



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Natural Area Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines

There has been some confusion expressed about the differences between:

- Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines
- Parks Classification Policy
- Green Seattle Partnership 10-Year update
- Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Pilot Project

This FAQ provides information about each of these projects and how they differ from one another, as well as answers to commonly asked questions.

What are the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines?

The Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines is a tool to evaluate the potential impacts and compatibility of proposed uses in our Natural Areas and Greenbelts. It includes a set of criteria in the form of a checklist that will be used to evaluate whether or not a proposed use or project should be considered, rejected or considered in another area that provides a better fit.

Is the City's 1993 Greenspaces Policy being changed?

No. The Guidelines provide a tool for evaluating proposals consistent with the City's 1993 Greenspaces Policy; we are not revising the Greenspaces Policy.

Does Seattle Parks and Recreation intend to open up all of the natural areas and greenbelts for active recreational uses?

No. Seattle Parks and Recreation views all greenbelts and natural areas as valuable assets worth preserving with intelligent consideration for uses that will have net positive outcomes for the environment and the community.

Some uses may be allowed in some locations. Some uses will not be allowed at all. Not all approved uses will be allowed in all locations. There are certain natural areas and greenbelts that are restricted from active use due to their physical characteristics, such as Nature Preserves. The criteria in the Supplemental Use Guidelines provide the avenue for determining where uses are appropriate, but this does not mean that all natural areas and greenbelts will be opened up for active uses.

What are the next steps for the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines?

The Supplemental Use Guidelines are on pause until early 2016. We value your input and have heard your concerns. We want to build upon the work already done, but feel that there is still more work to do. We would like to engage the community in focus group discussions in early 2016. If you are interested in participating in this discussion, please let us know by contacting susanne.rockwell@seattle.gov or 206-733-9702.

What is the Park Classification Policy and how is it used?

The purpose of the Park Classification Policy is to establish a method for classifying Seattle's parks. The system is used to assist in how the grounds maintenance crews work efforts are allocated and are driven by park use, purpose, general size, attributes, natural assets, and physical environment. For example, many of the parks in the 'Regional Park' category are used very intensely. As a result, they require more hours of trail maintenance, garbage pick-up and comfort station cleaning than a 'Neighborhood Park'. This policy is not to be used to supersede Seattle Parks and Recreation approved Master Plans for individual parks, such as Discovery Park, Magnuson Park or Seward Park.

Why was the Park Classification Policy updated?

During the development of the Parks Legacy Plan, the agency determined that some of the park classifications did not work well for planning and analysis purposes. The categories and parks assigned to them were modified during the plan's development but the Park Classification Policy was not updated. The changes reflect the consolidation or expansion of certain categories with park properties as appropriate. The parks listed in the 'Natural Area' category are consistent with City's 1993 Greenspaces Policy.

What has happened to all the missing acres? Where did they go?

All the acres are still there; they are just in different categories. Some categories were eliminated, such as 'Triangle Park', and a new category, 'Regional Park', was created. In order better reflect park use and characteristics many parks were shifted from other categories into the new 'Regional Park' category. Some parks now classified as a 'Regional Park' had previously been classified in the following categories: 'Community Park', 'Natural Area', 'Recreation', 'Special Use', and 'Neighborhood'.

The creation of the new 'Regional Park' category captures some of Parks' largest landholdings, often serving broader citywide recreation needs. Many of these parks have historic or landmarked significance and/or large areas of undeveloped land that are maintained in a natural state. These parks tend to be destinations, often generate tourism, and have views or water access. Examples include: Gas Works Park, Discovery Park, Warren G. Magnuson Park, Lincoln Park and Green Lake Park.

Does the change in park classification affect Green Seattle Partnership work?

No. Green Seattle Partnership work is focused on the restoration of forest habitat and is not tied to Park Classification categories. Green Seattle Partnership is currently working to restore 2,500 acres of forested park land. These forested lands occur in every Park Classification category except the 'Downtown Parks' category.

What is the Green Seattle Partnership 10-Year Update?

In 2005, the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) developed a 20-year plan to restore more than 2,500 acres of forested parklands in the City of Seattle by 2025. This plan outlined the restoration methodology and funding necessary to accomplish this mission. The 10-Year Update to this plan will include information about the success of the program to date, budgeting, best management practices, changes in the 20-year plan restoration methodology, and goals and objectives for the next 10 years.

How will the 10-Year GSP Update influence the approach to habitat preservation and improvement?

The GSP 10-Year update will identify methodologies and best management practices that are intended to improve habitat over time. The initial impacts of invasive removal may disrupt habitat temporarily, but observations have demonstrated that restoration improves both species quantity and diversity over the long term. The updated plan will also provide an annual work plan for the remaining 1,300 acres of forested parklands.

What is the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Pilot Project?

This project is a community-driven project that will explore the viability of a mountain bike and pedestrian trail project in the Cheasty Greenbelt. It will provide an opportunity to inform Seattle Parks and Recreation about the potential impacts and successes of activating a greenspace known for attracting negative behaviors. The project will include limited loop pedestrian and mountain bike trails with various access points. Cheasty greenspace is bordered by South Columbian Way on the north, Cheasty Boulevard South on the west, New Rainier Vista on the east and South Andover St. on the north. The pilot project will be evaluated after 15 months, via a specific set of criteria recommended by the Park Board.

Why was the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot project planned before the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines were developed?

The Cheasty Pedestrian and Mountain Bike Trail Pilot project was proposed to Seattle Parks and Recreation in late 2013. After being presented at Park Board meetings and community meetings, the project started to generate significant interest.

A public process and project advisory team was formed in 2014. It was determined during this process that Seattle Parks and Recreation needed a uniform methodology for evaluating use proposals for natural areas and greenbelts, especially as the population density in Seattle increase and the demand for the use and enjoyment of these areas grows.

The Cheasty pilot project continued forward as the Supplemental Use Guidelines were being developed. The intent is that the Cheasty pilot project process will inform the Supplemental Use Guidelines in the future.

For more information on the Supplemental Use Guidelines or to sign up for the 2016 Focus Group discussions, please contact:
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