



Public Participation Plan

Mason County | Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan

Introduction

Parks and recreation contribute to a high quality of life by providing a full range of recreational opportunities for all segments of the population from competitive activities, such as sports and games, to more passive activities, such as walking and enjoying nature. Attractive, well-maintained recreation areas also contribute to the quality of life by providing open space, wildlife habitat, and ground water recharge areas.

Mason County is updating its Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) Plan as identified within the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and in accordance with the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan.

We believe that an inclusive planning process is vital to the success of any effort to provide recreation opportunities and outdoor amenities within our community. Planning that engages people, supporters and opponents alike, will help ensure that the right actions are taken for the right reasons at the right time.

Fundamental to good planning is the collection of local insights and perspectives. Good, quantitative information will strengthen the results of this effort, helping to inform decisions, and leading to the development of a plan that is truly representative of our community.

Who

The Mason County Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with local tribes, the Shelton Metropolitan Park District, local agencies and groups, elected officials, the Parks and Trails Advisory Board and the general public.

What

We're drafting an updated master Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) plan for Mason County. This plan will replace the 2013 Parks and Trails Comprehensive Plan with a single guiding document that will help in decision making, project priority and grant funding over the next 10 years.

When completed, the plan will include:

- A public involvement processes, including timely communications with citizens and elected officials through web updates, presentations and various forms of public outreach
- Community driven evaluation approaches and comprehensive needs assessment
- Identification of potential inter-agency and public/private partnerships
- Evaluation of land, facilities, and program needs, maintenance services, park management, operations funding, as well as recreation program evaluations
- Review of local population trends and regional inputs
- GIS Mapping with updated figures and reference documents
- An updated vision intended to guide identified goals and objectives as they relate to Mason County parks, trails, programs, and open space.

Why

1. Parks, recreation, open space and trails are important to our community.

Parks, trails, and open spaces are an essential part of each day for our community, as they provide opportunities for recreation, transportation, connecting with nature, and help maintain a healthy environment. Access to parks and recreation is an important right of every citizen in the community, and proximity to these resources is an important factor in increasing physical activity which results in a healthier population. In addition, the natural resources conserved by open lands help provide clean air and clean water in the region, as well as wildlife habitat and agricultural land that enrich our community.

2. It's time to update and integrate existing plans.

Currently, two primary plans guide the development of parks, trails and open space. The 2008 Mason County Regional Trails Plan and the 2013 Mason County Parks and Trails Comprehensive Plan. In the years since these two plans were adopted, Mason County has updated the Comprehensive Plan (2017) and drafted an update to adopted Parks and Recreation Plans to better address the roles of Open Space for public benefit (2018).

The Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan has also been updated through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, complete with a 2021 manual for the development of planning policies and guidelines. At this same time, Mason County's undeveloped land is coming under greater pressure to accommodate new growth, and existing parks, trails, and open space are experiencing increasing recreational use.

3. Growing populations, levels of understanding and evolving needs.

Since 2010, some 8,000 new residents have moved into Mason County. In this same time, new studies have come out regarding level of service needs; the roles of corridors and buffer zones that provide wildlife movement between areas; changes in technology; environmental health; social equity; and changing demographics and associated needs.

We believe that it is our responsibility to respond to these changes. To better serve the community our guiding plans need to reflect the needs of our residents and their vision for the future. Many of our 2008 and 2013 goals and objectives have also been accomplished or shifted in the past 10 years. The new PROST plan will help Mason County to realize its goals while supporting environmental stewardship and sustainable, long-term growth.

When and How

To launch this project, we are engaging in a multi-faceted outreach process that will provide County residents and patrons a variety of opportunities to participate in the plan development. In Fall of 2021, the County is hosting a range of community engagement events that will function as the public project kickoff and the start of the community outreach effort. Regular updates and opportunities for participation will also be made available on the Mason County website.