

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle

DRAFT April 2, 2014

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750
700 5th Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attending

Commissioners

Peg Staeheli - chair
Tom Early – vice-chair
Gordon Bradley
Leif Fixen
Donna Kostka
Jeff Reibman
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Dave LaClergue - DPD
Stephen Karbowski - LAW

Public

Mark Ahlness
Cass Turnbull

Absent- Excused

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Call to Order

Public comment

Mark Ahlness – Has seen the second draft of the UFC letter on Cheasty. He is encouraged by the direction it seems to be going. He found out about it in January when it was already a done deal. Wants to encourage the UFC to oppose the pilot and to get it to the Mayor’s Office and City Council as soon as possible. City Council needs more information.

Cass Turnbull – would like to wait until after the conversation with Law.

Approval of March 5 and March 12 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 5 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 12 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

Green Factor refresher

Dave – Background is Landscape Architecture. Has worked on landscaping requirements he helped develop Green Factor. Green Factor was first adopted in 2006 as part of neighborhood commercial zones. It's applied to neighborhoods that are seeing a lot of development and there was an overhaul of that zoning designation. Continue to work on how to maintain livability as the city continues to grow. Green Factor wanted to keep the aesthetics of the requirements but also to provide incentives for those things that have a higher aesthetic and environmental value. Due to the recession they only have 5 years of data.

How does Green Factor work?

- Provides weighted menu, sets minimum score
- Includes green roofs and walls, bioretention, tree planting or preservation
- Requirement for permit approval, can 'double-count' toward other requirements

How does the score sheet work?

- Enter number and/or square footage of landscape features
- Score sheet weights each feature by a factor, from 0.1 to 1.0
- Total divided by parcel size, translates to % or Green Factor score
- Counts layers, right-of-way improvements, and various bonus credits

Trends they have seen in Green Factor projects:

- Higher quality, better-integrated landscape design
- More layered plantings in or adjacent to rights-of-way
- Permeable paving, green roofs, and green walls
- Landscaped rooftop/terrace amenity areas

Revisions to date:

- Clarified score sheet
- New credits and bonuses
- Caps on permeable paving and vegetated walls
- Increased credit for trees, decreased for shrubs
- Director's Rule (10-2011) provides details on plant materials, permit process, and installation.

Tinyurl.com/greenfactor – provides lots of information and guidelines for people as part of the Director's Rule.

Q&A:

Question: is there a requirement of how many years the installations need to be maintained?

Answer: they are required to be maintained in perpetuity. If you live in the neighborhood and notice that an installation died, DPD addresses it based on a code complaint.

Question: What other cities have something similar to Green Factor (GF)?

Answer: WA DC has a citywide GF as part of their whole Land use code. Fife – has GF. Chicago is thinking about it. Bellingham is considering it for downtown. Portland is rolling it out on a trial basis. Kirkland did a Green Codes (maybe more integrated). Copenhagen is looking at it too.

Question: The Commission has received complaints about GF implementation and in their opinion not meeting permit requirements. How can one get the score sheet for a project?

Answer: It's in the MUP.

Question: How would a regular resident be able to find it?

Answer: would have to look at permit drawings.

Question: UFSP has goals for each land use. How is this helping reach these goals?

Answer: Looked at permitted projects and analysis as they were developing the code, target in MF 20% canopy cover goal (24% in ROW), ranges between 20 – 30%.

Question: Portland has a consideration of canopy height. Is there a way to assess the height of the tree with GF?

Answer: volume was considered as part of the conversation. We don't have any active work to do assessment at this point in time. It would be a great research project for a graduate study.

Question: We now have a Stewardship Plan adopted by Council. We are trying to truth our goal. Can we tie it to GF so we can get reporting on this? This would help UFC find out if our goals are realistic and are being met. UFC gets reporting from the departments, we are not getting the equivalent reporting on canopy coverage. If this ongoing work list could include that, that would be great.

Answer: the UFC could request reporting.

UFC TO WRITE ADVISORY LETTER ON DPD REPORTING THINGS UFC WANTS TO SEE.

Question: When developers build to property line, how do they get GF compliance? There is a disconnect between canopy cover goals and the code.

Answer: Developers currently adopt the ROW to get their GF points. It's hard to meet goals without using the ROW but they can't just use the ROW.

Restrictions on alternative uses for SCL surplus stations

UFC wants to understand what's possible regarding alternative uses of surplus stations. How do transfers between departments work?

Rate-related restrictions for use of property:

There are two overriding prohibitions from State Law (RCW 43.09.210 – State Accountancy Act):

1. SCL is not allowed to pay for programs that don't serve a utility function (also not able to pay for services that are considered general fund related).
2. SCL has to be compensated for the full value of property that was purchased with rate money (as opposed to using tax revenues). Any property exchange would have to comply with Accountancy Act and SCL needs to receive full and true value.

Restrictions of use of property. Most recent 20 years of cases

- Under State Accountancy Act – true and full value
- Not allowed to pay for programs that don't have a nexus to rate payer utility.

Question: SCL trims trees and reduces tree canopy and thus the stormwater drainage utility for SPU. Can SCL be responsible to pay for this loss of drainage utility?

Answer: if that's true and can be quantified that could be a valid point.

Question: Could a voluntary program be created as part of SCL's carbon neutrality efforts?

Answer: Yes, there could be a voluntary program for on bill donations for trees.

Question: is there any way for SCL to hold on to these properties?

Answer: Without state law being changed it doesn't seem feasible.

Question: can SCL lease property for full value?

Answer: yes

Question: Would energy conservation be a utility function and would trees providing energy conservation?

Answer: Yes, it could be if properly demonstrated.

Letter of recommendation for Mountain Biking in natural areas – continues and possible vote

Discussion and incorporated comments.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

Race and Social Justice – Pacific Science Center event debrief - community outreach – stakeholder engagement – initial conversation

Item moved to next week.

New business and announcements

Back in October PLP was presented to the UFC its now in public process. Jeff will produce a draft letter in support for the existing proposal.

Adjourn

Community input

From: Bridget Brock [mailto:bbrocked@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, March 24, 2014 9:34 AM

To: Graves, David; Acosta, Rachel; Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra

Subject: Cheasty Greenspace Concerns

Hi,

I am a neighbor of Cheasty Greenspace. Over a year ago I learned of the proposal of the mountain bike park. It seems that the mountain bikers may be getting their way soon in Cheasty Greenspace. I ask you to stop considering this proposal and tell them NO. Cheasty is not unused space. Cheasty acts as a corridor for wildlife. We live in a neighborhood that has seen deer within the last 4 years! I understand the community wants to speed up the restoration, but unfortunately you can't make the trees grow faster than they want to. It will take 100 years before our native species are able to gain the foothold they need to be able to compete with the poison ivy and himalayan blackberry and the many other invasive species. These plants, unfortunately, grow in many peoples yards on beacon hill. The mountain bike community may claim they can get rid of these species in only 5 year time, but they will keep coming back. It is these habits of quick solution thinking that can lead well-intentioned people to make ecologically catastrophic decisions. "Regaining local knowledge is the practice of ecological restoration." Full ecological restoration, says biologist, is, "nothing less than the reestablishment of a completely functional ecosystem, containing sufficient biodiversity so that it could continue to mature and evolve over time." TIME is key. Wildlife habitats or ecosystems that are in recovery don't recover overnight.

Cheasty Greenspace natural biodiversity has intrinsic value and can ultimately add economic value to Beacon Hills diverse community. The area where they want to put the mountain bike park is the nesting area for many species including cooper hawks. Cheasty Greenspace has 4 riparian zones and a wetland. These riparian zones are the feeding grounds for the wildlife. They feed in one area and nest in the other! It has also suffered many landslides over the years which is a safety concern.

I have walked around and gathered close to 100 signatures. 90% of people were willing to talk and did not like the idea of a mountain bike park in this community. Where are they going to park?? The VA already has issues with parking making Cheasty dangerous to drive on at times. And what about Bathrooms? Slowly this greenspace will be compromised by these great disturbances. After that I started an online petition, as you probably know. Since getting another flyer in the mail recently, I reopened the petition. I also want to state that many people on beacon hill do not speak English. These flyers are handed out only in English and many people may not understand what is going on in the community or have a fear to state their opinion. I would hate for my neighbors to be taken advantage of.

Cheasty Greenspace fosters an interior habitat, a rarity in an urban landscape, as stated in the Cheasty Vegetation Management Plan. A bike park within the space would cause biodiversity, genetic diversity, and population loss. Biodiversity is essential towards our communities health. Loss of biodiversity creates unhealthy environments. Loss of biodiversity means that certain species will dominate. There is only 1,600 acres of undeveloped. These Undeveloped areas are not UNUSED! There is plenty of space for everyone without the need to compromise our greenspaces.

Cheasty Greenspace acts as a wildlife corridor as stated in the Cheasty Vegetation and Management Plan. In the Urban Wildlife Habitat and Management Plan it states: "Corridors of Habitat are important in maintaining viable wildlife populations. Movement corridors allow individuals and groups to move between habitat patches that would otherwise be isolated. This allows continual use of habitat patches, which otherwise would not be large enough to support sustainable breeding populations, thus preventing local extinctions in otherwise suitable habitat. The corridors also provide for gene flow between otherwise isolated populations, which helps prevent inbreeding and associated genetic problems for wildlife. Movement routes also allow individuals to move from a habitat area used for one activity such as feeding, to a habitat area used for breeding.....With the loss of habitat, wildlife populations will decline and in some cases the declines will be proportionally greater than the loss of habitat due to the loss of critical habitat components and disruption of habitat corridors. **These pressures on wildlife and wildlife habitat add urgency to the continuing efforts to protect the remaining habitat in the city"**

"One of the few straightforward laws of ecology is bigger pieces of real estate support more species. This is called the species area relationship.." Anthony Barnosky, paleontologist.

"Virtually every human threat to other species and their habitats is driven by economic growth and by our consumption, be it food, energy, products, or even scenery." -Stephanie Mills, renowned author and lecturer on bioregionalism, ecological restoration community economics, and voluntary simplicity.

"What can educators do to foster real intelligence?...We can attempt to teach the things that one might imagine the Earth would teach us: silence, humility, holiness, connectedness, courtesy, beauty, celebration, giving, restoration, obligation, and wildness." - David W. Orr

How is a child going to appreciate nature when all they are focusing on is the path and not falling down? Screaming about the thrill of the ride? Does not sound like they will be connecting with nature, in my opinion. Mountain bikers continually throw research at people stating that mountain bikes do not have as great of a disturbances as walkers or pedestrians. This is not true! These studies were payed for by the Mountain biking alliance etc.. These studies were also debunked by Purdue University because they did not take into consideration distance traveled, jumps, or speed!

BELOW IS PAST EMAILS OF CONCERN.

I've highlighted some key points here below from the **Cheasty** Greenspace Vegetation Management Plan from the Seattle Parks and Recreation. This was created in 2003 followed by explanation of what is currently happening or being proposed:

*** Cheasty Greenspace has notable wildlife value.....Cheasty Greenspace lies in the preservation of some forested interior habitat-a rarity in an urban landscape. Another important function provided by the greenspace is it's potential to connect habitat fragments that might otherwise be isolated-possibly preserving persistence and increasing population sizes for some wildlife species.**

The connection of habitats is from how the greenspaces connect through the city. The restoration work that has been done at Mt. View is wonderful, but unfortunately it has created somewhat of a disturbance between these corridors. The location of a mountain bike park across from the new mt. view trails would only further the area of disturbance creating an even bigger divide between corridors, which could cause population decrease in current wildlife and prohibit population increase. The pileated woodpecker is one bird I have seen that is very uncommon outside of heavily wooded areas, but **Cheasty** is an exception to the rule.

*** GENERAL "framework and guidelines for integrating natural and human systems in Seattle's parks and open spaces.**

- *Continue and increase wildlife habitat protection and enhancement efforts.**
- * Protect and enhance wildlife populations**
- * Develop and maintain a wildlife resource inventory**
- * Promote volunteer involvement in wildlife and habitat protection and enhancement.**

This part concerns me, because the volunteer group may have started to get misled at some point from the management plan, which aims to protect and enhance wildlife populations. I would propose if anything, observation points with signs that state what wildlife to look for. City could install coin operated binocular systems or something if we were to look at this from an economic standpoint. There must be other solutions to drawing people, that embrace wildlife and habitat protection.

Greenspaces are defined as Areas designated for preservation because of their natural or ecological qualities, and their potential to contribute to an interconnected open space system.

I talked with many neighbors and gathered signatures of those who do not want a mountain bike park and only one who was in favor of it. He said parks and recreation has given up on the maintenance of ridding it of the invasive species. He claims it is not natural. Yet nature seems to have found its place.

The primary functions provided by the wetlands in the greenspace include wildlife habitat, natural system support, water quality improvement, and groundwater recharge. The wetlands are on public lands and therefore have the potential to provide passive recreational and educational values such as bird watching and nature study....English ivy is the most frequently occurring invasive in the shadier areas..... However, native shrub cover was observed to be high in most of the greenspace...The presence of tree saplings, indicating forest regeneration, was observed frequently throughout the greenspace...

So what does that mean? We can just destroy the habitat that is finding a way to recover? When did mountain biking take the form of a passive recreational activity? Unfortunately we have been unable to force nature in the past, what makes us think we can do it now? Virtually every human threat to other species and their habitats is driven by economic growth and by our consumption. Rather just let

it be with as little human impact as possible. Parks departments has made cuts in recent years and parks have grown which makes maintenance difficult.

Maintenance of a mountain bike park is detrimental to the existing wildlife habitat, which it will disturb (remember it would be blocking the bridge to mt view, where disturbance exist, but is not as amplified as mountain biking would be). Maintenance must rely on volunteers and will be essential. But if maintenance was limited to restoration only and invasive species were eradicated and it was left to recover (which it's already doing), maintenance would be eliminated. Left "natural" it would be restored and taking care of itself.

Dumping issues could be lessened by signs stating that **Cheasty** is a wildlife habitat. Have signage with birds on them stating the importance and uniqueness of **Cheasty**... etc. It would instill disappointment in people who would even consider dumping there. That would be more cost effective and sustainable. It would also go along with the original plan of passive recreational use.

Cheasty Greenspace has a relatively large amount of edge habitat, due to the geometry of the greenspace....There is, however, a relatively large portion of the south end of the greenspace that contains interior habitat. Area sensitive species are expected to utilize the interior habitat in the southern portion of the greenspace, but are not as likely to be present in the portions of the greenspace dominated by edge habitat. Thus, much of the wildlife habitat value of **Cheasty Greenspace lies in the preservation of some forested interior habitat-a rarity in an urban landscape.**

Where the proposed mountain bike park would be going is in one of the widest spaces of the greenbelt which makes me assume that it would have the potential of fostering an interior habitat. It is also above the wetlands area and could cause water flow issues. I feel city should deal with water issues before allowing a mountain bike park, and consider what issues on the waterways a mountain bike park may have! There are 11 landslides on records within the **Cheasty** Greenspace.

In fragmented landscapes, so called wildlife corridors-habitat that serves to link isolated habitat fragments have come to be recognized as potentially important components of the landscape for maintaining wildlife species diversity and abundances.... **Cheasty is composed of number of smaller and larger forested patches in relatively close proximity to one another, similar to the habitat stepping stones mentioned above. In addition, **Cheasty** Greenspace contains a larger, contiguous forest habitat that might serve as a corridor between some of the smaller, discrete habitat patches. Part of the value of the greenspace, then, is it's potential to connect habitat fragments that might otherwise be isolated-possibly preserving persistence and increasing population sizes for some wildlife species.**

Don't let a bike park further the connection of habitats by causing a major disturbance! I think we need to consider a more passive recreational approach like stated in the Vegetation Management Plan. Bird watching and habitat protection seem the likely candidate. I am not against mountain biking, but do not feel **Cheasty** Greenspace is an appropriate place to have one. I recommend restoration be limited to only have removal of invasive species allowed. This space needs to be protected!

Seattle Nature Alliance
Denise Dahn, Co-founder

March 26, 2014

Open Letter Regarding Cheasty Greenspace

Last night's meeting for the Cheasty Greenspace/Mountain Bike Park was packed with sizable groups from both the Pro and Con sides. It was a tension-filled evening.

I saw a lot of bewildered looks on the Pro side that were deeply affecting. It is clear you have all worked incredibly hard and have done a great job in planning and promoting your project. The energy and enthusiasm you have poured into it are amazing. Personally, I feel pretty bad in opposing something that was done with such good intentions, especially something with nature-exposure as the goal. I'm sure it felt terrible to be presenting your project in front of an angry group like that. It is not how things in a community should be.

I have heard there has been some speculation as to who the opposition is. We are not a cohesive group. Among the Cons last night, there were two of us from the Seattle Nature Alliance. The Alliance is a West Seattle based group that formed as a result of Park's attempt to install a commercial zipline into Lincoln Park's forest two years ago. The Alliance is opposed to this particular project for two main reasons: impact and precedent.

At one point last night a woman from the Pro side stood and said, (paraphrased) "I don't get it. This is a positive for the community. We are good people. This will be a lovely park. How can anyone be against this?"

For me, that single comment seemed to sum up the Pro side's apparent incredulity and frustration with the opposition. I wanted to explain, but I cannot express thoughts coherently in a crowded room of angry people. I don't think anyone can.

So, for anyone who is still baffled by the opposition, here is a reply.

This is long, but there is a lot to say. First, I'd like to share some background as to why we see this as so important. Then, a bit about impact and precedent, and a few words on process, including a serious message to Parks. Finally, a proposal for how we might work together on shared goals for Cheasty.

I'm not speaking for everybody—these thoughts are mine alone. But, I think most people on the Con side would agree with me on most of these points.

Nature

Many of us have spent lifetimes in close contact with nature: exploring, observing, studying, painting, writing, or teaching about the natural world. We've looked closely at interrelationships in the plant and animal world and at the seemingly infinite layers of complexity and mystery. Many of us have found considerable wonder and meaning in observing natural processes. We value it in profound, even spiritual ways.

And yet, we see nature being attacked from all angles. There are pressures from growing population, development, pollution, invasive species, and climate change, to name a few. Seattle—and the entire region— is destined to absorb huge numbers of new residents in the near future. Our city will densify in ways I doubt anyone can truly anticipate or visualize. And, with urbanization, there will be fewer and fewer spaces for wildlife. In Seattle, we have only a few remnants of forest, wetlands or just plain undeveloped spaces left.

And climate change will affect us in ways we cannot predict, and cannot—or will not—prepare for. Birds, plants, insects, mammals and all other living creatures are going to be scrambling to survive. Many will go extinct. And we don't really know specifically how our regional habitats will be affected. Will our native Northwest forest plants even be suitable for the climate conditions in 50 or 100 years? I'm not a scientist, but I read enough to know that many questions like these remain unanswered.

Parks

Many of us have observed over decades (yes, we are the older demographic) as Seattle and its natural areas and parks have changed. Not all changes have been bad—but overall, as the city has grown, tree-cover and habitat have shrunk considerably. And, we've seen Parks become increasingly developed as sport fields and other facilities have been added into former natural sites. The few remaining remnant natural spaces—no matter how pristine or invaded they might be—are experiencing increasingly heavy human impact. And, the impact is only going to get worse.

For example Schmitz Preserve—which was restored beautifully just ten years ago when the creek was daylighted—has been so badly trampled in a single decade that last fall the restoration had to be restored. A large portion of one of Seattle's last stands of old-growth is now fenced-off to protect the 1500+ new plants.

This is, of course, what happens in urban natural areas that are well-used and well-loved. All the more reason they should be carefully managed to minimize impact.

Invasives and Restoration

A Pro woman last night asked what the space would look like in five years if the project was not approved. The answer from Parks seemed to vaguely suggest that the forest will die if the project does not go through. This is disturbing for a number of reasons.

Many of us long-time Seattleites wonder what has happened to City. In the 1980's Seattle went to court in an (unsuccessful) attempt to preserve greenbelts on private land. Now, the City seems to regard even our public greenspaces as a liability—essentially unused spaces that suck up resources. And, it seems to have decided that instead of preserving them intact, it is better to treat them as an untapped resource, as places to develop, thereby turning the liability into an asset.

The city should take responsibility for restoration. If places like Cheasty need to be cleaned up and restored—we should fund it and get it done. Make it a priority. If we value nature—and we should—then we should invest in it properly. Nature is too important to do otherwise.

Second, why would we develop greenspaces in order to save them? If a space is restored at the same time it is subjected to a highly impacting use, then what is the point? The net value as wildlife habitat would decline either way. Forests are more than just trees, the entire living system from the floor to the canopy needs to be considered.

Finally, should we really be trading restoration services for usage rights? I don't mean to suggest that the Pro group has been trying to pull a deal—I believe the goals of the proposal are worthwhile, admirable, and quite creatively conceived. But, consider the effect of future projects in other natural areas, and on volunteerism itself. Select groups—well-organized and well-funded—will be able to have control over considerable portions of natural areas, at the expense of the general population.

In the case of Cheasty, the space would be overwhelmingly dominated by mountain bikers—a select group, and a minority.

The offer of adding a hiking trail to accommodate the general population goes directly to my next point, impact.

Impact

The Pro side points out that bikes have no more impact than hikers. That may be true. But, bikes plus hikers in a given area is a far greater impact than either one alone. Recreation planners refer to the "carrying capacity" of land as to the effects of activity on wildlife and vegetation. In a park, this means how many trails and other features are appropriate for the space before you threaten the habitat or the natural qualities, and what level of "intensity of use" a parcel can absorb before it degrades.

The Cheasty space is simply not big enough for the number and type of trails proposed. The impact of the trails themselves, plus the usage they would attract would overwhelm the natural qualities of the forest. Doing a bit of research and talking to people in recreation planning I learned that these types of bike "playgrounds" (not a pejorative, this is the term used) with jumps, structures, and drops for the more advanced rider, tend to attract a steady stream of users—every day, all day, from dusk to dawn. It's an intense use pattern, similar to a skate-park.

It's a lot to ask of such a small space in a closely-built neighborhood, not to mention the effect on the land and wildlife. The greenspace is the wrong place for this type of active recreation development.

Precedent

This is the most concerning part to many of us. As one Con person pointed out last night, this is a pilot project. Pilot is by definition a trial for more of the same, the first of many. A lot of us Cons are alarmed and confused by this. Suddenly, we realize that Parks has made a major shift in policy with almost no public debate. Last year, when many of us were diligently attending numerous Legacy Plan meetings and pouring over multiple drafts of lengthy Legacy Plan documents—doing what we thought was providing our input to help plan Seattle's park future—we were entirely unaware that such an important decision was being made on a completely separate track.

Natural areas have traditionally been reserved for wildlife and natural landscape features, and what used to be called passive-use, or walking. That is why some of them were acquired and preserved in the first place. It is all that is left, it is irreplaceable, and we want to keep it—all of it—for present and future generations of living beings, both wildlife and people.

Opening natural areas to active recreational development is serious business. It means that our remnant fragments of urban wild are now subject to the same heavy human footprint we've left almost everywhere else. I've been repeating this a lot lately, but here goes again: Seattle Parks is already heavily devoted to recreation and sports, as opposed to nature or the environment. The Department has few staff specialists in wildlife or ecology. The Legacy Plan has almost no mention of wildlife or nature.

And, 86% of park land has already been developed for active recreation or landscaped.

Only 14% of park land remains as natural area.

So, how much of this 14% will Seattle be asked to "share" for future active recreation? If one specialized-user group is allowed to monopolize a space, how many other groups will claim the same right? How much will be left, after all the current and future nature-based sports have been granted their own piece of these ever-shrinking nature reserves?

Most importantly, what will people of the future do without these places? They are going to be living in a much different world, and all indications are that it will not be nearly as pleasant as what we have now. Human beings are pre-programmed to need nature—and especially quiet, peaceful nature—in their daily life. Do we have the right to develop and over-use these places just as we have everything else?

And, sadly, wildlife is going to need these places. Desperately.

if Parks wants to open natural areas for recreational development, reversing what many see as a long-standing policy of preservation, then just come out and say so. Make a clear statement as to your intent, the reasons why, and present it as a single, unified, comprehensible proposal. Do not bury it under a mountain of other things like 150-page Legacy Plans, pages of levy items, Opportunity Fund Requests, or the Metropolitan Park District discussion. Be more up-front and clear. Give people—not just user-groups—time to think about it or to come up with alternatives.

Proposal to work together

Pro people: the negative energy from the meeting is obviously the exact opposite of what you intended when you started this project. Now, you are tasked with raising a huge sum of money. And, as I understand it, you have to do the restoration work up front, before the bike part goes in. That's a lot of work for something that doesn't really seem—at least from where I was sitting last night—to be on very solid ground.

So, here's an idea—a proposition. What about backing up a little and starting something fresh? Why don't we—the Pros and the Cons—join forces and work together to make something out of Cheasty Greenspace? Something scaled more appropriately to the space, and something focused more tightly on nature itself rather than active recreation. Possibly a nature trail designed for unstructured nature play and exploration, and connected to learning programs. If done right, it would be just as healthful and fun, and just as much—I believe more—of a positive for the entire community. There are a lot of people in the community and in the Con group that have considerable expertise in nature, and I think with some encouragement, they would be delighted to help on such a project. I don't think many of us are still up to pulling ivy, but we can surely be useful in other ways. There could be student and community science projects, nature walks, naturalist lessons, and interpretive materials (this is my personal expertise I would be willing to donate.)

Maybe such a project would even be more likely to win an Opportunity Grant, if they are still being offered.

Please take some time to think this over, and if you have any questions or would like to meet and talk it over, please let me know. We at the Alliance would be happy to meet with you. We are open to talk, anytime.

Sincerely,

Denise Dahn
Co-founder, the Seattle Nature Alliance

Connecting with Nature

The Pro people make the case that the bike park as a way to connect people—especially children—with nature. I believe strongly that connecting people with nature is one of society's most important tasks, now more than ever. I have, in fact, devoted most of my life to it.

But, when nature is so severely limited, it is important to put what we have to its highest and best use. Nature-based sports are great, and should be supported where space allows. Mountain-biking is great, in the mountains. I wish we had enough urban forests left for everyone to use in their own preferred way. Unfortunately, we do not. In the city, mountain biking, and all other specialized-uses cannot be absorbed into the remaining fragments of natural area. Challenge courses, bike playgrounds, nature playgrounds—these can and should be built into existing active recreational or sport areas. We should support nature-based sport as much as we do all other active sports.

But, it is the 86% that should be doing the "sharing", not the 14%.

A recent Parks survey found that 78% of park visitors rate walking in nature as their highest priority. This is the general population—the broadest, most inclusive demographic. If proposals like these become the norm, this broadest group will ultimately lose out access to natural areas. This is the group that should get priority for the last 14% of park natural areas.

I believe there are better, more sustainable and more rewarding ways to use natural areas to connect people with nature. I'll leave that to a possible future discussion.

Process

A Message to the Parks Department:

Last night, after the tension had risen to uncomfortable levels, one person said pointedly, "Parks, this is entirely on you."

I agree with this, and more.

Parks, you had to have known this would happen. You do remember the zipline, right? I won't speculate publicly why this project was approved in the first place, but many of us are truly wondering. Now, a considerable amount of ill-will has been stirred up in the community, which is making everyone pretty miserable. The Pros have worked long and hard for something that has now become contentious. Cons have been put in the uncomfortable position of opposing a project brought forth in good faith by fellow citizens, after they have spent months of work on it. And now, whatever happens, you can shrug, point to the Cons and say, "Hey, blame those guys."

A major policy shift such as this requires reasoned, open debate before any actions are taken—not angry public meetings between opposing factions, after months of work and planning have already taken place.

From: Cass Turnbull [mailto:cassturnbull@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 02, 2014 7:17 AM
To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra
Subject: for the UFC

Hi Sandra,

It is a bit late, but attached is some extremely relevant Ecosystem Services information for the UFC. Please note page 7, bullet points 2 and 3.

- Implement innovative land-use planning techniques...for saving existing trees and planting new ones
- Incorporate the dollar values associated with trees when making land-use decisions

I will also reattach the TreeBank proposal. We'll see if anybody read it at the meeting today. I hope to be there. I don't believe I got an email. Is the meeting on?

Cass Turnbull
206-783-9093

TreeBanks – an alternative use for surplus substations

for consideration by the Seattle City Council, prepared by Cass Turnbull, PlantAmnesty/TreePAC

PROPOSAL: I recommend that the remaining SCL surplus substations become **joint jurisdiction properties (Joint Use) with the designation of Excess Property**. The properties could be used as TreeBanks or TreeReserves with the required municipal purpose of supplying ecosystem services as approved in Seattle's Complan and the Seattle Urban Forestry Stewardship Plan.

DISCUSSION: If the TreeBank idea is adopted, the jurisdiction of each property would be jointly shared by two or more public agencies, according to their missions. Joint users/managers *could* be SPU, SDOT, King County, OSE, Parks, Metro, and the King Conservation District. The lead department or public agency would be responsible for the administration of the properties. Various duties and responsibilities, as well as the system for conflict resolution, would be specified in formal agreements, as they are for other joint use properties in Seattle.

Such properties would *not* be parks whose primary mission is to provide public land for the aesthetic enjoyment of people. **They would be utilities**, that serve utilitarian functions such as air pollution mitigation, sewer overflow prevention, water quality, slide prevention, climate mitigation, etc. Maintenance costs and liability issues could be minimized by removing all turf and mulching the properties with wood chips. Placing an ornamental wrought iron fence around each property (posted with a sign that says TreeBank or TreeReserve) would keep out litter and prevent the gathering of undesirables which are a concern for neighbors. Supervised visits by local kids to these 'secret gardens' to update inventories and explore the land, would teach them field ecology and instill a love of Nature.

It can be reasonably assumed that it is cheaper, easier and less controversial to keep undeveloped, surplus open space than to buy it in the future for greenspace. It would also preserve public use options. Such properties would also be available if and when other pressing public uses for the land are

identified. Once sold to private developers it is difficult and sometimes impossible to get open space back.

The economic value of Ecosystem Services bundled with real estate values can already be calculated using existing computer programs. The iTree program, STREET, for example values the trees at the Glendale substation site at \$1,400. per year. This amount would offset maintenance costs, and when multiplied by the working life of the TreeBank, may offset much of the purchase price. The future addition of trees and plants will increase that value.

A different funding option for land acquisition, maintenance, and further greening of these sites would be the mitigation money from unavoidable tree loss incurred during private and public operations and the development processes. A third and fourth option for funding: split the costs among agencies, or acquire support from the City's general fund.

According to the Complan, Seattle's' commitment is to act boldly to meet the challenges of global climate change. This could be a small, but possibly precedent setting step in the right direction.

REQUEST: Therefore we request that these properties, taken as a whole, **be designated COMPLEX by the councilmember, and a HOLD be placed on their disposition until a feasibility study on this project can be prepared for City Council.**