



King County

Rural Forest Commission

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August 3, 2012

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Kevin Brown
Director, Parks and Recreation Division
Department of Natural Resources and Parks
201 South Jackson Street, Suite 700
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Brown:

On behalf of the King County Rural Forest Commission, I am writing to express our support for the Parks and Recreation Division's Forest Stewardship Program and request that you convey to the Parks Levy Task Force the recommendations related to the parks system in our 2009 report, *Actions Required to Conserve Rural Forests*. These are:

1. Fund active stewardship of county-owned forestlands for forest health and sustainability; and
2. Hire a full-time forester for the County Parks system.

The County has acquired many properties where historical management (or lack thereof) has resulted in unhealthy forests lacking species and structural diversity. Many of the County's hardwood-dominated forests are starting to decline and need active stewardship to ensure long term health and sustainability. The commission applauds the efforts of King County Parks as it completes the Forest Landscape Assessment Tools (FLAT) project, a forest health assessment of each of its forest lands. We support efforts to use the assessments to develop a long term forest stewardship strategic plan for all King County owned forest lands.

We are also encouraged that King County is implementing forest health improvements at sites like McGarvey Park Open Space, Taylor Mountain and Island Center Forest. More work is needed at other forested sites to promote resiliency in the face of a changing climate and ensure fully functioning natural ecosystems.

The Parks Division currently has a half-time forester position. The Commission recommends that this position be increased to full time. The body of work involved in actively stewarding the Parks Division's more than 23,000 acres of forest land requires a full-time forester. A full-time forester would be responsible for

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conducting forest assessments, stewardship planning, overseeing forest management activities by Parks employees, and managing contracts for specialized services such as forest thinning and timber harvests.

The addition of a forester will enhance the County's ability to steward the social, ecological and economic resources of its forested lands. The Parks Division's 2010 Open Space Plan states a goal of balancing timber harvests with resource protection and restoration through sustainable and adaptive forest practices. The creation of a full-time forester position would ensure a stable and consistent program, which will enhance revenue opportunities through sales of timber and non-timber forest products.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. Please keep the Commission informed as the Task Force develops its funding strategy for King County's parks and trails. Let us know if you will seek public comments at any time during the process.

Sincerely,



John Chaney
Chair, King County Rural Forest Commission

attachment: [*Actions Required for King County to Conserve Rural Forests*](#), King County Rural Forest Commission, 2009

cc: Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Mark Isaacson, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD),
DNRP
Joan Lee, Section Manager, Rural and Regional Services Section, WLRD, DNRP
King County Rural Forest Commission Members

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bcc: Joanna Richey, Assistant Division Director, WLRD, DNRP
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