

CHAPTER 11

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND RENOVATION LIST

The following projects are based on the needs compiled from the surveys, use patterns, level of service comparisons, public input, and other factors. Project priorities are sorted in order of preference as to which programs/facilities the project encompasses and how those projects/facilities rank using the aforementioned needs formula (analysis-chapter # 10). In sorting projects by priorities, financial issues are also considered. Considerations can include constraints due to a lack of resources required to develop, maintain and operate facilities. The ability to draw revenue from the proposed development, facility, and/or program is also factored in. Within a broad range of project priorities, the county needs to be flexible to changing conditions and opportunities that may arise. The priorities are categorized as follows:

Level 1 Need (High Priority):

Projects in this category typically fall under the department's first priority of "taking care of what we have". In addition, these projects may have demonstrated the highest level of need in some or all of the categories of public input use patterns, level of service, or survey results (from chapter 10 needs rankings). Finally, economic feasibility or potential cost recovery is considered.

Level 2 Need (Moderate to High Priority):

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

Level 3 Need (Low to Moderate Priority):

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

Level 4 Need (No to Low Priority):

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

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RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Indoor Recreation Center

Level 1

The survey indicated considerable interest for indoor recreation space for sports, recreation classes and swimming. Over 80% of the respondents reported that a recreation center was somewhat to extremely important to Skagit County inhabitants. Currently, there are no indoor recreation centers in Skagit County and because of this void and the clear demand for such a facility, it is SCPR's highest priority. The biggest issue is where should it be located and how will it be funded? The idea of developing several smaller centers was considered, but this was found to be a very costly option in both development and operations. The plan should be phased as to initially include a gymnasium and multi-purpose room with an option for an aquatic center at a later date. None of the cities in Skagit County are large enough to financially support a facility.

Design Requirements:

- The site must be central to the area it serves and visible to the passing public.
- The facility should provide a wide range of facilities and activities that will be of interest to all age groups
- A gymnasium and multi-purpose room should be developed first with an option to add a swimming facility as a part of a second project phase. The swimming component must be multi-use in nature and suitable for instruction, recreation swim and competitive events.
- space should be provided for competitive and active sports as well as places for recreation and instructional classes, small and medium sized meetings, receptions and large group gatherings, aerobics and other exercise programs, etc.
- Multi-use spaces should be favored over single purpose spaces. Flexibility is very important.
- The building should be attractive with a comfortable environment suitable for leisure activities. Active recreation spaces should be clearly separated from passive spaces.
- To reduce costs and free up valuable downtown real estate, the facility should be built to accommodate SCPR administrative staff.

Recommended Location

Because Skagit County is so large, locating a facility convenient to all will be impossible. As a result, the best location would be in the center of the greatest population concentration. With this in mind, someplace along the I-5 corridor would be the best location. The site should be out of the floodway and along a transit route.

Consideration should be given to joint collaborating with other public entities and/or private groups who provide recreational services.

RECOMMENDED RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

Trails continue to be the most demanded recreational facility asked for by Skagit County residents. The 2003 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) surveys show similar trends. The (SCORP) document makes recommendations for local agencies and encourages trail opportunities. The plan specifically states, “If there is a weakness in the local response statewide, it may be in addressing high-participation activities that take place away from a traditional park, especially bicycling and walking. Health professionals increasingly regard walking and bicycling, both for recreation and transportation, as valuable tools that can help people build healthier lifestyles. Community oriented trails, paths, and routes for walking and cycling can encourage people to participate in health oriented activities; encourage children to walk or bicycle to school; and encourage adults to commute without a car”.

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

Trails need to be provided for at every opportunity. Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley identified proposed trail corridors in their plans as well as connection points to the County-wide system. Anacortes is in the process of creating the Tommy Thompson Parkway Trail. The trail provides an important link along the northeast side of Fidalgo Island. Skagit County will work in finding regional trail links to this and other outside agency trails. City,

County, State, and Federal agencies should continue to work together to assure a healthy and user-friendly trail system in Skagit County.

Skagit County residents have identified a need for more primitive trails. Burlington has proposed these types of trails on Burlington Hill and Mount Vernon proposes to expand their system on Little Mountain. Anacortes has over 30 miles of primitive trails in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Skagit County has proposals for trails at Northern State Recreational Area and Pilchuck Forest. Skagit County Public Works is designating the extension of the State Route 20 Trail between Burlington and Sedro-Woolley. There is also a mile of trail proposed at Lake Shannon.

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

Northern State Recreation Area Trails Plan

Level 1

The NSRA trails component is the development of an integrated non-motorized trail network throughout the Northern State Recreation Area property that provides for at least five miles of trail. Trails were identified as the highest priority type of facility to include at NSRA in the countywide survey administered in the NSRA planning process. Several trail types are included in the master plan for NSRA, including multiple use trails, interpretive trails, limited use trails, and exercise trails. The entire master plan for NSRA can be viewed in the appendices.

Centennial Trail

Level 1

The Centennial Trail is a regional trail system connecting Snohomish County with Whatcom County. These neighboring counties have been actively buying and creating connections with monies dedicated within their capital facility plans with scheduled completion planned for 2007. The Skagit portion is divided into two segments. The northern segment between Sedro-Woolley and Whatcom County will follow State Route 9. Because this segment is on-street, it will probably be used primarily for bicycling. South of Sedro-Woolley, the Centennial Trail follows abandoned railroad corridor. The County has purchased approximately eight miles of this route but anticipates that the remaining portion will be located within street rights-of-way. This is an excellent opportunity to create multi-use trails for bicyclists, walkers, horseback riders and other users. This is envisioned to be part of an overall off-street trail one day connecting British Columbia to Seattle. The initial segment of the trail is located

near the Snohomish/Skagit County boundary and is on property referred to as the Pilchuck Forest. Within the boundaries of the site, three separate creeks converge. Immediately south of the site, Snohomish County owns an additional parcel of land, which has been identified as a potential trailhead for the Centennial Trail. A master plan should be developed for the Pilchuck site. Possible plans could include a wetland interpretive area containing boardwalks and interpretive facilities.

Lake Shannon Trail

Level 2

A one mile loop trail is planned for the Lake Shannon Boat Launch/camping area. Also, a linear trail linking Concrete with Lake Shannon and Baker Lake may be possible with a long-term adaptive management fund made available through a recent Puget Sound Energy relicensing process. Skagit County should remain actively involved with PSE and other recreational providers in the area to ensure the needs of County residents are met.

Evergreen Trail

Level 2

This is a cross-island corridor trail on Fidalgo Island. It links Anacortes, San Juan Ferry Terminal, Washington Park, Heart Lake, Campbell Lake, Mount Erie, and Deception Pass. Most of the linkages utilize existing public land. Additional linkages need to be acquired and some physical obstacles need to be addressed. This trail program should be a coordinated effort between the City of Anacortes, Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Skagit County, and private landowners. A missing link currently exists between city and state owned lands. This void can be filled in a number of creative ways, including but not limited to:

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

This proposed trail should also include the creation of a wildlife corridor between the Anacortes Community Forest Lands and Deception Pass State Park. The open space corridor would provide for important wildlife connections in that part of Fidalgo Island. The wildlife corridor should be wide enough to accommodate the movement of wildlife between the State and City

Forestlands. Wildlife corridors are important for the long-term genetic health of island wildlife by providing links for subpopulations. Such an Open Space Corridor can be created by purchasing properties, by keeping existing rural zoning, by conservation easement, etc. Habitat connectivity in this part of Fidalgo Island is very important for the long-term health the biotic community. Since there will be more and more pressures to develop these properties on Fidalgo Island, the pursuance of wildlife corridors are important at present time. Once these lands are lost to development, the opportunities may never again become available. Potential funding in partnership with a local land trust should be pursued.

Proposed Trail Development and/or acquisition

Level 2

In addition to the major trail routes described above, primitive trails should be developed in existing and proposed Open Space and day-use areas. Some of the specific areas should include:

- Sares Bluff

- Squires Lake

- Pleasant Ridge

- Chuckanut Mountain Area

- Northern State Recreational Area

- Other publicly owned lands and/or open space areas.

- Skagit River Access

RECOMMENDED OPEN SPACE PLAN

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

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

planned and used. They may permit a variety of land uses as long as open space qualities are conserved. Maximum development is low impact day-use activities and trails.

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

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

Another open space classification is recommended and is called Recreation Resource Areas (RRA). These are large areas of land that because of unique or scenic quality should be carefully monitored, planned and used. This is not to say that they cannot be used for a mixture of land uses but because of their unique characteristics, the open space quality should be promoted. When applying this classification it means that special studies and efforts should be made to balance the open space qualities with other land uses.

Four of these areas have been identified and include Chuckanut Mountain, Pleasant Ridge, Butler Hill, and the lower Skagit River Corridor (downstream of the wild and scenic river designation). These areas have high value as both urban wildlife habitat and recreational open space, and deserve consistent and coordinated management. The RRA designation does not mean the County should acquire these areas in their entirety, but instead makes effort to ensure careful consideration is given to their natural and recreational values. This plan recommends that 10-20% of each of the recommended RRA's be made available for public use as Recreational Open Space.

The Skagit County Planning Department is conducting a full review of potential open space areas under GMA requirements. Recommended Recreational Open Space areas will be forwarded to the Planning Commission with the anticipation they will be incorporated into the overall open space plan for the County. Skagit County has been given an extension and has until 2007 to incorporate the Open Space Plan into the County-wide comprehensive plan.

There are a variety of tools available to protect other open space areas. Acquisition is an option and most likely necessary to provide broad public access. Other options include scenic and access

easements, development restrictions, etc. It will be necessary to work closely with the Planning Department to ensure appropriate land use controls are in place to achieve open space objectives. It should be kept in mind that much of the natural open space now exists as sensitive lands and will be preserved through current land use controls. Therefore, it does not seem appropriate for the county to purchase these parcels when other mechanisms now exist to maintain their natural environment.

Sares Bluff

Level 1

Sares Bluff encompasses conifer lowland forest, a wetland, rocky bald, a seasonal stream, and coastal frontage property. These combined land characteristics make the property very unique biologically due to the habitat interface of these differing features. Sares Bluff is the largest remaining privately owned, undeveloped waterfront property on Fidalgo Island. Sares Bluff is also a vital connecting link between shoreline and inland parcels of Sharpe County Park. The San Juan Preservation Trust and SCPR are working together in actively pursuing the purchase of Sares Bluff with a goal of expanding Sharpe Park. Together, Sares Bluff and Sharpe Park would comprise a 110-acre natural area including almost a mile of rugged, natural shoreline on Rosario Strait. The property features a spectacular view, encompassing most of the Olympic Range, the straits, and Lopez, Allan, Burrows, and other islands.

Proposed Open Space Development and/or Acquisition

Level 2

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

Proposed Big Rock Improvements

Level 3

Permanent and legal access needs to be established. The property is currently landlocked. Formal parking and trailhead will also need to be established.

RECOMMENDED SHORELINES PLAN

The ability of Skagit County residents to gain access to their shorelines has been a persistent issue over the past couple of decades. The loss of shoreline to development and the loss of shoreline access are occurring at a more rapid rate. Concern has been growing that not enough avenues to reach Skagit County's shorelines

remain and pressure is mounting on existing access ways. Demand for public access seems to be rising as participation in recreational boating, fishing, and shellfish harvesting grows while traditional access sites and affordable shorefront lands suitable for access diminish. Clearly, public access to Skagit County's shorelines is an issue that will not go away. Once lands are lost to development, the ability to access shorelines will be lost forever. Because of the popularity of shoreline and the diminishing ability to access these shorelines, the priority for the acquisition and enhancement of these properties ranks fairly high. The monies available for these improvements vary.

Our County abounds with tideland recreational resources—miles of beaches and many important estuaries, in particular the Skagit and Samish River basins. In many ways, they are the legacies of Skagit we want to appreciate and preserve. To that end, we recommend and support working with local governments and non-profit agencies to find ways to acquire intertidal lands for the enjoyment of our public”.

Howard Miller Steelhead Park Proposal

Level 1

Only 13 acres of this site are currently developed with the remaining 80 acres lying across a small stream channel to the west. The existing site includes picnic areas, picnic shelters (one enclosed), a dump station, boat launch, park manager residence, 49 RV units, office building, two Adirondack shelters and a tent camping area. The site receives many regular users from outside the region.

Approximately 80% of site users are non-County residents and many are seniors.

There are currently two entrances to the site, one from Sauk Valley Road and the other through the local neighborhood on Alfred Street. The site is not gated and no entrance fee is charged for day-use. During the Eagle Festival and the eagle viewing season, 200 or more cars may attempt to park on the site. This heavy use period occurs mostly on weekends from December to March. Many boaters who ride commercial rafts park their cars on the site prior to being transported upriver to the boat launch area. A portion of the site is prone to flooding and noise from the nearby tavern is occasionally a disturbance.

It is recommended that the open meadow located west of the developed portion of the site be utilized for other active recreation uses. This should include additional camping, group shelters, river access and facilities for local community use. However, the heavily wooded portion found at the west end of the park should not be developed and remain as a wildlife corridor linking riparian habitat with other surrounding land. One of the most important tasks to complete should be an overall park site master plan to determine the impact boundaries of development and permitted uses. The plan should include a new office, interpretive center, parking for 200 cars, a gated entrance system, signage, electrical upgrades to the lower end, shoreline stabilization, and an

improved boat launch. The road needs to be chip sealed and maintained regularly. Development of a non-motorized take-out at the eastern end of Howard Miller Steelhead property is necessary.

The Skagit Bald Eagle Festival Board, in conjunction with SCPR, are actively pursuing an interpretive/office building at Howard Steelhead Park. The festival board has successfully operated a seasonal facility at the Rockport Fire Hall for the past seven seasons, offering educational programs on topics ranging from North Cascades geology to local history. There have been thousands of visitors and provide a valuable service and economic boost to the upper reaches of the Skagit River watershed. The Fire Hall is no longer able to adequately provide for the growing demand for interpretive services. A multi-purpose environmental/interpretive center at Howard Miller Steelhead Park would provide a permanent location for increasingly popular recreational opportunities.

Over 5.5 million people live within a 90 mile drive of the Basin and the Interpretive Center will be used year-round for a multiplicity of events and activities. The economic benefit potential will be very strong as the groups it will draw to the region will include travel professionals, families, seniors, conservation organizations, outdoor groups, bicycle groups, eagle/bird watchers, bus tour operators, fishing groups, rafters/boaters, Elderhostel, teacher workshops, school groups, vacationers, County Park and Recreational groups, and general visitors.

The Interpretive Center will work as a visitor center with interpretive opportunities and enhance Skagit County's ability to benefit from our abundant natural resources. The center will provide a variety of recreational learning experiences that promote an understanding of the natural processes that make the Skagit River System valuable and install a sense of stewardship and a conservation ethic.

Proposed Clear Lake Park Improvements

Level 1

This waterfront area contains three accessible docks with three slides, a swimming area, and lifeguard stations. The site also contains picnic tables, a grassy area, a sand volleyball court, a paved play area with a basketball hoop and support facilities. A snack bar is operated out of the garage. The site is fenced and visitors are charged an entrance fee during the summer swimming season. The fees pay for beach staff and lifeguards. This site should remain as a swimming beach. Water-skiing is prohibited and boating is limited to a speed of 15 MPH. During the fall, winter and early spring months, the beach is open for public use. An annual summer event, the Clear Lake Triathlon, is sponsored by the department and brings around 300 triathlon entrants plus 200-300 spectators each July. Improvements that can further enhance the beach and operations include improved parking and access at the entry and a permanent concession building. A permanent concession building would increase the revenue potential for SCPR.

Proposed Conway Park Renovation

Level 2

This park is located adjacent to the bridge over the South Fork of the Skagit River, near Conway. This site is not fully developed but because of its location, receives considerable use. The site contains a paved boat launch, a portable restroom and is used for fishing and informal camping. A fenced, grass playfield/Little League baseball field is also part of the site but lies on the other side of the dike.

The site is subject to seasonal flooding and was almost completely inundated during the 1990 flood. This event left the site covered with sand. A master plan should be developed for this property. There is an opportunity to connect the main portion of the site to the playfield on the south with a trail under the bridge. Formalized parking, an open grass multi-use play area and other improvements should be considered. Additional camping sites and improvements to the boat launch area should also be considered.

Proposed Lake Shannon Park Development

Level 2

Baker Lake, in Whatcom County, has a variety of recreational developments, while Lake Shannon to the south has a primitive recreational site with no legal road access to the lake. At Lake Shannon, surrounding lands are mostly in private ownership (except DNR lands on the western shore) and shorelines are steep. Osprey and Loons regularly use the lake and shoreline. It is recommended that safe, legal and permanent access is provided to Lake Shannon. The site should include day-use facilities, overnight camping, and a boat ramp. Lakefront recreational resources are extremely rare in Skagit County. Survey results indicate shoreline access to be a primary need of County residents. Standards developed for public access in this plan should focus on the types and scale of facilities developed at other Northwest reservoirs. The formation of this lake has created a demand for its use. The project proponent (Puget Sound Energy) must provide facilities to accommodate this demand (through the current relicensing process).

Currently, public access to Lake Shannon is across public and privately owned lands. Although Puget Sound Energy (PSE) provides portable restrooms and dumpsters at one southeastern lakeshore site, there are no formal public recreational facilities and services available to the public at this reservoir. The southeastern shoreline site is an open dirt-surfaced area with minimal shade where visitors park RV's and erect tents to camp. Visitor surveys that were done as a part of the relicensing process, show low satisfaction with access roads, availability of potable water, cleanliness of the area, facility maintenance, and quality of the parking area. Lake Shannon had the highest level of user dissatisfaction of all project sites that were surveyed. The lack of developed facilities means the users must provide their own comfort and convenience when visiting Lake Shannon.

Skagit County has proposed a measure that would require a public easement for roaded access to the Lake Shannon southeastern site and a one mile loop trail along the shoreline. One family campground with up to 24 sites, a group campground, a designated boat trailer parking area, vault restrooms, potable water, trash containers, fire rings, tables, and a kiosk would also be developed as a part of the measure. A day-use area would also be provided with a picnic shelter and fire grills and tables. The proposed measure would provide the first and only developed recreational facility at Lake Shannon.

Proposed Grandy Lake Development

Level 2

This primitive camping area is located off Baker Lake Road about five miles northeast of highway 20. This site was given to the county and includes picnic tables, a portable restroom building, and undeveloped parking spurs. The site is used to capacity on the opening weekends of fishing and hunting season. The site has become an overflow to the Baker River recreational developments. A master plan should be developed for this site.

Pressentin Park Proposal

Level 2

This proposed regional park is located off Highway 20 in Marblemount. It was acquired in 1990 with the assistance of an IAC grant. Currently developed only for trail use, it is comprised of three distinct areas, an upper forested area, a middle open meadow, and lower (across a drainage swale) floodplain terrace. The middle of the meadow or terrace was formerly used to graze pack animals and is likely the limit of the developable area (about 25 acres). Pressentin Park was used in 1992 as a staging area for the Crest-to-Coast race. The county also has first right of acquisition on an additional 14 acres of adjacent land.

Most of the site fronts a secondary channel of the Skagit River. The river island opposite the site belongs to the nature Conservancy, and is maintained as eagle wintering habitat (specifically, nighttime roosting area). Deed restrictions for the site are relatively flexible. Concerns regarding adjacent eagle wintering habitat caused abandonment of proposals for a boat launch at the site.

The long-term plan is for this site is for it to be developed as a destination park for county-wide and regional use with additional facilities placed for local community use. Entry should occur at the current road access point and vehicles limited to a nearby parking area. Recommended improvements include day-use area and camping, 40 RV campsites, and 10-20 tent camping sites.

Young's Park (waterfront portion)

Level 3

This site (and its upland section discussed under open space) is located at the northern edge of Guemes Island, off Guemes Island Road. Improvements include a portable restroom, picnic units with grills, parking, trash receptacles, and a newly constructed kiosk. The site is popular with sea kayakers as a starting point to access Cypress Island and the San Juans. It is recommended this site be maintained as a water trail destination with a focus on boater related camping. A master plan should be developed for this park.

Proposed Similk Bay Shoreline Access

Level 2

This proposed shoreline access area is privately owned and features grass with picnic tables and a portable restroom. The developed area is adjacent to a berm leading to an extensive tidal flat with evidence of a former pier. An oyster house and an old restroom are also found on the site. The intertidal area is still used for raising oysters. Due to poor access and a number of homes around this site, facilities should be limited.

Proposed Lake Park Development and/or Acquisition

Level 2

Lakefront recreational resources are extremely rare in Skagit County. A long-term objective of SCPR was to develop a major regional park on a centrally located lake in Skagit County (Big Lake or Clear Lake would best fill this void). Skagit County is bestowed with a number of beautiful lakes and public access is limited. The site should include an array of day-use opportunities.

Proposed Sauk Park Development

Level 3

This existing site is located about ¼ of a mile north of Lower Government Bridge off Sauk Valley Road. About half of the site is located on the upland side of the road. The park currently provides primitive camping opportunities but is very minimally developed. A boat launch used to exist on the site but eroded away during a high-water event. This access point, however, does provide good walking access to a broad, sandy riverside area. Camp units are situated on a relatively steep bank along the river. Uncontrolled access from units to the river has caused some bank erosion, resulting in escalating gradients in some areas. This situation could be considered a hazard in at least one camp unit.

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

RECOMMENDED SPORTS FIELDS PLAN

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

Since there is a great demand for more sport fields and the County is already managing a major complex, it is recommended that the County continue with this effort.

Proposed Skagit Valley Playfields Improvements:

Level 1

Skagit County obtained 25 acres of land in 1979 through a 50 year lease from the State. The surrounding properties and the concession building belong to Skagit Valley College. The site is heavily used averaging 21 weekends of scheduled softball tournaments. SCPR adult softball leagues play weeknights on all 4 softball fields up to 55 games per week. The softball fields are used for league play from the first of March through the middle of October. Drainage problems exist on two of the softball fields. Improved drainage, irrigation and new fencing were installed on field #2 in 2001. Improved drainage on field #4 is part of the current renovation to be completed by summer 2004.

Site recommendations include:

- Upgrade concession building.
- Increase the number of paved parking stalls
- Renovate, including new drainage, fencing, dugouts, backstops, and lighting.
- Add lights, restrooms, concession building to Skagit Valley Dream Field.
- Maintenance on lights on the current fields that have lights (fields #1,2,3)
- Bleachers/seating for the soccer field.
- Bleachers/seating on softball fields (some current bleachers do not meet ADA or needs or safety code).

- Improvement of internal pathways, including ADA accessibility.

Northern State Recreational Area Ball fields

Level 2

The ball field component at NSRA includes a destination youth and adult ball fields complex that creates an exciting baseball environment by providing state of the art play fields, integrated parking, concessions, restrooms, maintenance facilities, and picnic areas. An additional goal is to incorporate aesthetic values as well as conservation and restoration of natural resources into the planning of the ball field area. The ball field component includes the following elements:

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

OTHER RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Proposed Bayview Community Park Development

Level 2

The Bayview Ridge area is unincorporated but designated by Skagit County as an area of urban growth. It is located on the hill west of I-5 and is being developed at a much higher density than neighboring unincorporated lands. To provide park services in this area, a community park site is proposed. The timeline for the development of this park should parallel the timeline for other Bayview sub area infrastructure. The park should therefore be completed as the subarea reaches capacity.

Proposed Northern State Recreation Area Development

Level 2

A master plan has been prepared for this site and includes about 525 acres or 72% of natural open space. Other recommended facilities include a significant trail system, an adult softball complex, a day –use park, environmental education center, camping area, a multi-use event center and RV camping. Initial plans for development include trails, restrooms, and parking. Subsequent development is dependent upon the

acquisition of funds. It is strongly recommended that the entire 726-acre site be included within the urban growth area of Sedro Woolley to accommodate proposed future facilities at urban levels of service throughout the site. A cross-country course has been developed here and is used by local schools. The historic buildings should be renovated and preserved.

Proposed Shooting/Training Range:

Level 2

The need for a shooting range has become apparent because of random shooting in sand and gravel quarries or other unmanaged areas. Because of the concern for safety, shooting in these areas is now restricted. To accommodate the need for a safe and reliable recreational shooting area, an advisory committee made up of approximately fifty people studied several site locations. The Frailey Mountain site was chosen through a selection process in which two environmental impact statements were prepared and six separate sites were looked at in detail. The Frailey Mountain Site is located in the south central portion of the County on land that is being reconveyed to Skagit County from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The site consists of approximately 400 acres.

The County has prepared an environmental impact statement for the Frailey Mountain Shooting/Training range, which includes the development of a recreational and qualification level shooting facility. Development of this range shall be consistent with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, Plan Policies, and development regulations as set forth in law or as established by a court of competent jurisdiction. The land will be owned by Skagit County but developed, operated and maintained by private leaseholders.

Rexville Overlook Development

Level 3

This site is located off Bradshaw Road, in the community of Rexville. It is a small hillock covered in blackberry bushes and is the former site of Rexville School. There is a small roadway turnout that provides parking opportunities. A short climb up the moderate slope affords wonderful views across patterned agricultural lands to the distant coastline and islands. Skagit County should develop a master plan for this property. The plan should include a viewing platform with picnic tables.

Pomona Grange Park Development

Level 3

This site is located off Old Highway 99, about eight miles north of Burlington. It was purchased via a grant from the IAC. It contains a group shelter, five picnic sites, a portable restroom, a short nature trail and creek frontage. It is named for the volunteer group who constructed the shelter and has annual work parties to maintain the site. It is located across the creek from a state fish hatchery.

A master plan should be developed for this site. The plan should include a paved trail for the interpretive walkway for the disabled. Also, the State should be encouraged to make the hatchery site available for educational programs held at the park. This would allow learning about artificial as well as natural fish production and rearing.

MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS

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

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

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

MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR EXISTING FACILITIES

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

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

make the accommodations. However, determining a substantial economic burden is difficult.

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

MEETING ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW FACILITIES

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

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

ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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

1. Parking/Access Routes

- a. One designated handicapped space per 25 total spaces
- b. Eight wide parking spaces with 5' wide access state for cars and 8' access aisle for vans.

- c. 50% of handicap spans for cars and 50% spaces for vans.

2. Pathways/Trails/Ramps

- a. A handicap accessible pathway must be provided to all features of the park.
- b. Ramp required if slope is greater than 1:20 (5%).
- c. Maximum slope on ramp is 1:16 (6.25%).
- d. Ramp landings 5 feet by 5 feet for every 30 inch rise.
- e. Ramp width is 3 feet minimum.
- f. Two inch high curbs are required along edge of ramp.
- g. Ramp must have a hard non-slip surface.
- h. Handrails are required on ramps and trails with steep cross slopes.
- i. Pathways and trail grades should not exceed 1:20 (5%).
- j. Width of pathways and trails for one-way access is 4 feet and for two-way is 5 feet.
- k. Tactile warnings should be provided along surfaces of potentially dangerous areas

3. Fishing Facilities

- a. The connection between the fishing pad and pathway should be hard surfaced.
- b. A curb and/or railing should be provided at water's edge
- c. Two accessible fishing stations are required for each accessible parking space
- d. Each fishing station should consist of a linear foot of fishing on a dock or 5 linear feet of fishing area on shore pads.
- e. Shade and shelter should be provided for each station.

4. Boating Facilities

- a. Docks, piers and gangways must meet accessible pathway and ramp requirements

- b. Curbs and/or railings are required.

5. Restrooms

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

6. Playgrounds

- a. Connection between playground and parking should be hard surfaced and meet required design standards
- b. Entrance to the playground should be appropriately signed.
- c. Pathway from the entrance of the playground to the primary play area shall be fully accessible.
- d. At least 30% of the play equipment shall be accessible and easily reached from the playground path of travel,
- e. The playground equipment should encourage interaction between children with and without disabilities.
- f. The sensation of activity (such as swinging, spinning, etc.) shall be equally available to those with disabilities.
- g. Surface material beneath the play equipment should be firm and level to permit unassisted travel by a person in a wheelchair

7. Picnic Areas

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

8. Beach/Waterfront

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

9. Information/Signage

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