



## UPDATE

### Forest stewardship and trail-use planning at Danville-Georgetown and Henry's Ridge Open Space

October 21, 2013

Danville-Georgetown and Henry's Ridge trail user,

Over the past 6 months King County Parks has conducted public planning and implementation regarding forest stewardship at the Danville-Georgetown Open Space site, and trail use planning at both Danville-Georgetown and Henry's Ridge Open Space.

Here is an update and conclusion to the planning process.

#### Forest Stewardship at Danville-Georgetown Open Space

The draft Danville – Georgetown Forest Stewardship Plan was presented to 25 attendees at a public meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup> at the Tahoma Junior High School. The plan provides management recommendations to help guide the long-term stewardship of this 340-acre forest through a series of adaptive forest practices that will improve forest health and promote plant and animal biodiversity.

In mid-October, Erickson Logging, Inc. completed the thinning of 130 acres of overcrowded 30-year old Douglas-fir trees and the removal of trees infected with root rot on the south side of the Summit-Landsburg Road across from Tahoma Junior High School. Contractor compliance with the thinning guidelines and logging specifications was good. The contractor implemented measures to protect leave trees from skidding damage and limit falling and yarding impacts on trails. Where trees fell across or had to be yarded across trails they have cleaned up those segments of trail.

The thinning resulted in a leave tree density which should withstand wind damage unless there is a catastrophic wind event in the next few years. We were concerned that the unseasonably wet soils and strong winds of the recent September storms may have resulted in wind damage. There was not any wind damaged or down trees noticed following these storms.

We were pleased to find less incidence of laminated root rot than we anticipated. This is good news which will help ensure that the thinning results in a healthy and vigorous forest.

All trails are open with the exception of a couple sections of Ridge Loop. One small section on the east side that goes in and out of our property needs to be defined before opening (this can be bypassed by using either Berry Bear or 3 Elk and Weasel Road) and a section between our newest section and the old trail going up to Berry Bear. We will have our Back Country Trails Crew out

soon to help reestablish these two sections. We also have Washington Trails Association volunteers on the calendar to work on trail improvements in December. All culverts have been cleaned out and road beds graded.

#### Next Steps

The Danville – Georgetown Forest Stewardship Plan will incorporate trail use recommendations. See below. A forest stewardship plan for Henry’s Ridge will be developed in 2014-15.

#### **Trail use at Danville-Georgetown and Henry’s Ridge Open Space**

The respective forest stewardship plans for both Danville-Georgetown and Henry’s Ridge will include trail use and stewardship recommendations. King County gathered public input regarding appropriate use of the trails by the community, including non-motorized users such as: hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians.

King County held an initial public meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup> at Tahoma Junior High School. The meeting highlighted four trail use proposals:

1. Trails at both sites will be open to all trail users with no restrictions.
2. Trails at both sites will be open to all users with no restrictions and with the following conditions:
  - a. Signage at trailheads would identify which trail group predominantly uses the site and performs the majority of stewardship for that site.
  - b. For example, signage would alert trail users that Danville-Georgetown is used and stewarded by the Backcountry Horsemen, and Henry’s Ridge is used and stewarded by the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance.
  - c. The respective groups would work together to communicate to their respective members that any separation of use is voluntary.
3. Trails at both sites would be restricted to hiking and equestrian use only at Danville-Georgetown, and hiking and mountain bike use only at Henry’s Ridge, with the following conditions:
  - a. At Danville-Georgetown, the area south of the Seattle pipeline would be dedicated as a horse trail training area.
  - b. The Tahoma Junior High School mountain bike club would be allowed to use the Danville-Georgetown trails on a weekly basis and under a King County special use permit.
  - c. A trail link between the pipeline and the school via the Skunk and Putnam trails would be open to mountain bikers.
4. Trails at both sites would be formally dedicated for specific uses with no exceptions:
  - a. Danville-Georgetown would be used exclusively by equestrians and hikers.
  - b. Henry’s Ridge would be used exclusively by mountain bikers and hikers.

Public comments were received from 47 attendees. Since we received input that many folks did not hear about the April meeting and wanted an opportunity to be heard, a second meeting was held on July 23 at the Lake Wilderness Lodge in which 58 persons attended. Following both public

meetings we received many comments via email and postal mail. In all, we received over 125 comments. Most of the comments reflected the following major ideas:

1. There are minimal conflicts, therefore leave the current use as is.
2. Trails should be open to all uses.
3. Trails should be open to everyone, particularly the junior high students and neighbors.
4. Equestrians should have a dedicated public trail network.
5. Equestrians need a public trail training site for “green” riders and horses.
6. Horses and mountain bikes cannot share the trails safely.
7. It is only a matter of time before someone is injured.

### **Trail use determination**

After careful consideration, trail use proposal number 2 will be adopted and implemented at Danville-Georgetown and Henry’s Ridge Open Space:

- Trails at both sites will be open to all users with no restrictions and with the following conditions:
  - a. Signage at trailheads would identify which trail group predominantly uses the site and performs the majority of stewardship for that site.
  - b. For example, signage would alert trail users that Danville-Georgetown is used and stewarded by the Backcountry Horsemen, and Henry’s Ridge is used and stewarded by the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance.
  - c. The respective groups will work together to communicate to their respective members that any separation of use is voluntary.

### **Next steps**

In addition, King County Parks will implement the following actions:

1. Work with respective equestrian, mountain bike and school organizations to educate trail users about appropriate trail etiquette.
2. Develop and install new trail safety and etiquette signage.
3. In conjunction with respective equestrian and mountain bike organizations, improve trail conditions and address trail safety issues.
4. Coordinate with equestrian organizations to identify an appropriate site for location of a dedicated equestrian trail training site.
5. Revise and update trail maps and webpages to reflect appropriate uses at Danville-Georgetown and Henry’s Ridge Open Space.

King County Parks would like to thank everyone who attended the meetings, submitted comments and participated in the planning process. We appreciate your dedication and support for trails. We will use this email list to update trail users about future trail planning proposals.

Thank you.

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200 parks \* 300 miles of trails \* 26,000 acres of open space