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ATTACHMENT A

June 3, 2004

**King County's Open
Space System
Plan: Parks, Trails,
Natural Areas and
Working Resource Lands**

2004



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Parks and Recreation Division
King Street Center, KSC-TR-0700
Seattle, WA 98104

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Executive Summary

This plan for King County's Open Space System of parks, trails, natural areas, and working resource lands provides vision and direction to the system in the early 21st Century.

The plan takes a new approach. As annexations and incorporations, a declining economy and voter passed initiatives constricted the county's general fund, the King county open space system, which was funded almost completely from general revenue funds, was challenged to restore stability to the system and required to eliminate its dependence on the county's general fund.

King County Executive Ron Sims appointed a citizen task force to recommend strategies for achieving long-term stability in parks. The recommendations issued by the task force in 2002 were adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council and are reflected in this updated plan for King County's Open Space System.

The plan calls for continued environmental stewardship through management of resource and ecological lands, a renewed focus on regional recreation assets, generating new revenue through entrepreneurial initiatives and it encourages partnerships as a way to strengthen relationships with stakeholders and continue to enhance recreation facilities without budget impacts.

This approach requires a new commitment to the county's regional role and permits new kinds of activities in parks that will enhance users' park experiences while also generating new revenue for parks.

King County will continue its transition to becoming a different open space provider than today. King County's primary role will be as a regional provider of open spaces and a facilitator of recreation programs with a major focus on systems of open space corridors that conserve natural resources and provide recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty. Active recreation facilities will have services and amenities that help support parks financially and parks users will be more involved in the maintenance and improvement of parks facilities. Local parks and open space in the urban area will become the responsibility of cities, and in the rural area the county will continue to maintain local parks. King County will have a regional trail network that links cities and communities, and offers recreation, alternative commuting routes and migration corridors for wildlife. Valuable agricultural lands and forests will be conserved and continue as viable working resource lands.

This plan for King County's Open Space System establishes the recreational, environmental and community defining functions of open space. The Plan proposes a future of regional greenways and waterways, a comprehensive regional trail system,

major regional athletic complexes, and a range of recreational and aquatic opportunities.

The plan recognizes that federal, state and local governments, schools, private individuals and non-profit organizations play an important role in providing recreation and open space. The plan proposes a cooperative effort and calls for the county to play a leadership role in that effort.

King County's role as steward of our region's natural heritage requires policies directed toward stewardship of our significant natural resources. To accomplish a balance between natural resource protection and recreation, the plan proposes a classification system, which defines sites as regional or local, their role in the system, and identifies park use areas within individual sites.

The plan also sets park service levels and describes how the county will provide those services in the early 21st Century. To measure our success in providing local parks, recreation and open space to residents of unincorporated King County, the plan proposes park service goals, which account for facilities and services provided by others.

This plan acknowledges the valuable open space benefits provided by other types of county lands not covered in this plan and outside of those traditionally considered as parks or open space. Examples of these include flood hazard reduction lands, drainage facilities, and lands associated with wastewater treatment facilities.

Agriculture and forestry provide significant contributions to the quality of life in King county through their economic, scenic and cultural values. They are important elements of the county's open space inventory.

New programs are being developed today as part of a recently expanded county role. In the future, new policies and programs that result from this work will be incorporated into this plan.

Stabilizing parks operationally and financially has required a new approach that alleviates reliance on general revenue fund dollars. The Parks and Recreations Division's operating budget is now generated primarily through a voter approved property tax levy, entrepreneurial initiatives and fees.

This plan builds upon the 1996 Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan and the extensive recent efforts of the Metropolitan Parks Task Force, Active Sports and Youth Recreation Commission (ASpYRe), Parks Business Plan, the extensive public outreach activities associated with these plans as well as the outreach for this plan.

I. Introduction to King County

Majestic mountain ranges, forests, farmlands, waterways and shorelines define the natural beauty and character of King County's landscape.

This landscape was created by an active geological history of advance and retreat of glacial ice sheets, volcanic activity and constant erosion by wind and water. These natural features provide open spaces that offer a wide range of outdoor recreational activities, provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and help maintain air and water quality.

Throughout the county, open spaces border highly developed urban and suburban areas. Farmlands and forests surround small towns in the rural areas. These open spaces provide relief from development and help define the communities of King County.

The county's open spaces provide environmental benefits, recreational opportunities and help maintain the viability of working farms and forests. They offer places to exercise, participate in competitive sports, socialize with others and space for people to get away from development and experience the natural environment. They offer habitat for wildlife and fish, as well as opportunities to retain agriculture and forest activities in the county. Trails link the features of the county's regional open space system and serve recreation, transportation and habitat network functions.

Together, the open spaces contribute to county residents' physical, mental and emotional health and support the high quality of life our area is known for. They also contribute to the economic strength of the county by attracting businesses, jobs and tourists. King County residents have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of preserving open spaces and our quality of life through their continued support of programs to acquire a wide range of open space lands. King County's open space system includes nearly 25,000 acres.

King County is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. It has experienced a high level of population growth over the last decade, a trend that is expected to continue. This growth will continue to put pressure on the county and its cities to provide recreational opportunities and permanently protected open space.

Profile of King County

King County, with its 1.7 million people is the thirteenth largest county in the country and is larger in land area and population than some states. King County is home to almost a third of Washington State's population.

King County's population is distributed roughly in thirds among the city of Seattle, thirty-eight suburban cities and unincorporated King County. With about 350,000 people, unincorporated King County has a declining share of the population. More than 60 percent of the people in unincorporated King County live in urban areas. Historically the county has been an urban provider of open spaces and recreation programs. These urban services are generally associated with cities and will shift more to the cities in the future. The county continues to be the local park provider for the rural population, and the primary provider of regional open spaces and recreational facilities.

The county serves a very diverse population. More than one quarter are people of color, and some 70 languages are spoken in county schools. While the population in general is maturing, the unincorporated county includes a large percentage of children under 18 at 28 percent, almost twice that of Seattle and above the state average of 25.7 percent. Senior populations in the unincorporated area are 8 percent of the total, half that of the City of Seattle and less than the 11.2 percent statewide.

Growth Trends

Growth trends in King County present challenges. Over 230,000 new residents were added during the last decade and forecasts indicate an increase of 282,000 more people in the next 20 years. The majority of new growth is expected to occur in urban areas with urban levels of development. These areas are currently in both cities and the unincorporated area.

Planning in King County

The King County Open Space Plan is a functional plan that implements the King County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan that addresses urban and rural land use, transportation, housing, economic development, recreation and open space, natural environment, facilities and services, cultural resources, resource lands, and energy and telecommunications. The policies established in the Comprehensive Plan serve as a blueprint for growth through 2012 and beyond.

II. Open Space in King County

Open space has a number of meanings. Some people consider it to be recreation areas, others consider only the natural and environmental features, while still others think of open space as any vacant or leftover land.

The King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) calls for an open space system to include lands which provide for outdoor recreation and preserve natural areas and environmental features, wildlife habitat, cultural or scenic value, provide visual enjoyment and preserve physical and visual buffers between land uses. It also supports county action to maintain the viability of working farms and forests.

The Recreational Function. Recreational open space includes areas for active and passive recreational activities and opportunities to enjoy natural areas. There is a wide range of use and development associated with this function.

Recreational open space is provided by a combination of public sites and schools, and privately owned recreational facilities such as golf courses, campgrounds and resorts.

The Environmental Function. Open space for environmental purposes is usually identified by its physical characteristics, which might include geologic features, plant communities, fish and wildlife habitat, hydrologic and biologic characteristics, as well as its cultural, scientific and scenic value. These lands can also be important for their recreational and educational value. This may include such activities as hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing and outdoor education. However, there may only be a limited range of use on some sites to ensure valuable natural resources are conserved.

Environmental open space is provided through both public and private efforts. These include public parks and natural areas, private holdings and areas regulated to preserve their environmentally sensitive resources.

The Community Shaping Function. These open spaces provide relief from development in urban and suburban areas, preserve the natural character of an area, strengthen neighborhoods and communities, and separate differing land uses. A green corridor, the urban/rural greenbelt along the urban growth boundary will provide both physical and visual separation.

Greenways, waterways and large open space sites, as well as topographical features such as river valleys, hills and mountains, contribute to this shaping function. The combinations of these open space lands with their variety of attributes and often overlapping functions make up an extensive system of open space in King County. Together, they preserve the character of the area and provide for recreational enjoyment, environmental quality and the health and well-being of county residents.

Permanence and Public Access

King County's current and future open spaces may be described by two factors; permanence and public access. These two factors point out that our open space resources that appear to be abundant, are largely temporary, without guaranteed public access and can be expected to decrease in the future.

Permanent open space with public access: These open spaces consist of publicly owned open space lands with dedicated public access.

Permanent open space with limited public access: These open spaces might include public school sites and open spaces within residential developments that have been dedicated for the benefit of homeowners, but not the general public. It may also include portions of publicly owned open space sites with limited access to preserve sensitive natural areas.

Permanent open space with no public access: These open spaces include sites with development rights purchased such as through the Farmlands Preservation Program or transfer of development credits, conservation easements dedicated for open space preservation as a condition of land use actions such as sensitive areas and their buffers, and lands preserved for drainage ways.

Open space that is not permanent and has no public access: These lands, which add to our perception of open space, include lands in the Agricultural Production District, Forest Production District, regulated sensitive areas and rural areas. Also included are privately owned open spaces such as golf courses, private parks and campgrounds; properties enrolled for ten year periods in the Current Use Taxation Program; and growth reserve tracts in subdivisions which may be held for future development.

Park and Open Space Providers

King County's open spaces are a combination of the efforts of federal, state, and local public agencies and the private sector.

Federal Role

Federal agencies such as the National Park Service and National Forest Service, control a sizable portion of land providing open space and recreational opportunities in Washington State, including wilderness areas. Recreational opportunities include trails, camping, picnicking, boat launching and mooring, and skiing. Most of these lands are in large holdings and much of it is roadless and accessible only by trail.

State Role

State agencies provide recreational lands statewide. The majority of their lands are undeveloped and in a natural condition with developed areas providing access and support facilities for camping and passive recreation. Two agencies are prominent in providing parks and open space: Washington State Parks and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). State Parks are managed for a variety of recreational opportunities, while DNR manages land for forest production as well as conservation areas, both of which support some recreational activities.

Local Role

Local agencies include the traditional park and recreation departments found in counties, cities and towns. Other local agencies such as ports, utility districts and schools often provide some recreation and open space as a secondary benefit. These agencies provide the majority of public sites for active and passive recreation close to home. Cities generally provide smaller developed sites serving nearby city residents, while counties provide larger less developed sites that serve a countywide population base.

Private Sector

Private sector involvement is diverse, ranging from preservation of open space to provision of specific recreational facilities. It includes owners of private lands and facilities, and private non-profit land trusts that protect areas for their natural features and recreational use. Many of the open space lands in this category cannot be considered to have open public access or permanency.

King County's Evolving Role

Since the early 1900s, the role of King County Parks in providing recreation and open space opportunities has evolved and expanded through four distinct periods. Several of these periods are highlighted by the major funding efforts that directed them.

1900 to 1950: Establishment of a King County Parks System

This was a time when the need for a parks and recreational system for unincorporated areas of the county became apparent, and the first steps were taken to acquire land and provide recreation programs. Many of the original parklands were donated to the county and the first properties were acquired. Facilities added or built during this period include the Works Progress Administration (WPA) buildings in King County, which is one of the largest, and best-preserved groups of these log structures that remain in the nation today.

1951 to 1965: Focus on Recreation

The focus during this period shifted to providing innovative recreational programs and acquiring park land. Acquisition became important as growth shifted to suburban areas on the Eastside, and north and south of Seattle. Particular needs were lake-front

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access and areas for playgrounds, games, sports and parkways. The first county-wide park bond issue was passed for \$1 million in 1956. The county's first regional park, Marymoor Park, was acquired in 1962 for \$1.1 million.

1966 to 1980: The Forward Thrust Era

This was a period of unprecedented park expansion, funded by the Forward Thrust bond issue, to acquire and develop recreation facilities and programs distributed widely throughout the county. With \$49.2 million from the bond, the county was able to leverage millions more in grants and matching funds from other state and national programs. The county park system doubled in size, adding over 4,000 acres, 53 miles of waterfront, and miles of trail right of ways. One of the most notable of the county Forward Thrust park initiatives was the creation of the aquatics system of 16 indoor and one outdoor pool. Forward Thrust was a model interjurisdictional and interdisciplinary effort at the regional planning level. The King County Comprehensive Plan, the Ten Year Program for Open Space Acquisition (1965), the Urban Trails Plan and the General Bicycle Plan (1976) all contributed to the future of the system.

1980 to 2000: The Open Space Era

By 1980, the focus shifted to regional parks, natural resources and the preservation of open space. County residents, responding to dwindling open space lands and loss of habitat and public access, passed a \$50 million Farmlands Preservation Bond issue in 1979 to preserve agricultural open space, and a \$117 million Open Space Bond to acquire other open space lands in 1989. In 1993, the county established a \$60 million Conservation Futures Bond Acquisition Program to purchase open space, parks and trails and initiated the \$14.8 million Waterways 2000 Program to conserve streams and rivers to protect salmon and provide open space for recreation and education. Regional parks were developed and large and significant open spaces were acquired during this period to protect their resources, to provide passive recreation enjoyment and to continue to build the regional trails network. Active parks were developed or expanded during this period to deliver sports programs outside the incorporated areas of the county.

2000 to present: A Time of Transition:

Annexation and incorporations, a declining economy and voter passed initiatives constricted the county's revenue and funding for open space and recreation. New ways of funding and doing business were necessary to restore stability to the system. The Metropolitan Parks Task Force was appointed to recommend strategies for achieving this stability. Recommendations called for the county to focus on being a regional provider of open space lands and recreation facilities. The county will continue to provide services to the rural unincorporated areas and will transfer responsibilities for the local role in the cities and unincorporated urban areas to cities. In May 2003, a four-year property tax levy was passed by countywide voters to provide operation and maintenance funding for a four year period. The levy of 4.9 cents per \$1000/AV passed with an approval rate of 57 percent. These funds, in conjunction with revenue generated from new entrepreneurial initiatives and fees are expected to support the system while the general funding issues of county government are being addressed.

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Organizationally, in 2002 the Department of Parks and Recreation was merged with the Department of Natural Resources to become the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Parks and Recreation Division. Open Space lands were classified into new categories as a part of this reorganization and management of natural areas, also known as ecological sites, and working resource lands became the responsibility of the Water and Land Division to provide maintenance and stewardship direction to the Parks and Recreation Division.

III. The Future

The King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) establishes the importance of King County's open space system of active, passive and multi-use parks, trails, natural areas and working resource lands. The system is valued for conserving environmental quality and scenic beauty; offering social, educational and recreational opportunities; and for its contribution to the economic health of the region.

The role of King County has changed over time. The future of the King County Open Space System reflects the broad changes in the role of King County. The County can no longer afford to be all things to all people and must focus its energy and resources. The Metropolitan Parks Task Force was created to assist the county in defining its vision for the future and recommend strategies and institutional changes necessary to reflect current funding limitations.

This plan endorses the vision set forth by the Metropolitan Parks Task Force for the future of the King County Open Space System and builds upon their recommendations and those of the ASpYRe Commission (Active Sports and Youth Recreation Commission). These have been further set forth in the King County Parks Business Plan and the (Omnibus Parks) Ordinance No. 14509 adopted by the King County Council to increase the ability of the division to support its operating revenue needs through entrepreneurial strategies and refocusing services.

F-101 King County will continue the transition to a regional provider of open spaces with a major focus on systems of open space corridors that conserve natural resources and provide recreation, education and interpretative opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.

King County will have a regional trail network that links cities and communities, and offers recreation, alternative commuting options and migration corridors for wildlife.

Regional active, passive and multi-purpose parks will be available to all citizens of the county.

Local open space sites in the urban area will become the responsibility of cities, and in the rural area the county will maintain local parks.

Valuable agricultural lands and forests will be conserved and continue as viable working resource lands.

The role of King County has evolved and expanded through distinct periods, reflecting shifts in county government, growth and economic trends. The State Growth

Management Act supports this shift by reinforcing the role of cities as providers of local services and counties as providers of regional services. Recent years have seen the county's open space focus shift toward preservation of natural areas and working resource lands, provision of active and multi-purpose regional parks and the regional trail system. This direction is emphasized in the King County Comprehensive Plan.

Open Space Systems

King County will focus on regional corridors linking natural areas and recreation sites, wildlife and waterway systems. These linked regional open space corridors along the county's major river systems and the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway provide recreational and interpretive opportunities, scenic beauty, environmental quality and habitat value. They preserve the character of the area and help shape neighborhoods and communities.

The systems approach to preservation provides values beyond the traditional focus of a parks agency. This may include additional benefits such as stormwater detention and water quality protection, as well as fish and wildlife habitat corridors and incorporating scenic, cultural and historical features. Integral to the systems approach are activities in the uplands that can affect the quality of the linear river corridors. All activities in the watershed are important to maintaining the natural resource values of the open space system.

In addition to the identified open space systems, there are natural areas or features that could be considered of regional significance.

F-102 King County should consider adding significant natural areas not directly associated with the major open space systems, if they include regionally significant features and improve the distribution of open space within the county.

F-103 King County will work with a variety of public and private groups to identify and protect significant open space systems.

The realization of this future requires the county to embrace a new way of doing business, an entrepreneurial approach that includes a fundamental philosophical change by King County and the public.

IV. The Systems

Prior generations invested wisely in preserving open space in King County. A vast system of recreation and natural areas, trails, and working resource lands has been preserved through county purchase of sites and conservation easements. King County recognizes that connecting open spaces into contiguous systems or corridors increases the environmental and recreational value of these lands

Systems may be natural or functional or contain a variety of elements. Natural systems are based on geography, natural features and ecological functions. Functional systems are identified by their purpose or a relationship of similar characteristics or type of facilities and program use, such as athletic complexes. Both these systems provide multiple benefits and together contribute to open space environmental and recreational goals.

The Open Space Concept Map adopted in the 1989 King County Open Space Plan identified the county's major open space systems. The 1996 King County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan built upon the concept map and aggressive implementation efforts helped further the goals. This plan provides the status of the implementation of the previous plans and further reinforces the open space system concept and implementation strategies. The natural systems are based on linear elements, in most cases river corridors and include preservation of uplands within the respective watersheds that are important to maintain the health of the system. The system of recreational facilities is distributed throughout the unincorporated county and is focussed on user patterns and needs. Natural areas, working resource lands, trails and recreation sites frequently complement and enhance mutual goals within the systems,

- S-101 King County will focus its regional open space efforts on the following natural systems: Cedar, Green, Snoqualmie, White, and Sammamish river corridors, and the Vashon/Maury Island and Saltwater Shoreline.**
- S-102 King County will focus its functional open space efforts on the following regional systems: Regional Trail System, Mountains to Sound Greenway, King County Fairgrounds complex, wildlife habitat network and regional recreation parks that include athletic complexes, multi-use sites and the aquatic system.**

This chapter includes an overview of these systems. More detailed information may be found in other county inventories, plans, reports and studies. These include the Regional Trails Plan, individual park master plans, programmatic plans for forest and farmlands, drainage basin plans, water quality plans, lake management plans and Waterways 2000 planning reports.

These systems are the focus for the county's open space implementation actions. Implementation will include a variety of actions by the county, and other agencies and organizations.

S-103 Future research and planning efforts should focus on the protection and enhancement of the systems identified in S-101 and S-102. This work should result in planning, acquisition, development and management plans and strategies for each system that coordinates recreation and public use with resource conservation.

The following sections of the plan are an overview of each of the major systems.

Natural Systems

Cedar River

The Cedar River, with a corridor of extensive county open space lands, flows approximately 50 miles from its headwaters in the Cascade Mountains to the City of Renton and Lake Washington. The upper 24 miles of the river and 65 percent of the land area of the basin lies within the Cedar River Watershed managed by the City of Seattle. The lower 21.8 miles of the Cedar River lie between the Cedar River Watershed and Lake Washington. Below the municipal watershed, the lower basin has an extensive water system that includes 15 named tributaries, many high-value wetlands, lakes, aquifers and the Cedar River itself.

The Cedar River corridor provides a network for fish and wildlife migration. The lower Cedar River mainstem and four main fish bearing tributaries (Lower Rock Creek, Walsh Lake Diversion, Peterson Creek and Taylor Creek) provide spawning habitat for chinook, sockeye and coho salmon and steelhead and cutthroat trout. The Cedar River's chinook population is one of the native stocks that comprise the evolutionarily significant unit of Puget Sound chinook salmon, which is listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Other wildlife in the Cedar Watershed include elk and moose that winter in the upper Cedar River valley both inside and outside the watershed. Eagles and heron fish in the clear river water. Mountain lion, cougar, fox, coyote, deer and black bear are commonly seen in the Watershed.

The Cedar River also supports recreational uses such as fishing, swimming, river floating by various means such as inner tubes, rafts, and small boats, and the popular Cedar River Regional Trail that parallels the river from Renton to Landsburg.

The 90,000-acre municipal Cedar River Watershed provides a major part of the county's domestic water supply with storage behind a dam located at the western boundary of the watershed. Increased demand for water has caused some of the habitat along the Cedar and its tributaries to be jeopardized due to low water flows. Water supply issues need to be balanced with habitat needs especially the long-term viability of salmon runs.

The Landsburg Diversion Dam at river mile 21.8 limits salmonid access to the watershed. The Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan adopted in 2001, governs a variety of management issues including water quantity and quality regulation, tree harvest, management of aquatic and terrestrial habitat and species, and downstream habitat improvement.

In the lower 22 miles, the Cedar River flows through a deep valley enclosed by steep forested slopes in its upper reaches, and a broader valley in its lower extent. The frequently changing river channel discourages new development and the river's frequent flooding threatens the development that has occurred. However, development continues to grow at a rapid pace in the lower basin from the Renton urban center to adjacent suburbanizing areas and increasingly into rural and forest zones to the east. There are many opportunities to acquire increased natural area buffers and public access sites along the river and trail, as well as large parcels for environmental, recreational and educational uses to support this growth and preserve the ecological value and integrity of the Cedar River watershed.

The Cedar River Legacy program was established in 1994 to address the decline of salmonid populations and the protection and restoration of habitat, as well as to advance other county goals such as providing open space, recreation opportunity, and flood hazard reduction. Additionally, the Waterways 2000 Program has acquired and protected many important ecological sites such as the Peterson Creek and Rock Creek Natural Areas in the Lower Cedar River Watershed. These programs use acquisition, easements and tax incentives to contribute to a contiguous tract of protected property along the Cedar River.

The Rock Creek Vision, an effort of The Friends of Rock Creek, is a community effort to help protect important wetlands and sensitive areas, as well as provide active recreation areas in the Rock Creek Valley – a fast growing area outside of Maple Valley.

The 16-mile Cedar River Trail follows an old railroad right-of-way from downtown Renton to King County's Landsburg Park, alongside the scenic Cedar River. This trail intersects many King County-owned natural areas providing a beautiful natural setting and educational/interpretive experiences for those passing along on foot, bicycle or horse. The Cedar River Trail was originally a rail line built to haul coal from mines in the Cascade foothills to settlements in the lowlands. King County acquired the rail line in 1992 as a regional trail corridor. The trail ends at the Cedar River Watershed. Future interagency agreements may someday establish links between the Cedar River Trail and the county's Regional Snoqualmie Trail and Iron Horse State Park.

Another important feature of the Cedar River watershed is a portion of Cougar Mountain Park that covers more than 3,000 acres and is the largest park in the King County Park System. This large second growth forest is an integral part of the contiguous tract of public ownership of natural lands that extends from Lake Washington to Snoqualmie Pass that was created in part through a partnership with state and local agencies and the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust. Cougar Mountain provides opportunities for

hiking and other passive recreation endeavors in an urban setting. The natural resources protected within Cougar Mountain Park are numerous. Many wetlands and 14 creeks originate within the park, including three salmon-spawning creeks - Coal Creek, May Creek, and Tibbetts Creek. The forest includes western red cedar, western hemlock, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, and big-leaf maple. While most of the original old-growth forest has been logged, some virgin forest can still be found near the summit of Wilderness Peak. Resident mammals in the park include black bear, black-tailed deer, bobcat, and coyote; birds include Bald Eagle, Raven, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Pileated Woodpecker.

Cougar Mountain is linked to the Cascade Mountains through major public ownership on Squak and Tiger Mountains, Rattlesnake Ridge and the Snoqualmie-Mount Baker National Forest along with the corridors connecting them.

Sammamish River

The Sammamish River and its watershed is a portion of the larger Cedar/Sammamish/Lake Washington watershed, but is sometimes administratively separated from the Cedar/Lake Washington Watershed for management. The watershed is approximately 240 square miles, representing the basin that drains into Lake Sammamish and through to Lake Washington. The Sammamish River originates at the north end of Lake Sammamish and ends 13.8 miles later at the river mouth at the northern tip of Lake Washington. The Sammamish River has been significantly altered by human activities in the last 100 years, including lowering of the water level of Lake Washington. In the 1960s, the river channel was deepened and straightened to increase its flood-flow capacity and to drain the surrounding wetlands for farming and development.

The Sammamish River is primarily a migratory corridor for chinook, coho, sockeye and kokanee salmon, and steelhead trout that spawn in Issaquah Creek, Bear Creek, Little Bear Creek, North Creek and Swamp Creek. Limited rearing of juvenile salmon may occur in the mainstem of the Sammamish River. Current land uses in the river corridor have reduced habitat quality. Some wildlife species remain, but the degraded habitat excludes species needing diverse types of food and extensive cover. There is little vegetation along the riverbanks to provide cover and to maintain low water temperatures. Oxbow lakes are cut off from the river channel impeding migration of fish and wildlife between systems. Restoration and enhancement efforts are needed to improve water quality and habitat.

King County's Marymoor Park located on the north banks of Lake Sammamish has been instrumental in improving the habitat conditions at the mouth of the Sammamish River. Wetland habitats at this site provide needed forage for native and migrating birds, contribute to water quality and quantity regulation, and salmon habitat. In addition to protecting key habitats for salmon and wildlife, Marymoor Park provides over 600 acres that also include active and passive recreation. The Sammamish River Trail begins in Marymoor Park and runs north paralleling the Sammamish River to Lake Washington, connecting to the Burke Gilman Trail along Lake Washington to Seattle.

These trails together offer over 20 miles of paved trail for bicyclists and walkers along waterways in urban and suburban King County. Future connection south to the East Lake Sammamish Trail will extend the trail system to Issaquah.

The Sammamish River Valley is known for its farming history. Though the valley has experienced heavy development pressure, the designation as King County Sammamish Agricultural Production District and the acquisition of development rights through the Farmlands Preservation Program have been instrumental in retaining agricultural production in this beautiful valley.

The Sammamish River Regional Trail corridor runs along both sides of the river with a hard surface trail on one side and a soft surface trail on the other. The trail links numerous park sites and the cities of Bothell, Woodinville and Redmond.

The Bear Creek subarea at the north end of Lake Washington supports many areas of high quality habitat. The Bear Creek system provides excellent spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids, and supports the county's most extensive population of freshwater mussels as well as rare freshwater sponges. Conditions vary along the creeks: while portions of the creeks have intact riparian areas providing cover, temperature control, and bird nesting sites, other areas have cleared land with residential development closely fronting the creek. King County through the Waterways 2000 Program has acquired critical parcels that include the Upper Bear Creek reach and established protections for many additional parcels in the basin through voluntary landowner participation in current use taxation programs and conservation easement donations. However, critical linkages between the parcels acquired through the Waterways program along the creek systems are missing any kind of habitat protection, which may be important areas for future acquisition.

The Cold Creek Natural Area includes several sites totaling over 150 acres that include the Mary Cash Farm, along with a former blueberry farm, and other natural areas surrounding Bassett Pond and Cold Creek.

Evans Creek originates in a marshy area and forms a valuable natural wetland system as it flows through a farming area, and later converges with Bear Creek before both empty into the Sammamish River near Marymoor Park.

Issaquah Creek is the main tributary to Lake Sammamish, and is considered a regionally significant resource area due to the high quality of its habitat. Issaquah Creek's headwaters flow from the steep slopes of Cougar, Squak, Tiger and Taylor mountains—all of which are protected in county and state ownership. The middle and upper sections of Issaquah Creek and its tributaries have exceptional fish habitat. Tributaries Holder and Carey Creeks are characterized by largely undeveloped forested watersheds. These creeks originate on the south slopes of Tiger Mountain and flow through King County's Taylor Mountain Forest, which is managed to protect and conserve these important salmon habitats, as well as providing sustainable timber production and public recreation opportunities. Issaquah Creek flows into the south end

