



**King County**

**Parks and Recreation Division**  
Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
KSC-NR-0700  
201 South Jackson Street  
Seattle WA 98104-3855

## **McGARVEY OPEN SPACE PARK 2015 Proposed Harvest Public Comment Summary & Responses**

On March 16, 2015, King County Parks hosted a public meeting at the Northwood Middle School in Renton to provide the community an opportunity to ask questions and share comments about the proposed forest harvest at McGarvey Park Open Space scheduled for this summer. Approximately 20 people attended the public meeting.

King County Parks sent meeting notice flyers to the community residents (approximately 1,500) via US mail, emailed flyers to community groups and individuals who provided contact information during the 2011 public meeting process and posted notices at four trail locations within McGarvey Park.

King County Parks received comments from park users at the meeting, via subsequent follow-up emails, as well as through feedback expressed during a site visit on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The comments and responses are summarized below and are organized by common themes. Links to additional information about forest stewardship are also listed below. We were impressed by the level of interest among community members and pleased to learn that King County's open space and natural lands hold a positive and valuable role in the community.

### **BACKGROUND ON McGARVEY PARK FOREST AND THE PURPOSE OF THE UPCOMING HARVEST**

Acquired by King County in 2000, McGarvey Park Open Space is a 400-acre multiuse forest connecting King County's Petrovitsky Park, Wetland 14 Natural Area and Spring Lake/Lake Desire Park. Over five miles of trails fit for hiking, biking and equestrian use wind through McGarvey Park and connect with the trail system at Spring Lake/Lake Desire Park. The property was acquired through the "4:1 Program", a growth management tool that creates an open space buffer between urban and rural lands.

Through active management, King County Parks is working to restore a conifer dominated forest, a forest native to the Pacific Northwest. The lands that now make up Mc Garvey Park were extensively logged in the 1930's and 1960's. All trees were felled, leaving very few conifer seed trees to re-seed and create a native coniferous forest. Bigleaf maple sprouted vigorously from the stumps, resulting in trees more prone to rot than those grown from seed. The alder that re-seeded is short lived and is beginning



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to die of old age. If there is no active management, as the alder dies, shrubs such as salmonberry and vine maple may form a dense thicket making it difficult for conifers to become established from seed.

In 2011 King County Parks met with the community to develop a forest stewardship plan to guide management of McGarvey Park. Part of the plan includes a three phased harvest to actively manage the forest within the park. In 2012, King County Parks conducted Phase 1 of the stewardship plan on a 75-acre portion of the site, removing select poor quality bigleaf maple and red alders. After the harvest, volunteers planted almost 5,000 conifers, including Doug-fir, cedar, grand fir and white pine. Volunteers will also help manage the planting this spring by weeding around young conifers and removing invasive plants. This summer, a second harvest on 71 acres will help restore a more natural forest comprised of approximately 75 percent conifer species and 25 percent deciduous species. The harvest will be followed by planting cedar, Douglas-fir, white pine, and grand fir in open areas. In addition, the harvest will allow understory vegetation to grow and provide more space for the existing conifers to grow.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### ***Does King County Parks have any ability to change the harvest units?***

We know the residents of this area and park users are deeply invested in the outcome of this forest harvest. We consider a successful harvest one that manages forest health as well as one that the community can support.

King County Parks conducted a Forest Landscape Assessment of McGarvey park and mapped areas in the park that are dominated by bigleaf maples and red alders. Through this process, King County identified “Units” which need to be actively managed through a selective harvest followed by a conifer planting. Three units that were determined to require active management were selected for the 2015 harvest--Units 1 and 2 on the north side of the park and Unit 3 on the west side. All three units are of the same age, similar species composition, and will be harvested using the same guidelines. The harvest will remove approximately a third of the trees. Maps of the units are included in the public meeting slideshow available via the “Harvest Presentation 2015” link on the park web page at:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/naturalresources/foreststewardship/mcgarvey.aspx>

Based on input from the March 16 public meeting and some further forest assessment, we have re-evaluated Unit 3, which users considered a beautiful area of the park. The southern portion of the Unit does contain a higher percentage of conifers and little dying alder. In general, the conifers are taller than the maples and it is not critical that the maples be harvested. Therefore, the harvest area will be reduced to 13 acres (originally 27); the southern boundary of the harvest unit will be at least 100 feet north of the trail that connects the Woodside community to 174<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE.

### ***Will King County Parks conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposal?***

This spring, King County will submit a Forest Practices Act application (FPA) to the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the harvest which will be available for public review. The



FPA is designed to protect public resources and will address environmental impacts through an assessment of local hydrology, topography, wildlife and cultural resources. While an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for a proposal of this size or scope, an EIS was developed as part of the FPA rules adoption process in 1999.

Much of the forestland regulated by the Forest Practices Act contains habitat for aquatic and riparian-dependent species that have been listed (or may be listed in the future) under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In 2005, a Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP) was approved and adopted by US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) following a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. In approving the FPHCP, the federal services agreed that the DNR forest practice rules, which we follow for forest harvests, provide a sufficient level of protection of listed aquatic species.

Information about the FPA application process and review of forest practices in Washington is available on the Washington Department of Natural Resources' website at:

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/ForestPractices/Pages/Home.aspx> .

***Won't this harvest result in a loss of habitat?***

Creating healthier, native habitat is the primary long-term goal of forest stewardship. While there may be some temporary disruption to wildlife habitat during harvest activities, many wildlife prefer a more open forest with understory shrubs to browse. Some dead standing trees will be left for nesting cavities. The long term effects of this harvest will create a forest dominated by conifers, a more typical and natural forest for the Pacific Northwest. This will provide healthier habitat for native wildlife than the current forest composition at the park.

***Will exposed trees be at risk to wind blowdowns?***

The harvest design takes into consideration protection from wind. We are removing fewer trees than we did in the 2012 harvest; the forest openings will not be as large. Trees that will be removed are dispersed throughout the harvest area and therefore the remaining trees will not be exposed to excessive threat from the wind. Trees that do fall over provide nutrients to the forest floor and habitat for wildlife on the ground.

***Will this harvest affect water levels in Lake Desire?***

No. With the exception of Unit 3, all units drain to the north, not to Lake Desire. The following link shows the watershed of Lake Desire based on King County Lakes Stewardship Program.

<http://green2.kingcounty.gov/SmallLakes/lakepage.aspx?SiteID=45>

Current data does not provide evidence of water levels being affected by the previous harvest.

***What lessons did you learn from the 2012 harvest?***



- With all forest stewardship activities, King County Parks strives to maintain a balance between ecological, economic and social values that forests provide. Part of that effort includes forest stewardship education; with these goals in mind we relied on volunteers to plant new trees following the 2012 harvest. Unfortunately, survival rates of trees planted with volunteers are not typically as high as when using professional tree planters. In 2016 we will re-plant the previously harvested areas lacking seedlings. Following the 2015 harvest, we will use a contractor to plant in harvested areas.
- Large, woody debris piles were left at the harvest areas following the 2012 harvest. This was a result of the contract not including a requirement for the log debris to be scattered within the unit; we will include that requirement in the 2015 contract.
- Following any harvest, it is beneficial to wait two growing seasons to determine how a forest is responding to the harvest and post-harvest conifer plant treatment. Our assessment of the 2012 reforested area indicates that competing vegetation is affecting the growth of the conifer seedlings. We will encourage the success of the planted seedlings through management of the competing vegetation, including invasive control.

***What is the schedule for the logging activities?***

Concerns have been expressed about the noise of operations during the harvest. King County Code Section 12.88 limits construction noise to daylight hours only, which are defined as 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends. However, because McGarvey Park is in close proximity to a residential area, the contractor will not be allowed to work past 5 P.M. In addition, no work will be allowed on weekends or holidays without advance approval from King County Parks. Before any forest harvest work commences, the public will receive notification of the harvest schedule through emails, onsite signage and the King County Parks’ website.

***How much money will this harvest generate?***

Once we sign with a contractor we will provide the contract information (including revenue) online. While the *primary* goal of the proposed harvest is not to produce revenue, any revenue we receive will go back into King County Parks’ budget to manage our forested parks, including restoration activities, trail maintenance and general maintenance and management.

***Can King County look at hazard trees bordering my property?***

Yes, King County Parks can look at specific complaints about hazardous trees from homeowners whose property borders King County property; we have already responded to some requests made during the recent public meeting. The first step is to determine if the tree is on county property. If so, our certified arborist will conduct a closer inspection to evaluate the tree of concern and determine if it poses a hazard. If the tree is located on county property and determined to be hazardous, King County will arrange and pay for the tree removal. King County will also continue to monitor any trees of concern to



be sure they don't become a hazard in the future. To report a tree concern, please contact Park District Maintenance Coordinator Dan Perzynski at [dan.perzynski@kingcounty.gov](mailto:dan.perzynski@kingcounty.gov), or (206) 255-6676.

A King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER) permit is required for hazard tree removal. The state forest practice permit for the harvest does not cover hazard trees outside of the harvest units. King County has found it more feasible to treat hazard trees separately from forestry activities.

## **NEXT STEPS**

King County Parks will be moving forward with a modified harvest plan this summer; our proposal has been modified based on public comments and further forest assessment. All those on the project mailing list will receive notification when the Forest Practices Application (FPA) has been submitted and is available for review/comment; it will also be posted on the McGarvey Park web page at:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/naturalresources/foreststewardship/mcgarvey.aspx>

Once a contractor has made an offer on the harvest and it has been accepted we will also send notifications of the logging schedule through the McGarvey email listserv, as well as post that information at trailheads and on the McGarvey Park website. If you are not on the listserv and would like to sign up, please enter your email address [HERE](#).

### **Further information on forest stewardship**

Management Options for Declining Red Alder Forests

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/EM003/em003.pdf>

Forest Ecology in Washington

<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=13907>

Silviculture for Washington Family Forests

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb2000/eb2000.pdf>