



Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Healthy Environment Stories

Continuing Our Commitment

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) ensures a healthy environment for everyone, every day. We steward Seattle's 6,414-acre park system of 485 parks and natural areas, 27 community centers, 10 pools, four environmental education centers, and much more.

SPR has always been an environmental leader. As part of our Healthy Environment initiative, we are now placing even greater emphasis on our many programs, policies and practices. Our goals are to reduce energy use, improve air quality, reduce solid waste, increase biodiversity, and sustainably manage water, while engaging with more people and expanding social equity. Read on to learn more!



Urban Forest Restoration

Following a 1999 American Forests study that revealed an alarming loss of tree canopy and assault on our urban forest by invasive plants, the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) was formed to restore our green spaces. This sustained 20-year effort to restore and maintain 2,500 acres of forests in Seattle is powered by more than 10,000 volunteers and multiple community partners.

To date, more than 100 acres have been fully restored, including planting over 164,000 native plants. When completed in the year 2025, SPR's healthy urban forest will do what forests do best: manage storm water, preserve wildlife habitat, clean the air by capturing the carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change, and provide places where people can relax and explore.



Healthy Food/People/Planet

SPR's Urban Food Systems program responds to several calls: the increasing interest in locally grown food, Seattle's love of community gardens, and the goal of increasing outreach to Seattle residents, with an emphasis on underserved and immigrant communities. Among the program's offerings are opportunities and spaces to grow food, classes that teach food production, community kitchens where people can learn cooking techniques and food safety, a Teen Top Chef competition that draws teens to the world of food and cooking, food for children at parks in the summer, and community events where people can build gardens, plant food and harvest it.



Shining an Efficient Light

Another new goal is to replace all SPR lighting with LED (light-emitting diode) lighting, a solid-state lighting technology that uses a semiconductor to convert electricity into light. LED bulbs last 25 times longer and use 77 percent less energy than incandescent lights. They are more durable and offer comparable or better light quality than other types of lighting.



Environmental Education

SPR has always responded to residents' love for and interest in the outdoors, and is stepping up opportunities to learn about the wonders of nature that abound in our own backyard. Four environmental learning centers (and their naturalists and volunteers) serve as visitor centers and provide programs and classes for people of every age. Among these are volunteer planting events, tot treks, beach walks, birding events and "nature at night" walks. SPR also offers camps, Outdoor Opportunities for city kids to learn about and enjoy nature, a Junior Naturalist Program, a Salmon Stewards Program, and partnerships with schools.



Particular with Pesticides

SPR is stepping up efforts to reduce the use of pesticides in its landscapes. Today, 16 parks are pesticide-free, and SPR is updating its Integrated Pest Management Plan and database. The new effort will include maintaining golf courses in more sustainable ways.



Watering Wisely

In a focused effort to save water while keeping our landscapes healthy, SPR has implemented an automated or "smart" irrigation system that uses real-time weather data and local plant specification to determine whether a site needs water, and provides it when necessary. Over 95% of our irrigated parks now feature automated irrigation systems, and SPR continues implementation as capital funding allows.



Our Green Fleet

SPR manages a large fleet of vehicles to maintain our 485 parks and other tasks. We were the first department in the City of Seattle to purchase an electric car, and we are working toward our goal of 100% electric sedans. In addition, we are exploring how to use alternative biofuels and other innovations to reduce the carbon emissions in our trucks and heavy vehicles.



Going Solar!

SPR is placing a new emphasis on solar installations that build climate resiliency in our public spaces. Starting with the inclusion of a solar-powered picnic shelter at the renovated Jefferson Park through Seattle City Light's Community Solar program, SPR is now preparing to install solar panels on Miller Community Center.

