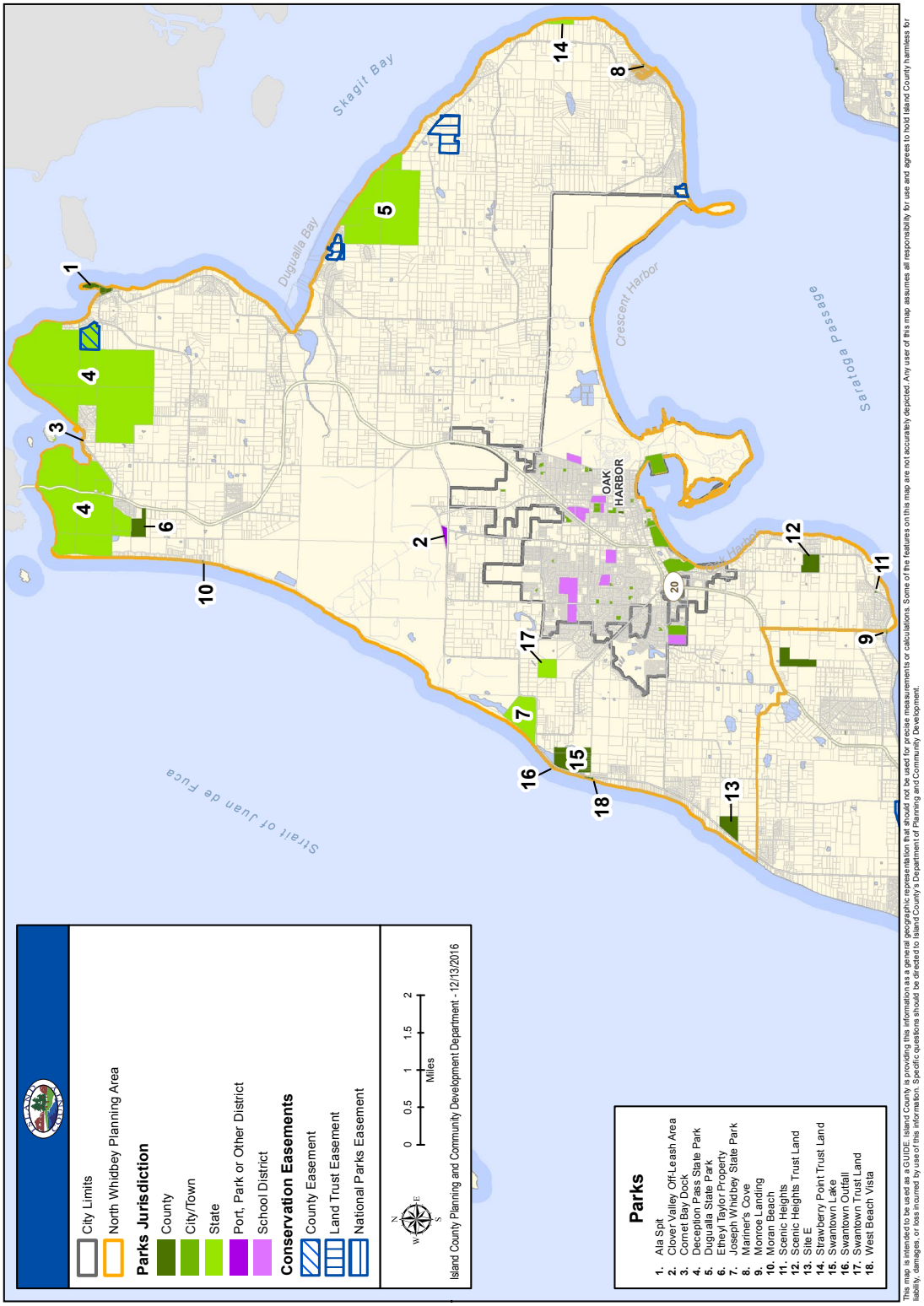
Table 7-4. Parks Inventory by Jurisdiction, cont.

Park Name	# of Parcels	# of Acres
NORTH WHIDBEY PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT		
Clover Valley Off-Leash Area	1	2.1
Subtotal	1	2.1
SOUTH WHIDBEY PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT		
South Whidbey Community Park	4	123.0
Trust Land Trails	2	174.8
Subtotal	6	297.9
OAK HARBOR SCHOOL DISTRICT		
Broadview Elementary School	1	12.9
Fort Nugent Park	1	19.7
Hillcrest Elementary	1	19.3
North Whidbey Middle School	3	21.3
Oak Harbor Elementary	2	15.7
Oak Harbor High School	1	43.9
Oak Harbor Middle School	1	15.6
Olympic View Elementary	1	12.2
Subtotal	11	160.4
COUPEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT		
Coupeville Elementary	1	13.9
Coupeville High School	2	10.1
Coupeville Middle and High Schools	1	3.9
Coupeville School Administration	1	0.2
Coupeville School Bus Barn	1	1.0
Future ballfield development	1	21.1
Subtotal	7	50.2
SOUTH WHIDBEY SCHOOL DISTRICT		
Bayview High School	1	3.8
Elementary School Trails	2	46.7
Langley Middle School	2	19.6
Outdoor Classroom	1	5.0
South Whidbey Elementary School	1	52.4
South Whidbey High School	1	48.0
South Whidbey School Bus Barn	1	15.2
Subtotal	9	190.7
STANWOOD/CAMANO SCHOOL DISTRICT		
Utsalady Elementary School	1	19.9
Subtotal	1	19.9
PORT OF COUPEVILLE		
Coupeville Wharf	4	0.3
Greenbank North	11	198.8
Subtotal	15	199.1
PORT OF SOUTH WHIDBEY		
Bush Point Boat Ramp	6	1.5
Clinton Park	1	0.6
Freeland Park1	-	-
Langley Marina	2	2.0
Possession Beach Park	5	26.2
Subtotal	14	30.2
PRIVATE/NON-PROFITS		
Cedars Subdivision	4	6.5
Highlands Subdivision	1	2.7
Metcalf Trust	4	59.6
Nature Conservancy	16	533.7
Noble Cliff	2	2.4
Sunnyside Cemetery	2	12.3
Trillium Community Forest2	-	-
Subtotal	29	617.2
TOTAL	**536**	**10,356.0**

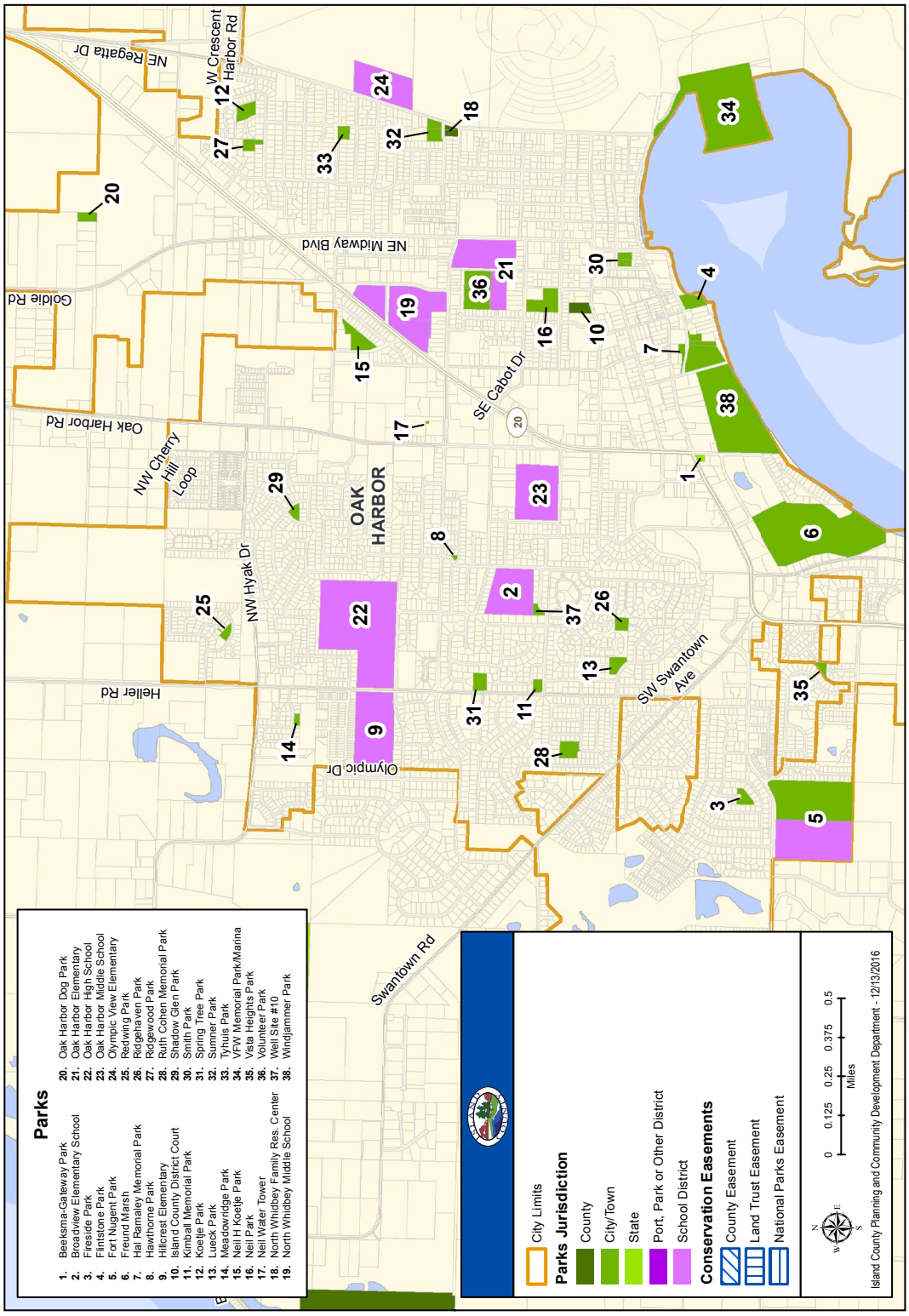
[1]Inventoried under Island County Parks, since it is partially owned/operated by Island County and the Port of South Whidbey.

[2]Owned by WCLT, but Island County maintains access and a trailhead, so it is inventoried under Island County, since it is a park the County does maintenance on.

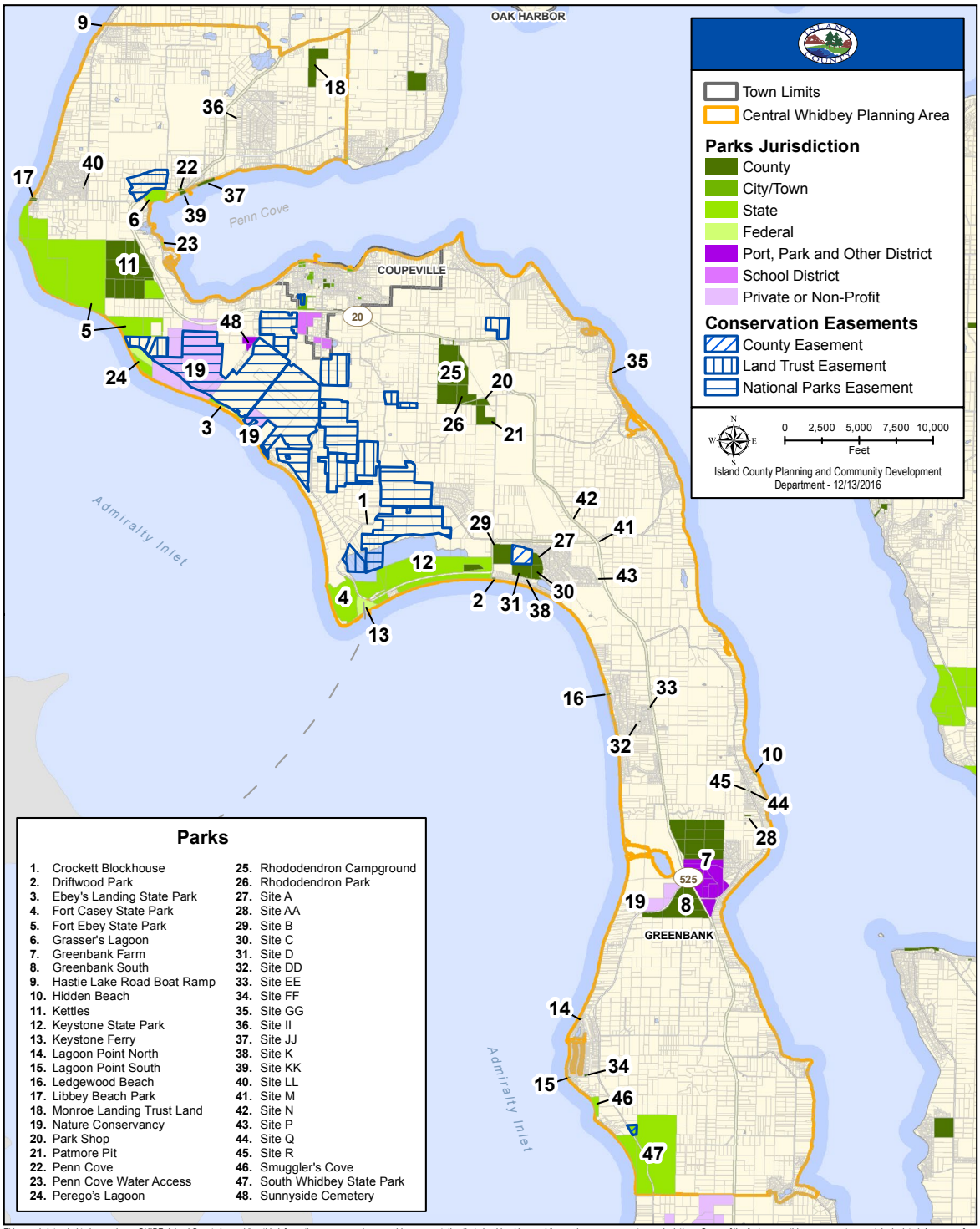
MAP 7A. Parks by Jurisdiction - North Whidbey Planning Area



MAP 7B. Parks by Jurisdiction - Oak Harbor

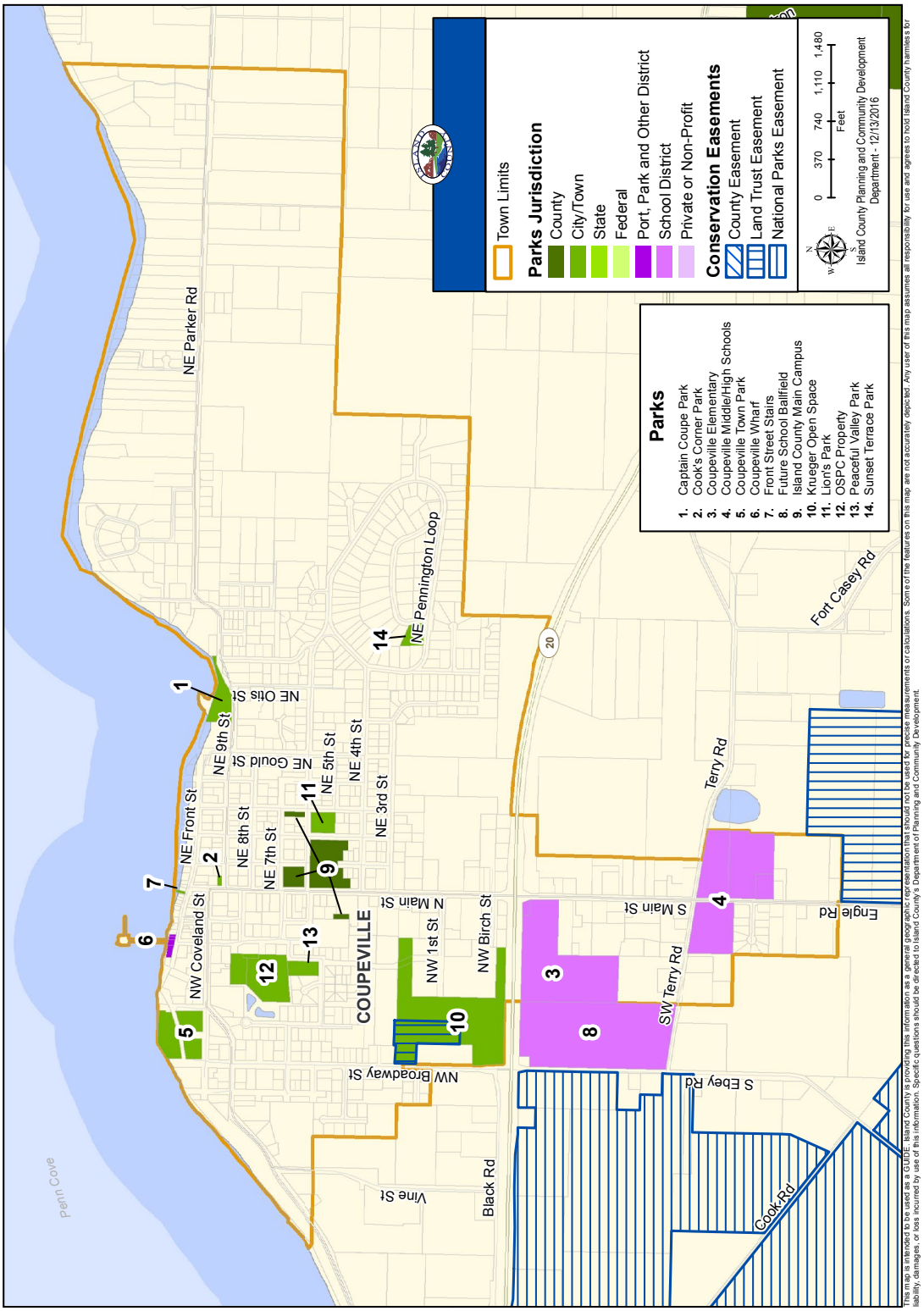


MAP 7C. Parks by Jurisdiction - Central Whidbey Planning Area

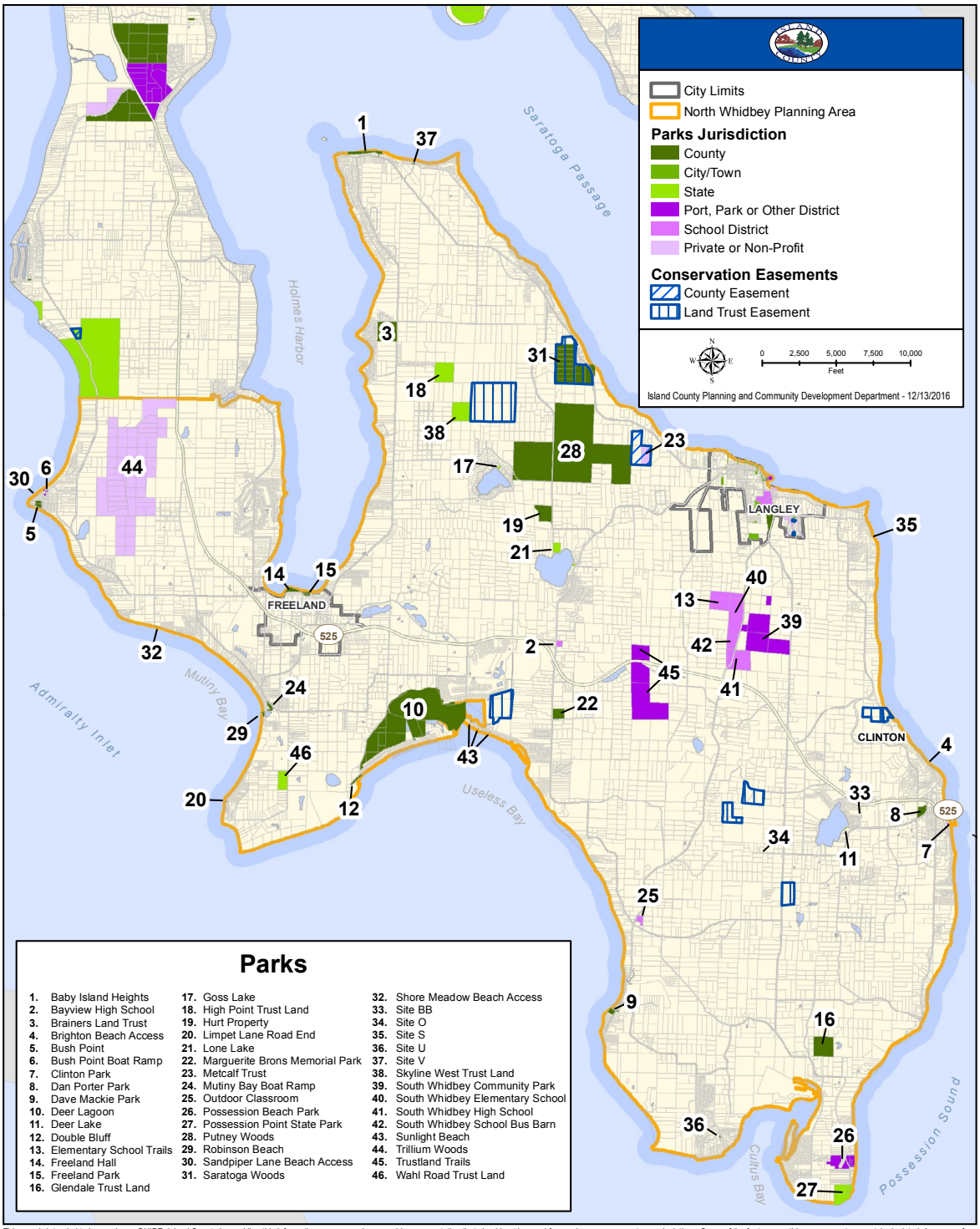


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MAP 7D. Parks by Jurisdiction - Coupeville

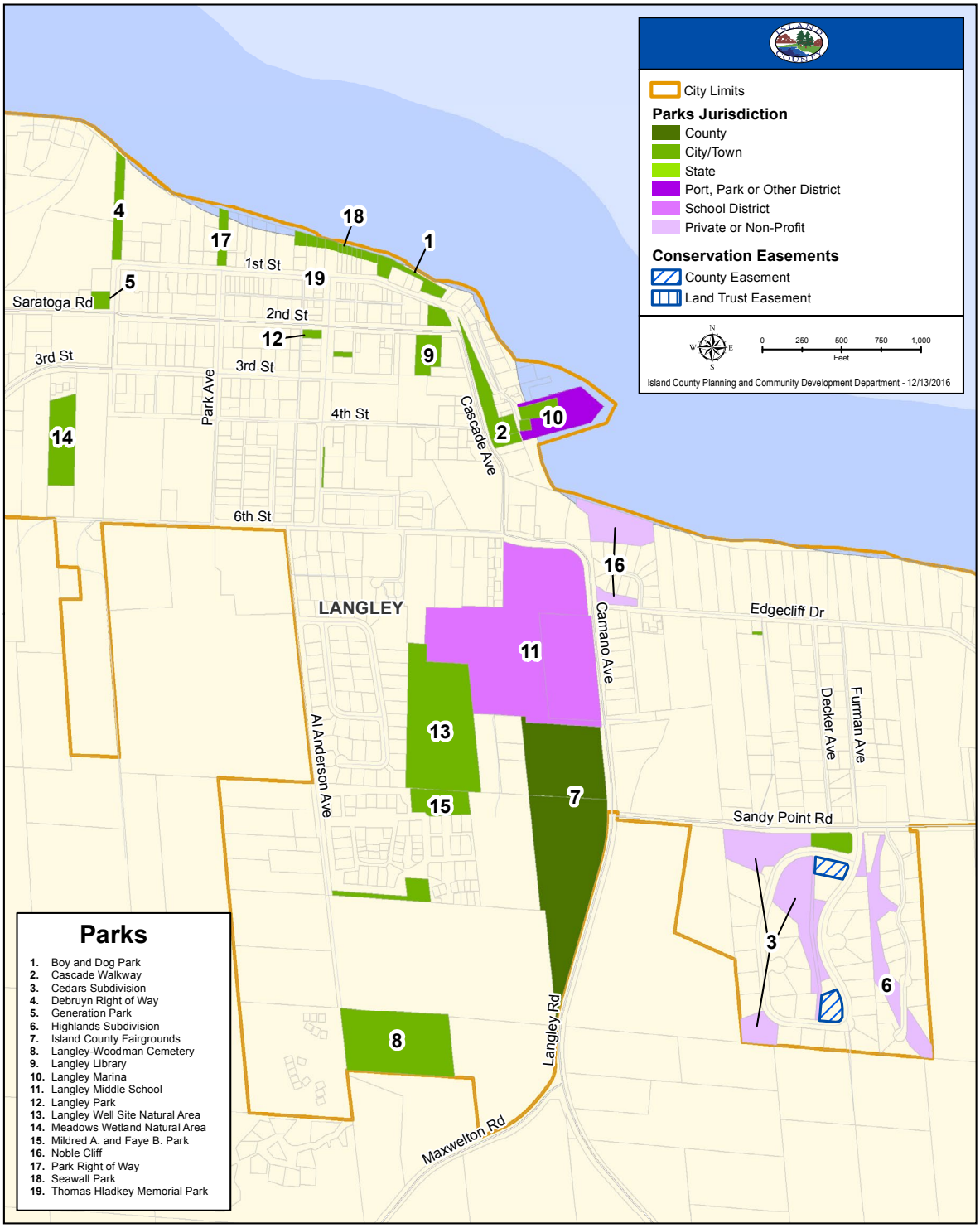


MAP 7E. Parks by Jurisdiction - South Whidbey Planning Area



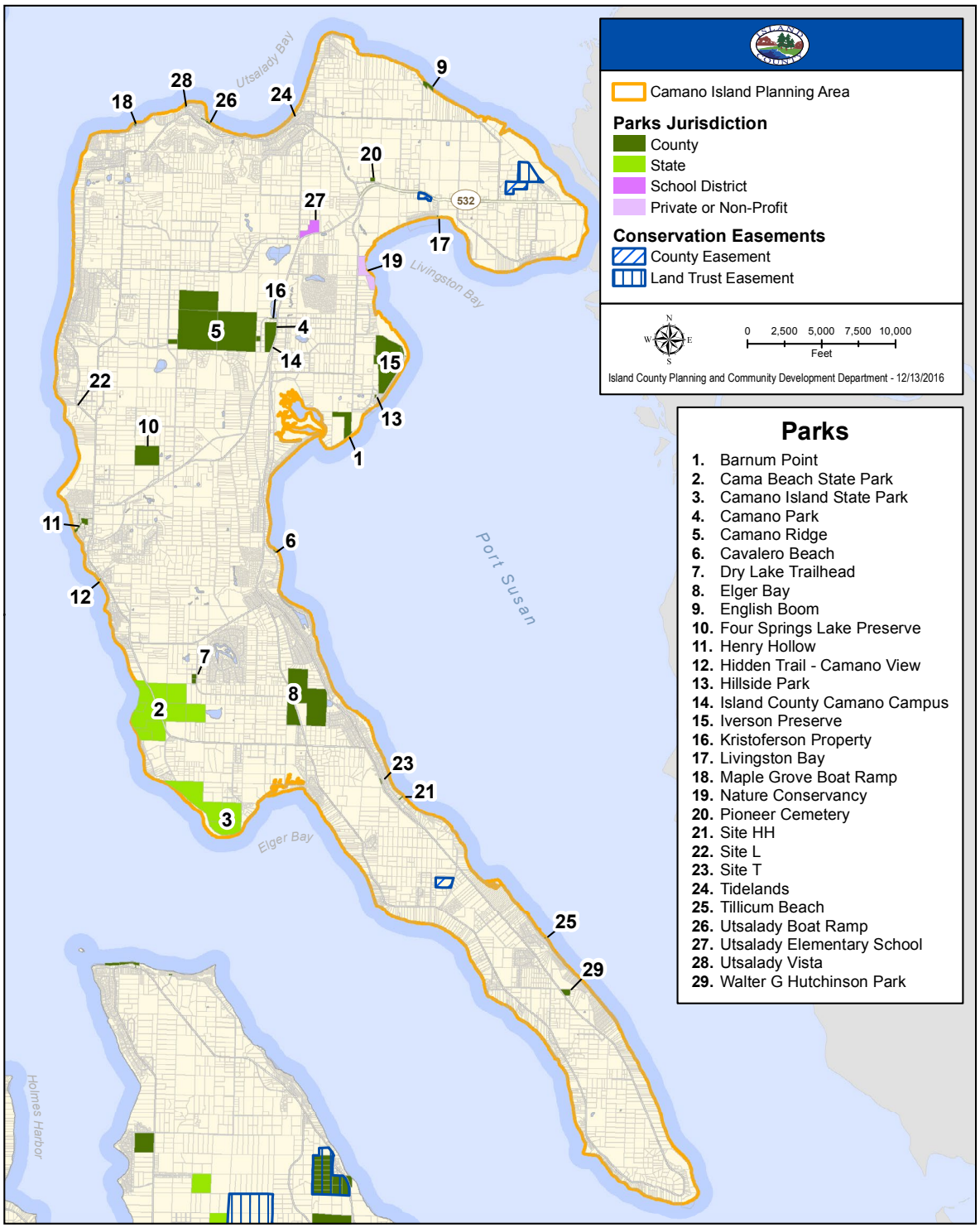
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MAP 7F. Parks by Jurisdiction - Langley



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MAP 7G. Parks by Jurisdiction - Camano Planning Area



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Table 7-5. Conservation Easements in Island County

Jurisdiction	# of Easements	Acres*
National Park Service	24	2,023.0
Land Trust	28	1,064.1
Island County	9	191.3
Total	**61**	**3,278.4**

*Acreage includes the total parcel acres, which is usually greater than the actual easement portion.

7.2.2.1 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

In addition to the land owned outright by the County and other jurisdictions, additional habitat areas are protected through conservation easements. Conservation easements may be purchased and held on privately-owned lands to protect them from development or to preserve specific conservation values, such as farmland or forest.

As shown in Table 7-3, the Land Trust (1,064 acres) and the National Park Service (2,023 acres) are major holders of conservation easements in Island County.

7.2.2.2 COUNTY LAND BY DEPARTMENT

Island County manages 2,902.5 acres of park land. Most of this acreage is managed by the Parks Department or Public Works (Table 7-2). In addition, 289.2 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 Table 7-5.

- 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 management. These unassigned sites include wetlands, remnant prairies, beach access, and a number of tax-title lands.
- As special maintenance areas, the Parks Department co-owns with the Port of South Whidbey three sites through inter-local agreements. This includes a section of Freeland Park, a section of Maxwelton Park and Robinson Bay (owned by South Whidbey but maintained by parks.
- Through long-term lease agreements, Island County manages over 330 acres of School Trust Lands. Owned by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, these sites include Elger Bay Preserve, High Point Trust land, Strawberry Point Trust Land, Swantown Trust Land, Skyline West Trust Land, Smuggler's Cove Trust Land, and Wahl Road Trust Land.

The Parks Department is responsible for the maintenance of four non-recreational sites, such as the Coupeville Campus and the North Whidbey Family Resource Center. The Public Works Department also coordinates with the General Services Department regarding operations of the County Fairgrounds.

7.2.3 COUNTY PARK LAND CLASSIFICATION

To better understand Island County's park system, each site was classified based on its physical characteristics, level of recreation, habitat value, level of development, and management needs. These classifications describe the purpose of each type of park. The park classification system includes three types of properties:

7.2.3.2.1 Community Parks

Community Parks typically have high levels of recreation and/or facility development, leaving only remnant habitat areas, such as native tree stands or un-built waterfront. Freeland Park, Dave Mackie Park (also known as Maxwelton Beach), and the Maple Grove Boat Ramp are examples of community parks.

7.2.3.2.2 Natural Recreation Areas:

Natural Recreation Areas protect more extensive habitat areas, in addition to providing passive 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, Kettle Trails, and West Beach Vista are examples of Natural Recreation Areas.

7.2.3.2.3 Conservation Areas:

Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation and protection but may provide passive 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.

Table 7-6. Island County Park Land by Classification

Department	# of Sites	Acres	% of Total
Community Parks	21	127.6	3.4%
Natural Recreation Areas	31	2475.1	66.2%
Conservation Areas	24	1073.0	28.7%
Subtotal	76	3675.7	98.2%
Other	27	65.9	1.8%
Total	**103**	**3741.6**	**100.0%**

7.2.3.2.4 *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).

Table 7-5 presents the inventory according to this classification system. Table 7-5 is the Island County inventory by classification.

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".

7.2.4 LEVEL OF SERVICE

One way to measure if there is adequate park land provided by Island County is to calculate the number of acres provided for every 1,000 residents. In 1998, when the Parks and Recreation Element was first adopted, Island County had an existing LOS of 2.9 acres for *ALL* park land per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area. The Parks and Recreation Element considered all lands managed by the Parks Department as parks and calculated the County's LOS accordingly.

This unit of measure is the level of service (LOS) for parks is defined in the Capital Facilities Element. In the Capital Facilities Element, the LOS standard calls for 3.5 acres of community parks per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area. To be consistent with other Elements of the County's Comprehensive Plan, this Element will measure LOS of service based on the inventory of Community Parks in the unincorporated area. Community Parks now represent approximately 127.6 acres of the total 3741.6 acre park land system. Based on 2010 Census data, the unincorporated Island County population is 53,559 which equates to a LOS of 2.38 acres of Community Parks per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area. Without increasing the amount of Community Parks, in 2036, the projected LOS will decrease to 2.16 acres of Community Parks per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area. Natural Recreation Areas and Conservation Areas are more appropriately identified and are consistent with definitions found in the Natural Resources Element of the comp plan. The Natural Resources Element does not apply a LOS to these types of lands. So, although park land acreage has increased, the LOS has actually decreased based on the new classification system proposed with this plan update. If all park land owned by the County was included, the LOS would be roughly 63 acres of park land per 1,000 residents in the unincorporated area.

As detailed in Section 7.3, the County is shifting its focus from active recreation properties (those including ball fields and playgrounds) to passive outdoor recreation properties (properties with natural vegetation and trails). The adopted LOS for trails is 0.5 miles/1,000 population as stated in the Capital Facilities Element. However, it's unclear how the existing inventory compares since a full County trails inventory is not available. The County is currently working on updating the Non-Motorized Trail Plan.

Table 7-7. Island County Parks Inventory by Classification

Park Name	Water	Developed Parkland	Farmland	Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	Forest	Freshwater Habitat	Grassland
RECREATION AREAS							
Community Parks							
Camano Park		6.2					
Cavalero Beach		0.3			0.3		
Cornet Bay Dock		0.4					
Dan Porter Park		4.2			5.4		
Dave Mackie Park		3.6			0.2		
Double Bluff		0.7					
English Boom					3.8		
Four Springs Lake Preserve	0.6	10.6			38.6		
Freeland Park		2.5		0.4			
Hastie Lake Road Boat Ramp							
Libbey Beach Park		2.2					
Maple Grove Boat Ramp							
Mariner's Cove		0.2					
Monroe Landing		0.2		0.5			
Mutiny Bay Boat Ramp							
Rhododendron Park		9.8			22.2		
Tillicum Beach		0		0.2			
Utsalady Boat Ramp		0.1		0.1	1.1		
Utsalady Vista		0.2			0.2		
Walter G Hutchinson Park		0.2			4.7		
West Beach Vista							
Subtotal	0.6	41.4	0	1.2	76.5	0	0

Park Name	Water	Developed Parkland	Farmland	Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	Forest	Freshwater Habitat	Grassland
RECREATION AREAS							
Natural Recreation Lands							
Ala Spit	0.4				3.6		
Barnum Point				3	24		
Brainers Land Trust					38.9		
Brighton Beach Access		0		0.1	0.1		
Camano Ridge					405.2		
Crockett Blockhouse							
Driftwood Park							
Dry Lake Trailhead					4.7		
Glendale Trust Land					40.5		
Henry Hollow		5			1.7		
Hidden Trail - Camano View				0.1	0.3		
Iverson Preserve		0.8		81.8	29.8	3.1	
Kettles					240.8		
Kristoferson (Can Ku Road)					0.2	0.7	
Lagoon Point North							
Lagoon Point South							
Ledgewood Beach	0.2	0.1					
Limpet Lane Road End							
Livingston Bay							
Marguerite Brons Memorial Dog Park		1.2			12.4		
Moran Beach		0.2		0.2			
Patmore Pit Dog Park		0.9			26.7		
Penn Cove							0.2
Putney Woods		0.8			597.4		
Rhododendron Campground					152.5		
Robinson Beach				1.25			
Sandpiper Lane Beach Access							
Saratoga Woods		5.4			103.5	7.9	
Shore Meadow Beach Access							
Sunlight Beach Accesses							
Trillium Community Forest					662.9		
Subtotal	0.6	14.4	0	86.45	2345.2	11.7	0.2

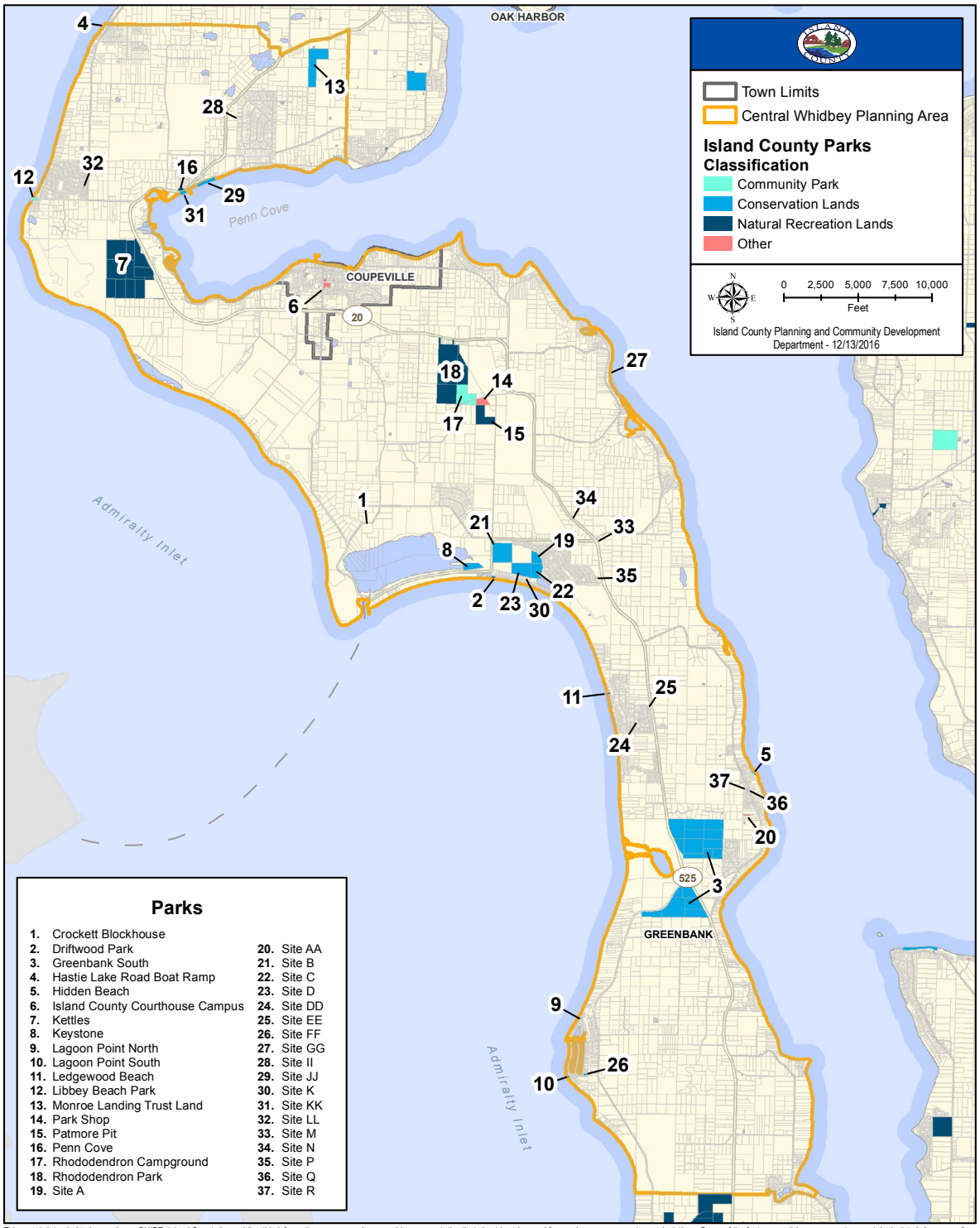
Park Name	Water	Developed Parkland	Farmland	Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	Forest	Freshwater Habitat	Grassland
RECREATION AREAS							
Conservation Lands							
Baby Island Heights					6.1		
Bush Point	1.8			2			
Deer Lagoon	117	2.7		236.4	5	15.4	
Elger Bay					157.9	16	
Etheyl Taylor Property					4.2	30.7	
Greenbank South					113.6		
Hidden Beach		0.4			0.3		
Hillside Park					0.4		
Hurt Property					25.8		
Keystone		0.2		10.7			
Monroe Landing Trust Land					44.5	0.6	
Scenic Heights Trust Land			28.3		8.4		
Site A				10.9			
Site B				38	1.8		
Site C	0.8			15.2			
Site D				25.8			
Site E					38.3		
Site FF						0.4	
Site GG				0	0.2		
Site HH		0.2		0.1	0.7		
Site JJ				6.5			
Site KK				2.7			
Site M		0					
Swantown Lake	35.3		8	42		12.8	
Subtotal	154.9	3.5	36.3	390.3	407.2	75.9	0

Park Name	Water	Developed Parkland	Farmland	Shoreline/Tidal Habitat	Forest	Freshwater Habitat	Grassland
RECREATION AREAS							
OTHER ISLAND COUNTY OWNED PROPERTIES							
Freeland Hall		4.9					
Island County Camano Campus							
Island County Coupeville Campus							
Island County District Court							
Island County Fairgrounds							
North Whidbey Family Resource Center							
Park Shop							
Pioneer Cemetery							
Site AA					1.3		
Site BB					0.1		
Site DD					0.2		
Site EE					0.2		
Site II			0.4				
Site K				0.1			
Site L					0		
Site LL		0.2					
Site N					0.2		
Site O			0				
Site P					0.2		
Site Q					0.2		
Site R					0.2		
Site S					0		
Site T					0.9		
Site U					0.4		
Site V					0.7		
Swantown Outfall	0.1			0.1			
Tidelands							
Subtotal	0.1	5.1	0.4	0.2	4.6	0	0
TOTAL	156.2	64.4	36.7	478.15	2833.5	87.6	0.2

MAP 7H. Island County Owned Parks by Classification - North Whidbey Planning Area

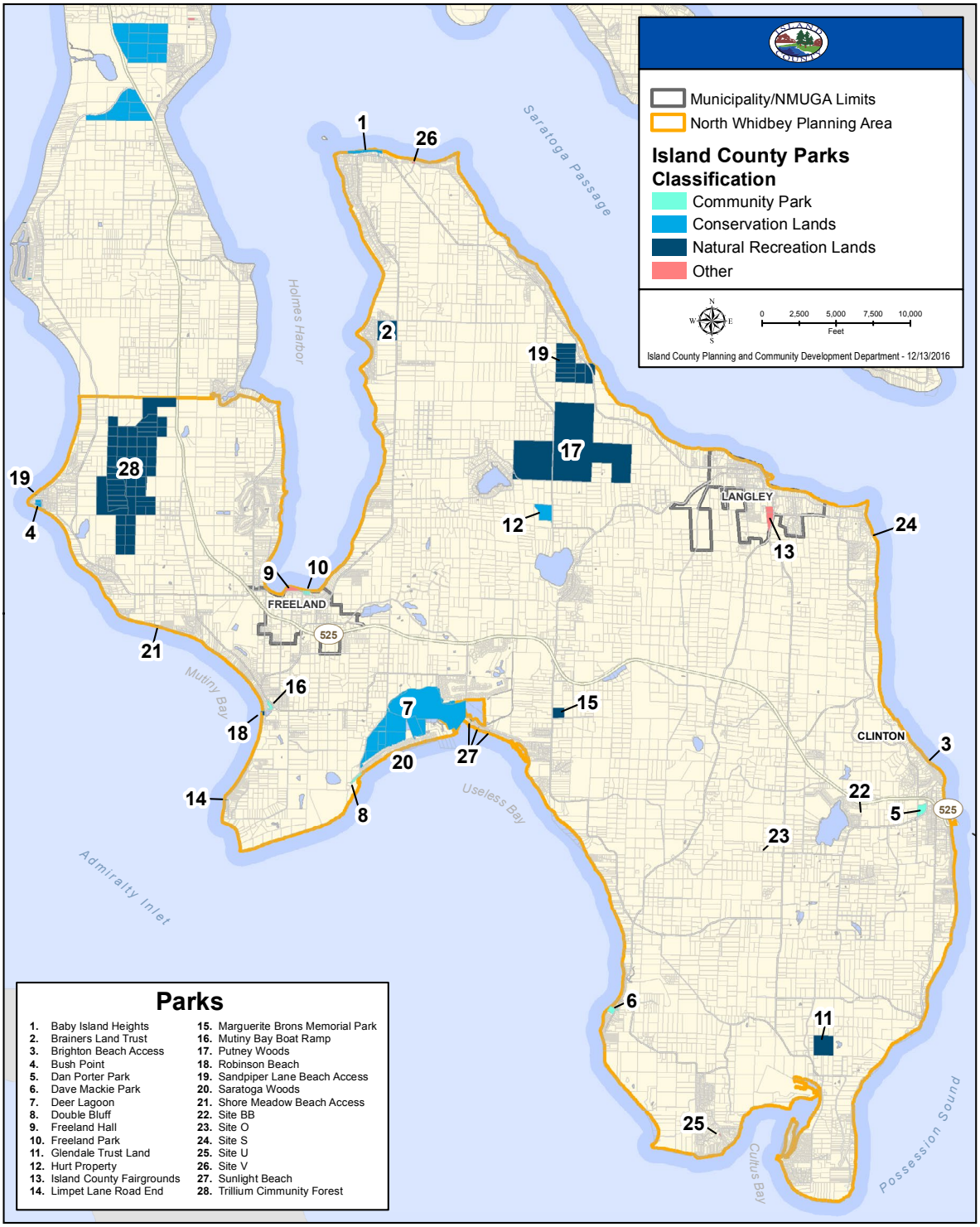


MAP 7I. Island County Owned Parks by Classification - Central Whidbey Planning Area



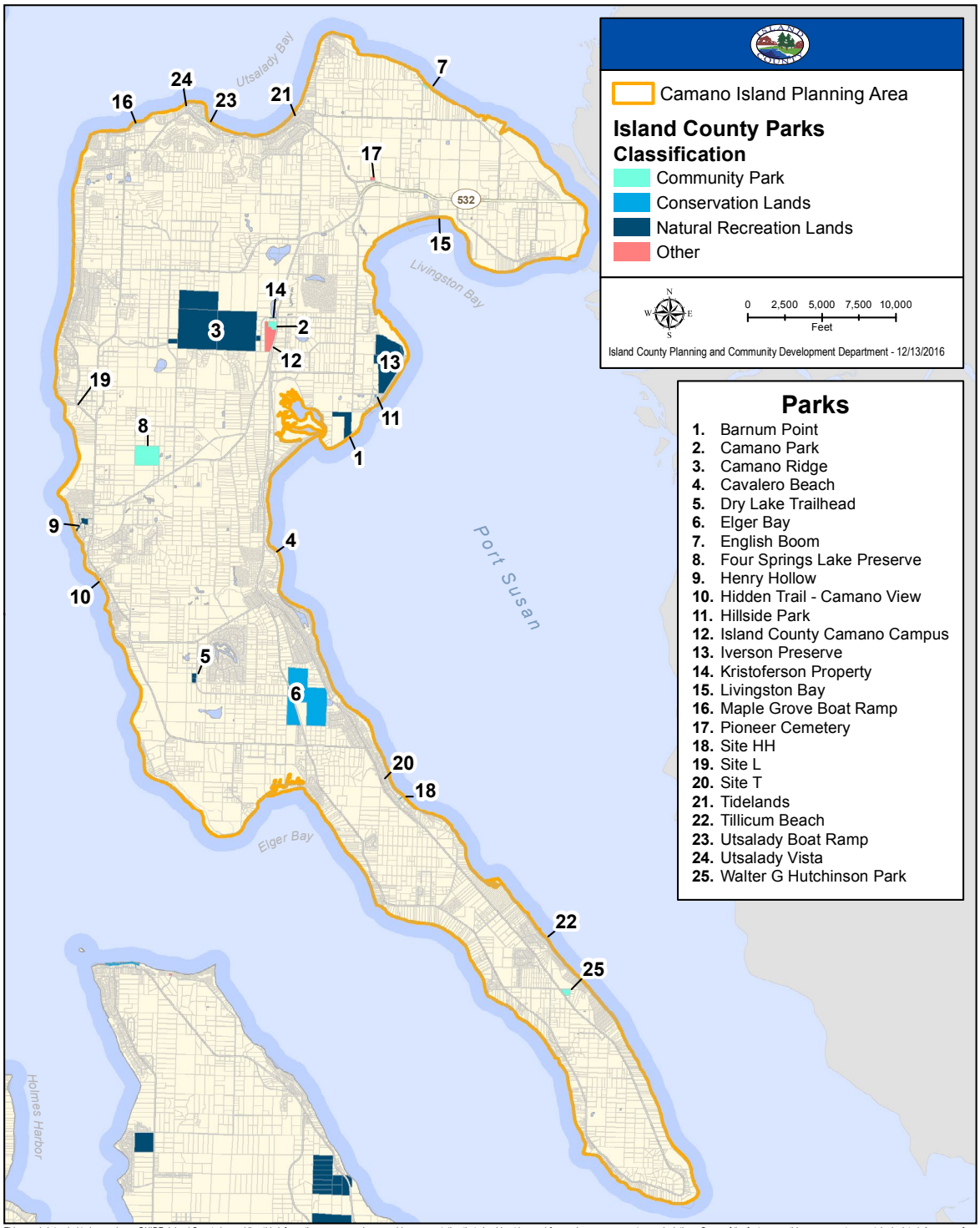
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MAP 7J. Island County Owned Parks by Classification - South Whidbey Planning Area



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MAP 7K. Island County Owned Parks by Classification - Camano Planning Area



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7.2.5 EXISTING COUNTY HABITAT

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

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

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

Table 7-8. Island County Habitats

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

Table 7-7 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.

7.2.6 COUNTY RECREATION FACILITIES

Even though Island County has an extensive land base, few sites are heavily developed with recreation facilities. Table 7-8 summarizes the number and type of outdoor recreation facilities in Island County. A comprehensive inventory by site is included in Table 7-5.

Island County provides recreation facilities that mainly support outdoor, passive recreation opportunities. The most common is public beach access (24 sites), followed by picnic areas and tables (21 sites). Fifteen sites include unpaved (natural-surfaced) trails. Nine sites provide public boat ramps. Nine sites have picnic shelters. Dog parks are provided at three sites.

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

Table 7-9. 2011 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	41.4	0.0	1.2	76.5	0.0	0.0	119.7
Natural Recreation Areas	0.6	14.4	0.0	86.5	2,345.2	11.7	0.2	2,458.6
Conservation Areas	154.9	3.5	36.3	390.3	407.2	75.9	0.0	1,068.1
Other	0.1	5.1	0.4	0.2	4.6	0.0	0.0	10.4
Total	156.2	64.4	36.7	478.2	2833.5	87.6	0.2	3,656.8
Percentage	4.3%	1.8%	1.0%	13.1%	77.5%	2.4%	0.0%	100.0%

*The total acreage is based on a USGS Groundcover Analysis of vector areas, which differs from total park acreage. The USGS Northwest Regional Gap Analysis Project uses re mote sensing data from satellite and aerial images to identify different land cover and habitat types for the Pacific Northwest. Based on the scale of the images, the smallest area that the Gap Analysis can measure is 0.22 acres.

Table 7-10. Island County Park and Recreation Facilities

Outdoor Recreation Facilities	# of Sites
Beach (Swimming or Waterfront Access)	27
Boat Ramps	9
Camping Areas	1
Dog Park	3
Garden	2
Picnic Area Tables	23
Picnic Shelter	12
Playground	5
Sport Court (Basketball, Volleyball, Tennis)	3
Sport Fields: Open Turf Play Area[1]	6
Sport Fields: Base/Softball	3
Sports Fields: Soccer, Football, Lacrosse	0
Trails (unpaved)	17

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

Indoor facilities are provided at four sites. Four Springs Lake Preserve includes three reservable indoor areas for events: the main house, Meadow Room, and barn. Camano Park has a multi-purpose center managed by Island County's Facilities Department. Freeland Park includes Freeland Hall, which is managed by a private non-profit, a reservable multi-purpose hall with a kitchen and stage. The Crockett Blockhouse site includes a historic structure.

7.3 COUNTY AREA OF FOCUS

In 2011, using findings from public involvement activities conducted as part of this planning process, a new vision, mission, and area of focus were defined for the Parks Department. Described in this section, these elements are consistent with community priorities for recreation and habitat conservation.

7.3.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The following provides a planning framework for the acquisition, disposition, management, and maintenance of County-owned parks and habitat areas. These are a guiding force for the Parks and Recreation Element.

7.3.1.1 VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES FOR PARKS

The community's vision, mission, and core values for Island County park lands are as follows:

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 passive, 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.

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

7.3.2 AREA OF FOCUS

Residents and visitors to Island County have many different needs and desires associated with parks, recreation facilities, trails, and habitat areas. Given its limited resources, Island County cannot meet all of these needs. For this reason, Island County Parks Department has defined a specific area of focus 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 1, Island County will position itself as a habitat and passive outdoor recreation provider, reflecting a desire to protect habitat and meet the community's outdoor, passive recreation needs. Based on public feedback and direction from the Board of County Commissioners, Island County will take a 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 (section 7.2.3), individual areas may be focused on habitat conservation, recreation, or both, according to the County's area of focus.

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



Island County will focus its resources on providing passive 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 more effectively for public use. The County will limit any new facilities that support active, organized, indoor or active 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 can meet these needs, should the community desire these types of opportunities.

Conservation Areas with no Recreational Uses: As defined in this Element, Conservation Areas are lands set aside primarily for ecological conservation purposes but may provide passive 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 passive outdoor recreational opportunities. Other Island County departments may continue to protect Conservation Area lands (as provided for in the Natural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan) that are not appropriate for recreational uses.

7.3.2.1 PARK DEVELOPMENT

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

Table7-10, summarizes the types of outdoor recreation facilities that are consistent with the County's area of focus and provides a general overview of major considerations for site selection. Below lists amenities and facilities in three categories:

- Appropriate Amenities and Facilities: These amenities and facilities are consistent with the County's area of focus. The County may develop parks with any of these amenities unless a site-

specific design or resource protection issue makes that amenity impractical or undesirable for a particular site.

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

While not a comprehensive list of allowable or unpermitted uses, Table 7-9 is intended to provide guidance regarding the County's area of focus. Site characteristics and habitat needs will affect facility location, design, and development.

The County's area of focus reinforces and refines the current direction for park and habitat planning, based on community desires, existing resources, and current management strategies. Most, but not all facilities and sites within the County's existing inventory, reflect this area of focus. However, some changes in land and facility management, maintenance, and operations will be necessary to ensure best practices according to the habitat and outdoor recreation provider area of focus. Following Table 7-9, Table 7-10 provides an overview of these management and operation considerations.

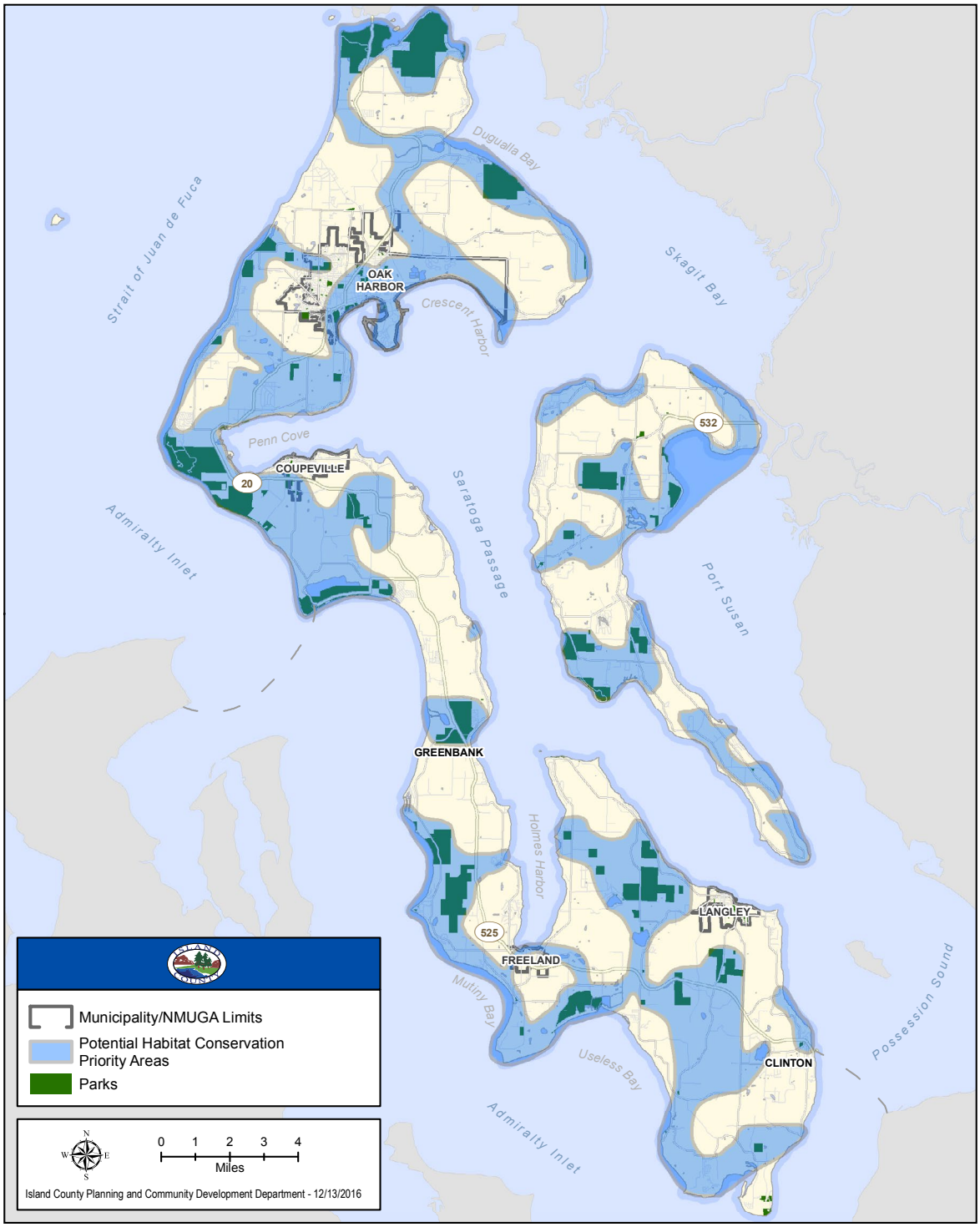
7.4 HABITAT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION NEEDS

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

7.4.1 HABITAT CONSERVATION NEEDS

Island County Parks will limit its focus to habitat areas that have the capacity to address passive, outdoor recreation needs. As noted in section 7.2, Island County already owns and manages lands that support this area of focus by protecting wildlife habitat and open space, improving water and environmental quality, supporting aquifer recharge and water filtering, and protecting critical, sensitive, or ecologically important areas, such as shorelines, wetlands, prairies and oak woodlands, upland forests, while providing recreation access.

MAP 7L. Habitat Conservation Priorities for Parks Acquisition



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

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

Description:	▪ 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.
Site Selection:	▪ 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
Appropriate Amenities and Facilities:	▪ 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) ▪ 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 area of focus
Amenities and Facilities to Consider:	▪ 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 passive 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.
Amenities and Facilities to Avoid:	▪ 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 passive 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 area of focus

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

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

7.4.1.1 HABITAT CONSERVATION CRITERIA

Through the 2010 planning process, Island County and WCLT discussed key criteria for determining habitat conservation needs and priorities. Because so many agencies and organizations are working on conservation in Island County, Island County will focus on using existing data to be an effective steward of public resources. To evaluate priorities on a County-wide scale, data that is consistent across the entire County is needed. These criteria are intended to be dynamic, not to paint a static picture of habitat needs across the County. As newer or better information is developed, the County can continue to refine its habitat conservation priorities. As the County makes decisions about specific parcels, site specific data can be incorporated if it is available.

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

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

As part of the Land Trust's efforts to permanently protect the most important and irreplaceable lands and waters on Camano and Whidbey Islands, the organization has developed a Land Protection Plan and Protection Priorities Map. First created in 2003 based on known data and input from experts, the Land Protection Plan Map highlights the Land Trust's identified target areas.

7.4.1.1.2 *Adjacent to Other Conservation Lands:*

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

7.4.1.1.3 *Contains Critical Areas:*

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

7.4.1.1.4 *Contains Rare Habitat:*

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

7.4.1.1.5 *Contains Other Significant Habitat:*

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

7.4.1.1.6 *Prioritized in the Shoreline Master Program:*

This includes those shoreline areas designated as Aquatic, Natural, Rural Conservancy and Urban Conservancy within Island County, or otherwise identified for habitat conservation in the updated of the Shoreline Master Program.

7.4.2 A HABITAT CONSERVATION CONCEPT FOR ISLAND COUNTY

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

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

7.4.2.1.1 North Whidbey/Deception Pass

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

7.4.2.1.2 Northeast Whidbey Shoreline

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

7.4.2.1.3 Oak Harbor

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

7.4.2.1.4 Swantown Lake

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

7.4.2.1.5 Penn Cove Area

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

7.4.2.1.6 Coupeville South

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

7.4.2.1.7 Greenbank

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

7.4.2.1.8 Trillium Community Forest/Bush Point

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

7.4.2.1.9 Freeland

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

7.4.2.1.10 Putney Woods

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

7.4.2.1.11 Bayview Area

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

7.4.2.1.12 South Whidbey

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

7.4.2.1.13 Livingston Bay

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

7.4.2.1.14 Four Springs

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

7.4.2.1.15 Central Camano

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

7.4.2.1.16 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area

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

7.4.2.1.17 South Camano

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

7.4.3 HABITAT QUALITY RATING CRITERIA

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

7.4.3.1 CONIFER FOREST

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

7.4.3.1.1 High Quality

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

7.4.3.1.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.1.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.3.2 GRASSLAND

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

7.4.3.2.1 High Quality

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

7.4.3.2.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.2.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.3.3 WETLANDS

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

7.4.3.3.1 High Quality

- All or mostly native species
- Natural hydrology is intact
- > 5 acres
- Connected to other natural areas, or water bodies

A. Few or no invasive species, particularly reed canarygrass and knotweed

7.4.3.3.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.3.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.3.4 FRESHWATER HABITATS

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

7.4.3.4.1 High Quality

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

7.4.3.4.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.4.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.3.5 SALTWATER (SHORELINE) HABITATS

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

7.4.3.5.1 High Quality

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

7.4.3.5.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.5.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.3.6 OAK WOODLANDS

Oak woodland includes groves and savannas.

7.4.3.6.1 High Quality

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

7.4.3.6.2 Medium Quality

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

7.4.3.6.3 Low Quality

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

7.4.4 RECREATION NEEDS

For Island County Parks, providing quality passive outdoor recreation opportunities is as important as providing quality habitat areas. The most critical needs, highly prioritized by the community County-wide, are for water access and trail activities. A variety of other outdoor recreation needs were identified through the public involvement process. These recreation needs are discussed below.

7.4.4.1 GEOGRAPHIC NEEDS ANALYSIS

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

7.4.4.1.1 Nature Trails

Combining their desire for protected habitat with public access, community members most desired nature trails. For analysis purposes, this was defined as a hard or soft-surfaced trail that provides at least a one-mile walk in nature.

7.4.4.1.2 Beach Access

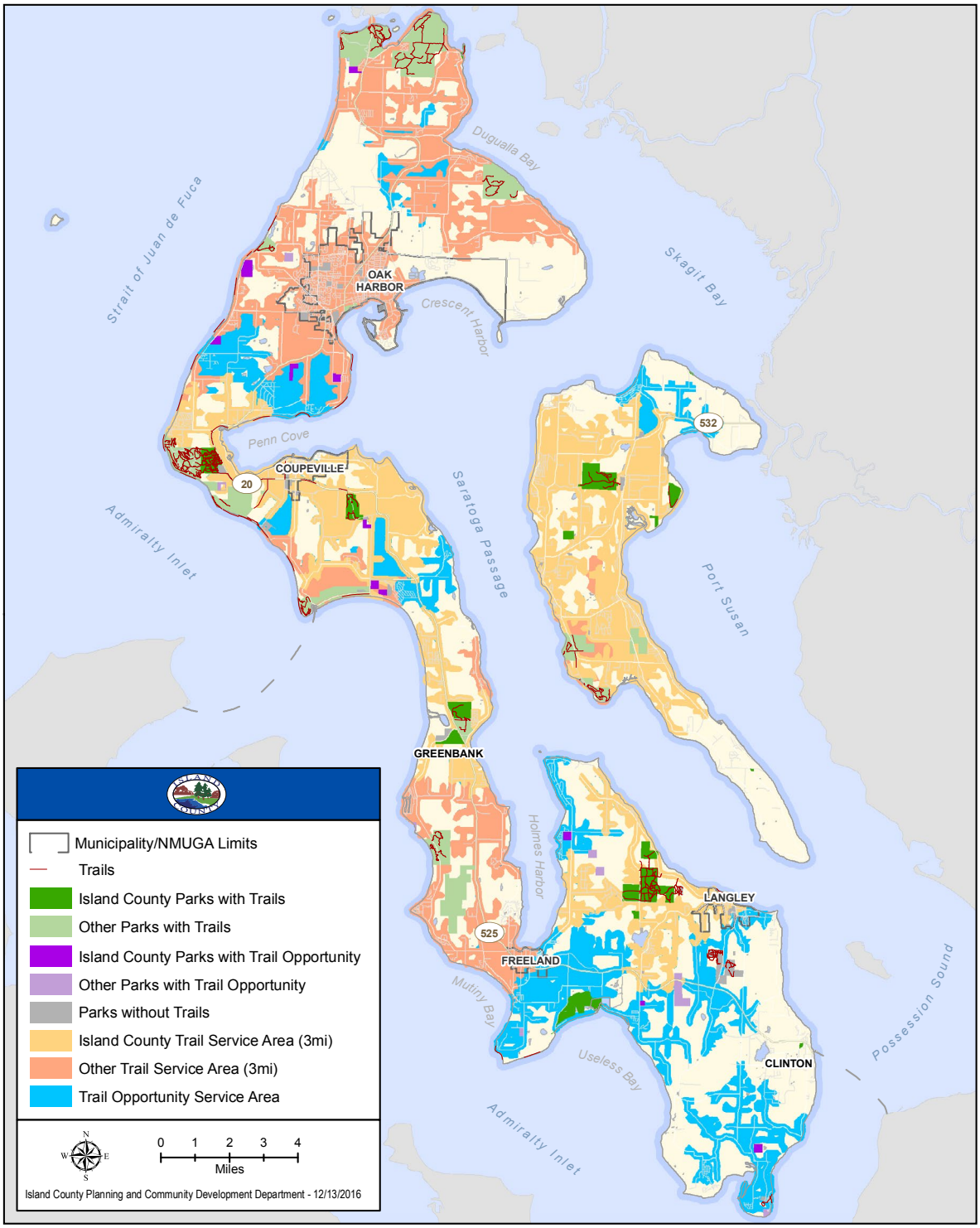
Community members indicated that public water access is desired. More than just a road end, boat ramp, or viewpoint, residents want places where they can touch the water and engage in beachfront recreation activities, such as boating, clamming, fishing, beach strolling, wading, etc. For analysis purposes, beach access was defined as a waterfront site at least one acre in size to allow space for activities.

7.4.4.2 Trail Access and Needs

As noted in the park and habitat inventory (Table 7-2), Island County provides unpaved, soft surfaced trails at 15 sites. While most of these sites are larger parks and habitat conservation areas, sites with trails range in size from 0.3 acres (Hidden Trail Camano View) to nearly 600 acres (Putney Woods). Several sites managed by other agencies also provide trail opportunities, including State Parks, National Parks, and to a lesser extent, habitat areas supported by the cities, town, ports, and recreation districts. The County is currently working on updating the Non-Motorized Trail Plan which will continue to update trail inventory and needs.

Map 7M 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.

MAP 7M. Trail Access Opportunities



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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 7M illustrates service areas around "trail opportunities" in a hatched purple color on the map. Additional factors besides trail needs should be considered before trail development is pursued. However, trail opportunity areas were identified to help the County consider opportunities to use existing lands to meet recreation needs before acquisition needs are determined.

The remaining white areas on Map 7M reflect unserved areas. It is important to note that some areas are unserved because they have limited or no road access or residential development. If and when these areas develop, trail needs will have to be re-evaluated. The development pattern will affect residents' access to trails in these areas.

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

7.4.4.2.1 Northeast Whidbey

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

7.4.4.2.2 Penn Cove North

As indicated by the purple hatches, several trail opportunity areas are present in this unserved area. These include Site E (currently undeveloped), Monroe Landing Trust Land (currently lacks an access road), and/or Scenic Heights Trust Land (is currently farmed and forested).

7.4.4.2.3 Coupeville South

While this area in Central Whidbey is unserved, trails developed in one of two opportunity areas (shaded in purple) would improve service. These are sites B and D.

7.4.4.2.4 Greenbank/Trillium (East-Central Whidbey)

Gaps in the road network to the north of Greenbank, to the north of South Whidbey 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.

7.4.4.2.5 Freeland South, between Mutiny Bay and Useless Bay

Much of south Whidbey is documented as unserved. While the County inventory does not include formal trails at Deer Lagoon, trail improvements at the 378-acre site could support a one-mile walk in nature. A trail opportunity is also noted at the Wahl Road Trust Land.

7.4.4.2.6 Putney Woods North

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

7.4.4.2.7 Bayview Area

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

7.4.4.2.8 South Whidbey/Clinton

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

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

7.4.4.2.9 Livingston Bay/North Camano

North Camano is unserved by nearby nature trails. Although English Boom is located in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. No other trail opportunity areas exist here, so a new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

7.4.4.2.10 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area & South Camano

The southern end of Camano Island lacks trail access. Although Walter G. Hutchinson Park is in this area and has trails, this site is too small to provide the desired trail opportunity. No other trail opportunity areas exist here, so a new park or habitat conservation areas is needed to address nature trail needs.

7.4.4.3 Beach Access and Needs

Island County provides some type of water access at 27 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. 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 7N illustrates 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. Where areas overlap to some extent with conceptual habitat areas, the same geographical descriptor is used.

7.4.4.3.1 Northeast Whidbey

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

7.4.4.3.2 Penn Cove

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

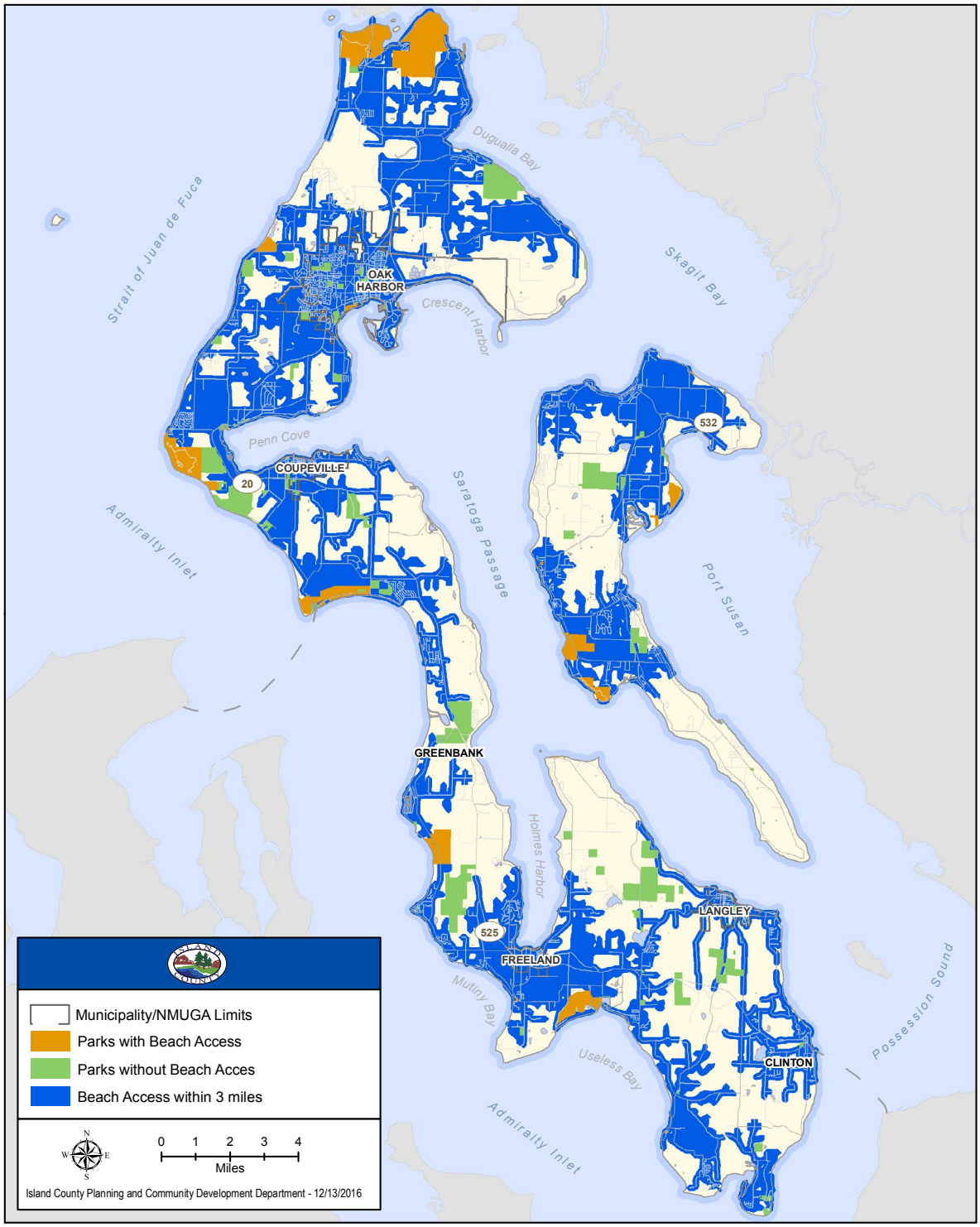
7.4.4.3.3 Greenbank (Central Whidbey)

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

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

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

MAP 7N. Beach Access Opportunities



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7.4.4.3.5 Putney Woods

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

7.4.4.3.6 South Whidbey/Clinton

The entire eastern shoreline of South Whidbey is unserved by beach access areas, with the exception of areas near Possession Point State Park.

7.4.4.3.7 Camano Island

Camano Island has four areas that lack beach access, Livingston Bay, Four Springs, Camano Aquifer Recharge Area.

7.4.4.3.8 Livingston Bay

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

7.4.4.3.9 Four Springs

Central Camano on the west side of the island and north of Henry Hollow is unserved. 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.

7.4.4.3.10 Camano Aquifer Recharge Area

This area lacks beach access.

7.4.4.3.11 South Camano

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

7.4.4.4 ADDITIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS

A variety of additional recreation opportunities are important to residents. Some are consistent with the County's area of focus. According to its role as an outdoor recreation provider, Island County should support the following needs:

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

7.4.4.4.1 Boating (Motorized and Non-Motorized Launches)

According to the inventory, Island County provides 9 boat ramps and 2 docks. Other providers in Island County have 6 boat ramps and 6 docks/marinas. These facilities are pretty well dispersed throughout the County, with the exception of Central Whidbey, north and south of Greenbank.

As noted in public involvement findings, boating is less popular than many other recreation activities in Island County. However, there is a significant latent demand for canoing or kayaking, meaning it is an activity that residents would like to engage in more frequently. In fact, the results of the community questionnaire suggest that canoing 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.

In addition to boat ramps, there is a need for more non-motorized boat launches to support kayaking and canoing in Central Whidbey and central/south Camano. Of seven existing hand-carry boat launches in Island County, three are in Oak Harbor/North Whidbey, three are in 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.

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

Table 7-13. 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, 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

7.4.4.4.2 Dog Parks

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

- Double Bluff (Island County)
- Marguerite Brons Memorial Park (Island County)
- Patmore Pit (Island County)
- Clover Valley Off-Leash (NW Parks & Recreation District)
- Oak Harbor Dog Park (City of Oak Harbor)
- Greenbank Farm (Port of Coupeville)

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

In partnership with the Island County Parks, FETCH! (Free Exercise Time for Canines and Humans!) maintains the off-leash parks at Double Bluff Beach, Marguerite Brons Memorial Park, Patmore Pit, 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!

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 mix of amenities, such as picnic tables, shelters, a rinse station, portable toilets, and sheltered bulletin boards. FETCH! volunteers ensure that the parks are maintained in good condition. While anyone can use the dog 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.

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

If the demand for dog parks on Whidbey Island increases, another off-leash dog area may be needed in the future—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.

7.4.4.4.3 Camping

Island County currently allows RV and tent camping at Rhododendron Campground. This campground on Whidbey Island has 15 pay campsites, vault toilets, and fresh water. Other providers have seven additional public campgrounds in Island County. These include five sites at State Parks (one on Camano Island and four on Whidbey Island), as well as one provided by the City of Oak Harbor at Windjammer Park and one provided by the Island County Fairgrounds. 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 100 people. Deception Pass State Park provides 167 tent

sites, 143 utility spaces, five hiker/biker sites, three group sites, two dump stations, 20 restrooms, and ten showers. The Island County Fairground has 15 tent sites, 30 utility sites and showers, though they are closed during the late summer for the fair. Historically, South Whidbey State Park provided 46 tent spaces, eight utility spaces, a dump station, two restrooms, four showers, and a group site for up to 60 people. Currently, all campgrounds at South Whidbey State Park are closed indefinitely due to diseased trees that present a potential hazard for campers. Due to this, it is unclear if camping will reopen at South Whidbey State park in the near future or ever again.

In addition to campgrounds, other types of overnight sites are available at public parks in Island County. Cama Beach State Park provides 31 reservable cabins plus a 15-room retreat lodge and dining hall. In addition, six sites in Island County provide water trail campsites, which are available to campers who arrive by kayak or canoe. According to the 2006 Island County Non-Motorized Trail Plan, these campsites are at Joseph Whidbey State Park, Fort Ebey State Park, Possession Point State Park, Captain Coupe Park (Coupeville), Dugualla State Park, and Camano Island State Park (the only one on Camano Island).

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

7.4.4.4.4 Specialty Trails (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)

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

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

Based on population trail needs on Whidbey Island are greater than on Camano Island. On Whidbey Island, three geographically dispersed sites (north, central, and south) are needed to support equestrian and mountain bike trail use. These sites should include trailheads to support these uses. There are several sites that could be improved to support this need, including the Kettles (where Mussels in the Kettles Mountain Bike Race is held each year), Saratoga Woods, Greenbank Farm, and potentially the Trillium Community Forest (depending on the decisions within a management plan now under development). Another trail is needed on North Whidbey. On Camano, two sites are needed to support mountain biking and horseback riding. Elger Bay and Camano Ridge have the capacity to support trails (if appropriate trailheads and support amenities were added).

Table 7-14. 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.

Ideally, at least one mountain bike and equestrian trail on each island would be at a site where deer hunting (the discharge of firearms) is not allowed. Otherwise, equestrian and mountain biking needs are not met during hunting season (see below). At this time, most of Island County's large sites that support mountain biking and equestrian trails are also open to hunting. However, South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District's Trustland Trails (located on the south end of Whidbey) does not allow hunting and is open year around for hikers, bike riders, and equestrian activities. The County is currently working on updating the Non-Motorized Trail Plan which may address some of these needs.

7.4.4.4.5 Hunting

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

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

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

7.4.4.4.6 Summary of Additional Recreation Needs

Table 7-14 summarizes outdoor recreation needs, including the capacity of existing sites to meet these needs.

7.5 FUNDING STRATEGIES

7.5.1 STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS

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

7.5.1.1 Apply for Grants

The adoption of the Parks and Recreation Element will make Island County eligible to apply for State grants to support habitat conservation and recreation for the next six years. In addition, the Non-Motorized Trails Plan has made the County eligible for non-motorized transportation funding from the State. The County should take advantage of these application windows and continue to take advantage of other grants and Federal funds, especially those for trail development that are available at this time.

7.5.1.2 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 uses do not support the County's area of focus. A new cost recovery strategy should be implemented that increases the revenue generated through facility rentals, facility use, land leases, park use for special events, sustainable resource harvesting, tourism, etc. Greater fees can be charged for non-residents and activities outside the County's area of focus.

7.5.1.3 Build on Successful Efforts

The County should build on successful funding strategies, reinvesting funds into land and facilities that will continue to support this success. Similarly, the County should continue to build on its successful partnerships and the relationship it has with volunteers, agencies, and groups who have helped fund or complete capital projects and ongoing maintenance efforts. The County should continue to support model efforts that will help build support for future park efforts.

7.5.1.4 Ensure Maximum Dollars from Traditional Funding Sources

The County's existing funding resources should be monitored to ensure that the Parks Department is receiving the maximum funds possible from these sources.

7.5.1.5 Engage Volunteers

Volunteers can help move a variety of projects forward. Generally, Island County volunteers need more guidance and direction than they receive now. While the County may not be able to 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.

7.5.1.6 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.

7.5.1.7 Develop and Market Trails

Because of the level and frequency of trail use, trail development is one of the best and most cost-effective ways for Island County to increase the number of people in parks. If Island County can position itself as having the best and most scenic hiking and biking trails in the State of Washington, it will open the door for more events and self-directed activities that appeal to tourists who anticipate paying fees to explore the Puget Sound.

7.5.2 FUNDING NEXT STEPS

From this point onward, Island County will continue its search for a brighter future and a better quality of life. Park lands for recreation, and habitat conservation will play an integral role in creating this future. As new projects enter the County's scope, staff must carefully evaluate its options and determine

whether the value of the project is worth the cost of the effort to obtain it. In the short and long term, the County should carefully identify and weigh these costs. These include:

7.5.2.1 Capital Costs

Changing land values and construction costs, as well as variables such as site size, site character and condition, habitat quality and mitigation needs, facility styles, size, and access needs, will all affect capital costs associated with projects in the Capital Facilities Plan. Because of these variables, capital costs should be determined when the County is considering project implementation. In assessing costs, the County should be prepared to invest more in facility development than it has in the past, so that it can create the signature parks that the community desires.

7.5.2.2 Operations Costs

The amount of money invested in Island County park maintenance is not comparable to the 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 consider habitat stewardship needs, since funds have not been budgeted consistently for this purpose in the past.

7.5.2.3 Community Costs

The cost of community support is intangible and unquantifiable. We often talk about community support in terms of its value. The reality is that there can be a cost as well. The County needs to pursue projects that will foster community support for parks. On the other hand, the County should temporarily avoid projects that will stretch County resources even more thinly. The County cannot afford the social costs for such undertakings, and may have a hard time justifying major new expenses.

7.5.2.4 Recovered Costs

In calculating costs, it is also important to factor in the potential capacity of a site or project to generate revenue. Cost recovery is extremely important in developing a self-sustaining system. While charging facility use fees may seem controversial, it sends a consistent message that Island County values its land and facilities, which are assets and investments to be sustained for future generations. In return for the facility use fees and charges, Island County promises to invest this money efficiently and wisely into site improvements.

7.6 GOALS AND POLICIES

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

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

2016 UPDATES

NEW **New goals and policies are indicated with *red italicized* numbering**

REVISED **Goals and policies that have been revised (more than minor text edits) are indicated with *blue italicized* numbering**

Goal 1. Provide a quality, diverse and, sustainable system of park land that effectively balances recreation and habitat conservation needs.

PR 1.1. Park land should support the mission and vision of Island County Parks in providing passive outdoor recreation experiences and protecting habitat.

PR 1.2. Provide signature park lands and high-quality recreation facilities that reflect the character of Island County, draw users from throughout the region, and establish an identity/brand for Island County Parks.

PR 1.2.1. Provide attractive and uniform signage at park entrances to improve the branding of Island County Parks.

PR 1.2.2. Improve the image of County parks through sensitive site design and development that reflects Island County's character.

PR 1.2.2.1. Prior to the development of any new minor feature or facility, consider its design and placement within the park.

PR 1.2.2.2. Prior to the development of any new major facility or park, create a site design (for smaller sites) or site master plan (for larger sites) to help achieve the County's vision for parks lands of being the best in the state.

PR 1.3. Continue to update the County's facility inventory to have an accurate count of facilities within all parks, including the length of trails (in linear feet or miles) that are developed and maintained both inside and outside of parks and habitat areas.

PR 1.4. Ensure recreational uses and development does not result in significant degradation of habitat, including cumulative degradation.

PR 1.5. Residents should have adequate access to "open space" areas. Open spaces include land which contains natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural and scenic resources. Such land should be preserved and provided to residents for recreational use when appropriate. Open spaces should be linked to non-motorized transportation and public transportation.

Goal 2. **Provide low-impact/passive outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the County.**

PR 2.1. 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.

PR 2.2. Strive to provide areas where people can walk at least one-mile in nature within a 20 minute drive from most County residences.

PR 2.3. Provide additional recreation opportunities that are consistent with the County's area of focus, such as dog parks, boat ramps, camping, and hunting, in dispersed locations county wide where safe and appropriate opportunities exist to support these activities.

PR 2.4. Provide diverse, non-motorized trail opportunities, including both hard and soft-surfaced trails, water trails, looped trail systems, and trails with variety of lengths and access points consistent with the Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan. Include appropriate amenities to support a variety of trail uses, including pedestrians, equestrians, bikes, non-motorized watercraft, and other appropriate uses.

PR 2.4.1. Trail development should be completed through regional collaboration and prioritize linking multimodal transportation, schools, urban development, places of employment, and recreational facilities.

PR 2.5. Increase the level and quality of development in park lands, where appropriate, to enhance the County's image as a premier provider of passive outdoor recreation opportunities in the Puget Sound area and in Washington State.

PR 2.6. Monitor community demand for additional outdoor recreation services as the population in Island County continues to grow.

PR 2.6.1. When a need or gap is identified, the County will look to develop plans to address these discrepancies by expanding existing recreation facilities, acquiring new land or coordinating with other agencies to meet those needs.

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

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

PR 3.1. Plan, design, and develop beach access areas while adhering to the goals and policies set forth in the County's Shoreline Master Program.

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

PR 3.3. Identify opportunities to increase public waterfront access through the recovery of public road ends where public access is being blocked, 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.

PR 3.4. Strive to provide shoreline access for beach activities within a 20 minute drive from most County residences.

Goal 4. Acquire lands that conserve priority habitat and natural resources, preserve open space, improve beach access, maintain island character, and improve and expand passive outdoor recreational opportunities for public enjoyment.

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

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

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

PR 4.4. Only accept land donations that support the County's area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this Element.

PR 4.5. Foster Island County's economic vitality by protecting productive resources and park lands that support economic activity in industries such as tourism, agriculture, and forestry.

PR 4.6. Ensure donations from other providers are consistent with the County's area of focus and can be sustainably managed and maintained with identified funding resources, such as a stipend, long-term stewardship fund, revenue-generation strategy, etc.

PR 4.7. Acquire land using the following criteria:

PR 4.7.1. The site is adjacent to a County-owned park land so that acquisition would create a larger park land and/or the site is adjacent to a trail and will provide a longer trail corridor.

PR 4.7.2. The site is located near park lands owned by other entities. Unlike PR 4.7.1, these parcel must be large (e.g., five acres or more), or contain important habitat, or meet a specific recreational need or wildlife corridor need to justify the County's role in this area.

PR 4.7.3. Larger sites typically have higher habitat value, greater recreation capacity, and a greater maintenance cost efficiency. The County should avoid acquiring small habitat parcels, unless these sites contribute to a larger protected area, contain important habitat, or provide a wildlife corridor between protected areas. Also, the County should avoid acquiring sites just large enough to address recreation needs, without space to protect habitat.

PR 4.7.4. The County should strive to acquire land that is considered to have a high or medium resource value, to minimize restoration requirements. Habitat quality can be measured by considering factors such as habitat age/maturity, presence of rare species, absence of invasive species, and level of degradation (e.g., development, soil compaction, pollution, impacted vegetation, etc.). A sample habitat quality criteria is presented in section 7.4.3 of this Parks and Recreation Element.

PR 4.7.5. The land uses and quality of habitat on adjacent or nearby parcels should not negatively impact the scenic and aesthetic value and natural character of the site. The County should consider whether adjacent site characteristics or land management practices (e.g., weed control, invasive species removal, erosion and water runoff, soil contamination, etc.) will affect habitat quality on the site being evaluated.

PR 4.7.6. The site meets a need for a one-mile walk in nature (or longer nature trail) or beach access for recreation opportunities.

PR 4.7.7. The site meets another passive outdoor recreation need, such as a boat ramp, boat launch, dog park, primitive camp, or equestrian and mountain biking trail and trailhead.

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

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

PR 4.7.10. The site is not located within the service area of another town, city, or recreation district. The County should strive to address conservation and recreation needs in areas that are not served by another jurisdiction.

PR 4.7.11. The site is not adjacent to a site protected by another jurisdiction. If another jurisdiction is in a better position to manage and protect a site, the County may partner to support the other jurisdiction's acquisition of this land.

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

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

PR 4.7.14. To be managed by the Island County Parks Department, the site needs to have the capacity to address both habitat conservation and outdoor recreation needs.

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

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

PR 4.7.17. The County or other provider is able to pay the annual operating and maintenance costs for the site. The County should avoid providing or accepting from others new park lands where the County is unable to fund site stewardship. If a site is transferred to the County with an operational endowment, this stipend should be on-going or sufficient to cover site land and facility maintenance costs for a minimum of 5 years. That will give Island County time to put a different funding strategy in place.

PR 4.7.18. The site can be sustainably managed using approved revenue-generating strategies to generate funds to support operations and maintenance. This may include user fees, facility rental fees, leases, and other strategies.

PR 4.7.19. 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.

PR 4.7.20. 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.

Goal 5. Divest in parks lands that are not consistent with the County's area of focus.

PR 5.1. Should an existing County property with resource restrictions (such as a conservation easement) on its title be considered for divestment, the County shall honor those restrictions. Additionally, should any existing County property with significant conservation value (that does not have any encumbrance on the title) be considered for divestment, the County should consider placing conservation restrictions on the title before divestment.

PR 5.2. Evaluate County lands to determine which sites do or do not support the vision and goals of this Element. Consider divestment of public lands that have little value for conservation or passive outdoor recreation.

PR 5.3. Prior to any divestment of County land, the County should consider transfer of those lands to agencies that will maintain the land for uses that meet recreation or habitat needs that are outside the County's area of focus, including, but not limited to, transferring active recreation sites to park districts or transferring habitat land without potential for recreational use to a land trust to protect.

PR 5.4. Create a transition plan for sites or facilities which do not fit within the County's area of focus. Identify which sites (if any) can be sold or immediately transferred to other jurisdictions, and which sites should be held until a long-term transition is feasible.

PR 5.5. Evaluate all funding, actions, and projects by their fit with the County's defined area of focus. Pursue projects that support this area of focus, and re-evaluate plans that do not. For example, put immediate hold on any plans to improve active use facilities, such as sport fields, sports courts, and indoor facilities. Do not accept any new lands or renew any maintenance or site use agreements until a transition plan is in place.

PR 5.6. Discuss with the Board of Commissioners whether the County should continue to own and operate any special properties not consistent with the County's area of focus; for example facilities such as Freeland Hall and the Four Springs Lake Preserve.

PR 5.7. Create site master plans for properties not consistent with the County's area of focus and parks that are not accepted by other jurisdictions. Involve site users, nearby residents, and interest groups to create a new plan or design that notes what new facilities will be developed at these sites, when older facilities not consistent with the County's area of focus age or deteriorate to the point where they are unsafe for future use. For example, consider removing the tennis court and softball field at Camano Park and providing a dog park at this facility instead.

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

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

PR 6.2. Increase the level of land stewardship at all County-owned sites. The County should evaluate and budget for habitat stewardship needs. The County should use the funding strategies outlined in section 7.5 of this Element as a starting point in calculating a maintenance budget for habitat stewardship.

PR 6.3. As part of stewardship efforts, evaluate the condition of natural lands within County parks and habitat conservation areas. Identify which sites would benefit most from restoration efforts. Based on available resources, target sites where restoration is achievable, since maintenance needs will decrease after the ecosystem is stabilized. Maintain other sites at a minimum level for hazard mitigation.

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

PR 7.1. Actively seek innovative funding methods to retain financial flexibility and increase facility services.

PR 7.2. Consider and maintain diverse funding sources to meet community needs and provide high-quality parks and facilities. Consider impact fees; real estate excise taxes (REET); tourism taxes; conservation futures funds; bonds and levies; grants, donations, and sponsorships; facility/site use fees and rentals; land leases; sustainable resource harvesting; concessions and vendor agreements; and other options that may be available in the short and/or long term.

PR 7.3. Reinvest revenue and/or resources obtained from park lands, back into recreation and habitat conservation services, whether directly or through a dedicated fund for system-wide conservation and recreation services. This includes any proceeds from facility/site rentals, user fees, leases, vendor or concessionaire agreements, and land divestment (sale or trade). This applies to all lease agreements, user fees, vendor fees, facility and site rentals, etc.

PR 7.4. Increase the County's maintenance investment in terms of funding and staffing to significantly improve the maintenance level of service for parks and recreation facilities.

PR 7.5. Revise the accounting and budgeting process for collecting and spending revenues generated through the outdoor recreation system. Rather than establishing independent funds for specific sites (such as Cornet Bay Dock) or projects (such as Camano Island boat ramp improvements), create two funds: Camano Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund and Whidbey Park/Habitat Enhancement Fund. This will allow sufficient funds to accumulate to apply them to most needed projects, rather than piecemeal upgrades at individual sites.

PR 7.6. Increase the level of facility maintenance and land stewardship at the most-frequently used County-owned sites.

PR 7.7. Even though the County is moving towards low-maintenance Park facilities, the maintenance budget should be increased to ensure the County parks are maintained properly.

PR 7.8. Implement low-maintenance landscaping techniques in all existing and new park sites. Remove turf areas that do not support specific recreational uses. Avoid high-maintenance plantings.

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

PR 7.10. Create a transition strategy that defines an appropriate level of maintenance investment in facilities that do not support the County's area of focus. Define a funding threshold for repairs, but do not engage in a major capital reinvestment.

PR 7.11. Renovate or replace capital facilities that support the County's area of focus, as well as the goals, vision and objectives noted in this Element.

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

PR 7.12.1. Non-capital alternatives may be pursued if operating and maintenance cost restrictions prohibit capital construction.

PR 7.13. Create strategies or a business plan for facilities identified in PR 5.6, which are not consistent with the County's area of focus, to recover costs sufficient to support their maintenance and operations. For example, at Freeland Hall, either charge fees for grounds maintenance or create an agreement where the Holmes Harbor Activities Club provides all site and grounds maintenance and improvements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PR 8.6. Partner with community groups, concessionaires and others to provide appropriate programming and outdoor events consistent with the vision and goals in this Element. This may include but is not limited to low-impact/passive outdoor community events, environmental education, campground programs, facility-based programming (e.g., related to boating, hunting, trail use), etc.

PR 8.7. Formalize the County's role with ongoing and new potential partners. There are many other providers in Island County who play a variety of roles in conserving habitat and providing recreational opportunities. If one of these providers is better positioned to meet identified needs, let them. If a partnership or collaborative effort is proposed with Island County, clearly define the County's role according to its area of focus including spelling out financial and management responsibilities for both parties.

PR 8.8. Coordinate or partner with non-profit groups, vendors, businesses, or other agencies to provide outdoor recreation programming consistent with the County's area of focus.

PR 8.9. Cooperate with other public and private agencies to protect habitat and provide recreation opportunities before the most suitable sites are lost to development.

PR 8.10. Explore partnerships with vendors, for-profit concessionaires, and non-profit groups to provide programs, events and services consistent with the County's area of focus, vision and goals of this Element.

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

PR 9.1. Provide opportunities for public input in park planning and design decisions to keep tabs on local park and recreation preferences, needs, and trends.

PR 9.2. Promote volunteerism to enhance community support and stewardship of parks, recreation facilities, and natural resources. In particular, encourage citizen involvement and participation in maintaining, improving, and restoring parks and natural areas.

PR 9.3. Increase volunteer coordination and administration to ensure that volunteers have sufficient direction, support and recognition.

PR 9.4. Enhance customer service and increase site use by making information more accessible to residents and visitors.

PR 9.5. Prior to instituting boat ramp and trailhead parking fees, create press releases, website information, and email notifications with messages about "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 area of focus). Also, create an online volunteer coordination and recruitment tool where volunteers join a work party to help with identified improvements. The goal of the public information effort is to allow residents to be involved in and see the positive changes that these new funding initiatives will bring.

PR 9.6. When funding is available, provide staff time for volunteer coordination, direction, recognition, and general involvement. Initially, this may be a part-time position that eventually expands. Ensure that volunteers are not engaging in undirected activities, such as new trail development, without permission or guidance to do so.

PR 9.7. Increase volunteer coordination through more specifically defined volunteer programs and opportunities, including written volunteer guidelines for specific tasks, such as habitat restoration, trail building and site maintenance.

PR 9.8. Plan a larger effort to advertise and market County sites as tourism destinations for their scenic value, outdoor facilities, camping opportunities, event capacity, etc. Replace the marketing coordinator position at Four Springs Lake Preserve with a system-wide marketing specialist who oversees all facilities.

PR 9.9. Establish an online system for campsite and other facility reservations. Other agencies use online reservation providers that are paid for by the user.

PR 9.10. Incorporate opportunities for historical and environmental interpretation into the park system to educate the public about the local, regional, and ecological context.

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