



Department Policy & Procedure

Subject: Natural Area Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines		Number 060-P
		Effective
		Supersedes
Approved:	Department: Seattle Parks & Recreation	Page 1 of 10

PREAMBLE

Seattle's forested parklands are remnants of a once-vast forest that covered the entire Puget Sound region. Today, the City's Natural Areas and Greenbelts provide a reminder of what once was, and continue to provide important natural and ecological features that help create an interconnected system of open spaces throughout Seattle's neighborhoods. Natural Areas and Greenbelts include heavily wooded and vegetated areas, often with steep hillsides or ravines. These lands provide special environmental resources such as unique topographic features, animal habitat, streams and wetlands. Restoration of our forests, streams and habitat areas are key elements in moving towards a sustainable City.

Seattle Parks and Recreation is dedicated to the unique public-private partnership, the Green Seattle Partnership, created in 2005, with a vision for having a healthy, livable city with a sustainable urban forest by 2025. The goal of restoring and maintaining 2,500 acres of forested parkland is being accomplished through the intensive work and collaboration between the City of Seattle, Forterra, community groups and non-profits, businesses, schools, and thousands of volunteers working together to restore and actively maintain the City's forested parklands. To date over 1,200 acres are in restoration.

Essential to the forest restoration effort are the forest stewards who have contributed over 700,000 volunteer hours and installed 528,806 plants. Without this remarkable volunteer effort, unmatched anywhere in the country, the urban forest would continue to decline and the environmental benefits of storm water retention, carbon sequestration and wildlife and habitat diversity would disappear.

Increasing environmental education, galvanizing an active community around forest restoration and stewardship, and getting our youth engaged and involved, is vital to the preservation of Natural Areas and Greenbelts. Providing access and exposure to our environment is needed in order to build a sense of responsibility and promote stewardship of these lands with the next generation.

These Use Guidelines provide a checklist for evaluating proposals for activities within Natural Areas and Greenbelts. They are intended to balance:

- Increasing environmental education and stewardship,

- Getting youth engaged and involved in their environment,
- Preserving and enhancing forest habitat, tree canopy and water quality,
- Providing recreation opportunities for our changing needs,
- Ensuring equitable access to all park land, including Natural Areas and Greenbelts, and
- Enhancing positive use.

Not all uses will be allowed in all locations, and community support must be demonstrated.

1.0 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the Supplemental Use Guidelines is to provide a transparent tool to evaluate use proposals in Seattle Parks and Recreation's classified Natural Areas and Greenbelts. The guidelines include a checklist of criteria that will allow, in some locations, low-intensity recreation activities while minimizing adverse impacts on the environment. Access and exposure to our urban natural environment is needed in order to build a sense of responsibility and promote stewardship of these lands with the next generation. The Supplemental Use Guidelines and attached checklist (see Appendix A) will:

- 1.1 Limit the adverse impacts of proposed uses in our urban Natural Areas and Greenbelts, and their surrounding environment.
- 1.2 Provide criteria for determining the compatibility of activities within these areas, their design character and level of use; while providing access, opportunity and sustainability.
- 1.3 Protect and enhance the value of Natural Areas and Greenbelts as a regionally significant educational and recreational resource.

2.0 ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED

- 2.1 Seattle Parks and Recreation
- 2.2 Seattle Public Utilities
- 2.3 Seattle Department of Transportation

3.0 REFERENCES

- 3.1 1993 (Resolution #28653) Greenspaces Policy and Designated Greenspaces as part of the City's Open Space Policies
- 3.2 1991 (Resolution #28530) Urban Trails Policy Adopting the Urban Trails Policy as part of the Open Space Policies
- 3.3 1988 (Resolution #27852) Adopting Comprehensive Plan policies relating to open space throughout the City
- 3.4 Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Code (SMC 24.09.020)
- 3.5 SEPA ordinance (SMC 25.05)
- 3.6 Park Code (SMC 18-12)
- 3.7 Park Policy and Procedure:
 - 3.7.1 060 P2.17 Viewpoint Designations
 - 3.7.2 060 P5.6.1 Tree Management, Maintenance, Pruning and/or Removal
 - 3.7.3 060 P5.9.1 Native Plant Policy
 - 3.7.4 060 P5.10.1 Wildlife Sanctuary Designation
 - 3.7.5 060 P5.11.1 Parks Classification System

- 3.7.6 060 P7.11.1 Bicycle Use
- 3.7.7 060 P7.12.2 Rule Establishing Marine Reserves within Certain City Parks
- 3.7.8 060 P7.13.1 Use Management Guidelines for Parks and Recreation Facilities
- 3.7.9 060 P8.13 Environmental Policy

4.0 POLICY

The use of parkland classified as Natural Areas and Greenbelts is guided by the references listed in Section 3.0 and by these Use Guidelines; except for the Exclusions listed in Section 4.1. These Use Guidelines are not meant to supersede the City's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Code, SMC 24.09.; including peat settlement-prone areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservations areas and wetlands, as defined by the State Department of Ecology.

4.1 Exclusions

- 4.1.1 No use proposals will be considered for areas located in either Wildlife Sanctuary Designation areas or established Marine Preserve areas.
- 4.1.2 Use proposals for educational signage and entry way improvements do not need to complete the checklist, but do need to be approved through Parks and Recreation's Planning and Development Division project approval process.
- 4.1.3 Habitat, urban forest restoration and maintenance work being conducted through the Green Seattle Partnership program are allowed outright.

4.2 Habitat and Environmental Preservation

Consider use proposals that:

- 4.2.1 Enhance forest and habitat restoration efforts to maintain and enhance regional biodiversity.
- 4.2.2 Provide for wildlife habitat and migration opportunities; these proposals may include seasonal closures of a trail or portions of a trail, an overlook or education program due to mating and/or nesting season(s) or migratory routes of key mammals, fish and fowl.
- 4.2.3 Improve water quality and aquatic habitat opportunities.
- 4.2.4 Include and/or enhance environmental restoration efforts; is consistent with on-going forest restoration efforts.
- 4.2.5 Assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed use on the location where the use is proposed and on the City's system of greenbelts and natural areas.

4.3 Education, Access and Public Safety

Public safety increases through positive use. Where appropriate, consider use proposals that enhance the value of Natural Areas and Greenbelts as a significant educational resource and that increase opportunities for access.

- 4.3.1 Increase formal and informal educational programming and partnership opportunities.
- 4.3.2 Strive for access points in close proximity to schools and Community Centers.
- 4.3.3 Provide access connections to school 'safe routes' and the City of Seattle's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans.
- 4.3.4 Foster volunteer and stewardship opportunities.

- 4.3.5 Provide for ADA view areas and trail access as feasible given the terrain and existing conditions and fiscal realities.
- 4.4 Recreation
Recreation activities are to be considered on a case by case basis; not all activities are suitable for all areas; and benefits of the activity should be greater than potential impacts to the site.
- 4.4.1 Increase access through a variety of trails, such as: walking trails, multigenerational activity trails and neighborhood connector trails.
- 4.4.2 Strive for equitable distribution of recreational opportunities where feasible across all areas of Seattle.
- 4.4.3 Where appropriate, provide for the opportunity for challenge course area(s), orienteering type activities, and future activities that may evolve.
- 4.4.4 Demonstrate community support.
- 4.4.5 Alternate locations for the use proposal should be considered, including park property outside of Natural Areas and Greenbelts and non-Parks and Recreation property. If the purpose of the proposed use can be met at an alternate location, then a location in a Natural Area or Greenbelt should be considered only as a last resort.
- 4.5 Acquisition
Acquisition of Natural Areas and Greenbelts should continue to be a high priority for the City.
- 4.5.1 Preserve and reclaim Parks' property for public use and benefit, and ensure continued access to parkland for a growing population.
- 4.5.2 Continue to leverage grant funding for acquisition to the maximum extent possible.
- 4.5.3 Prioritize natural area and greenbelt acquisitions of parcels that expand land holdings and increase habitat continuity.
- 4.5.4 Repair damaged and fragmented natural systems through parcel acquisition and/or expansion.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

Classified Natural Areas and Greenbelts: are those parklands defined as such in Parks Classification policy – http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Publications/policy/parks_classification_policy.pdf

Low impact: those activities that have a low negative impact on the environment, leaving the decision on which uses will be allowed to individual proposal evaluation pursuant to the criteria.

Low-intensity: a use which through its low negative environmental impact either enhances, or does not significantly diminish environmental quality.

Access: permission or the right and encouragement to enter, get near, or make use of something or to have contact with something or someone.

Multigenerational activity: activity that is conducive to, or relating to, several generations, as of a family, or society, and may include bicycling.

Challenge course area: an area and/or activity that tests one's ability, requires personal development and/or team building, and consists of a variety or progression of elements, and may include a bicycle skills course or ropes course.

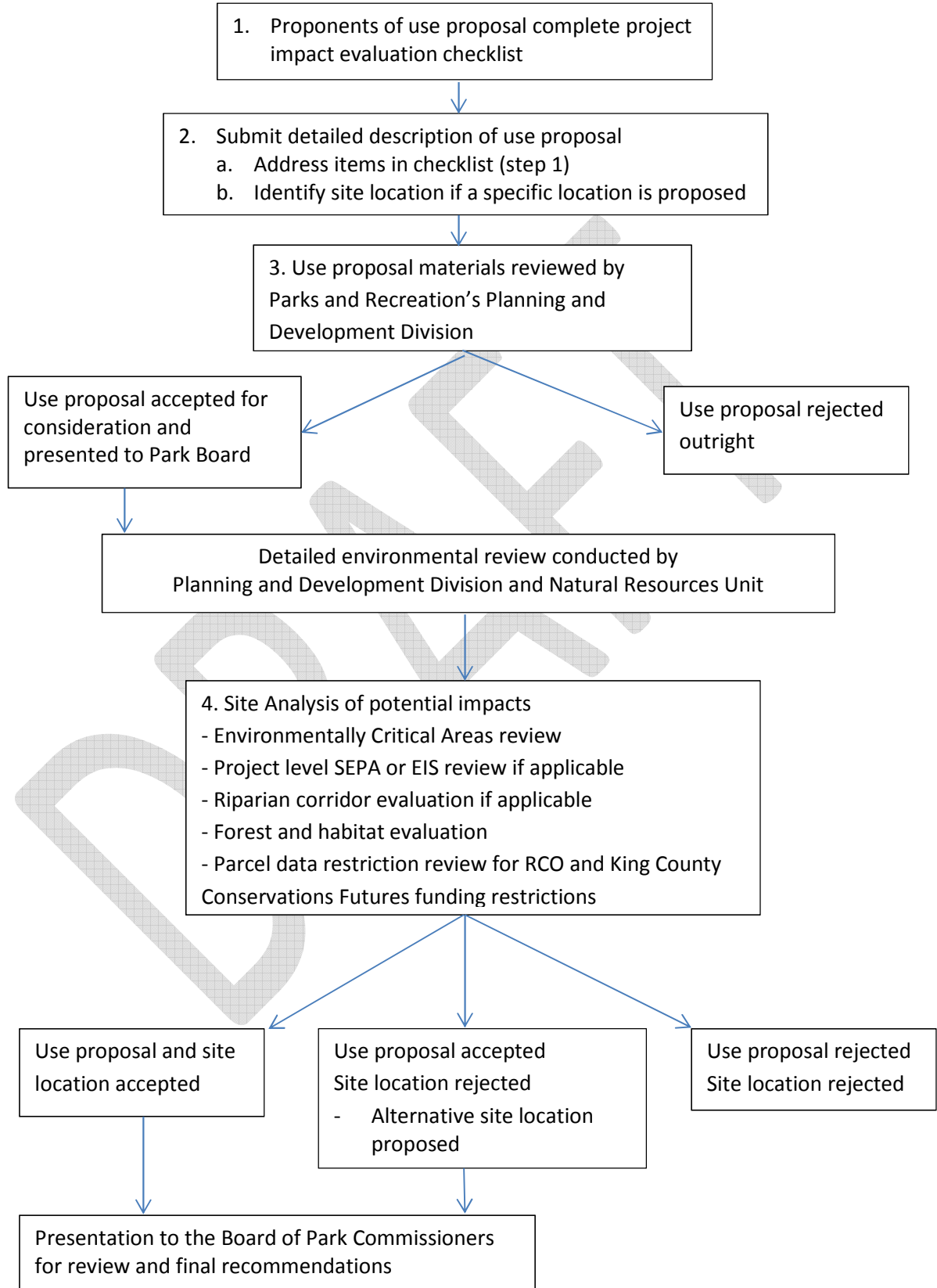
6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 The Superintendent of Parks and Recreation or his/her authorized designee shall be responsible for the review and approval of activities to be considered.

7.0 PROCEDURES

- 7.1 All new use proposals must complete the checklist in Appendix A in order to be considered; this includes Department of Neighborhoods' Matching Fund proposals, along with other granting agencies. Exceptions are those uses allowed outright in section 4.1.
- 7.2 Use proposals that meet Parks' values, as outlined in section 4.0, may be considered for development on a case by case basis. Please see illustration of process on next page.
- 7.3 Best location(s) for approved uses will be determined through Seattle Parks and Recreation's Planning and Development Division site analysis and planning, such as environmentally critical areas analysis, forest and habitat analysis, parcel restriction data review, and public engagement per Parks and Recreation's practices and policies.
- 7.4 New uses and changes of use are to be presented to the Board of Park Commissioners for their review and recommendation.
- 7.5 Revisions to the Natural Area Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines may be requested. Requests should be made in writing to the Parks and Recreation Superintendent.
- 7.6 The Superintendent may confer with the chair of the Board of Park Commissioners on the revisions and the preferred public review process for requested revisions. The Superintendent shall have final authority on changes to the use guidelines.

Illustration of Use Proposal Procedure and Environmental Review diagram



8.0 APPENDIX

8.1 Project Impact Evaluation Checklist

8.2 Map of Parks Classified Natural Areas and Greenbelts

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APPENDIX A
PROJECT IMPACT EVALUATION CHECKLIST

1. No use proposals will be considered for areas located in either Wildlife Sanctuary Designation areas or established Marine Preserve areas.
2. Not all activities are suitable for all areas; benefits of the activity should be greater than potential impacts to the site.
3. Best location(s) for approved uses will be determined by Parks Planning and Development Division site analysis and planning, such as environmentally critical areas analysis, forest and habitat analysis, parcel restriction data review, and public engagement per Parks practices and policies.
4. Uses proposals for educational signage and entry way improvements, do not need to complete the checklist, but do need to be approved through Parks Planning and Development Division.
5. Habitat, urban forest restoration and maintenance work being conducted through the Green Seattle Partnership program are allowed outright and do not need to complete the checklist.

Provide a detailed description of the Proposal, including which Natural Area or Greenbelt is the proposed location and the proposed siting within the Natural Area and Greenbelt.

Provide the reasoning behind each “yes” response in the checklist.

		Yes	No	Not Sure
A. Habitat				
A-1	Does the use proposal maintain and/or enhance regional biodiversity?			
A-2	Does the use proposal provide for wildlife habitat and migration opportunities?			
A-3	Does the use proposal include seasonal closures due to mating seasons or migratory routes of key mammals, fish and fowl?			
A-4	Does the use proposal improve water quality and/or aquatic habitat?			
B. Environmental Preservation		Yes	No	Not Sure
B-1	Is the proposal consistent with on-going forest and/or habitat restoration efforts			
B-2	Does the proposal enhance forest and/or habitat restoration efforts?			
B-3	Is there an environmental restoration element in the proposal?			
B-4	<u>Assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed use on the location where the use is proposed and on the City’s system of greenbelts and natural areas.</u>			
C. Education, Access and Public Safety		Yes	No	Not Sure
C-1	Does the use proposal increase formal and/or informal educational programing and partnership opportunities?			

C-2	Does the use proposal strive for access points in close proximity to schools and community centers?			
C-3	Does the use proposal intend to provide access connections to school 'safe routes' and the City of Seattle's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans?			
C-4	Does the use proposal foster volunteer and stewardship opportunities?			
C-5	Does the use proposal provide for ADA view areas and/or trail access?			
D. Recreation		Yes	No	Not Sure
D-1	Does the use proposal increase access by providing walking trails?			
D-2	Does the use proposal increase access by providing multigenerational activity trails?			
D-3	Does the use proposal increase access by providing neighborhood connector trails?			
D-4	Does the use proposal strive for equitable distribution of recreational opportunities?			
D-5	Does the use proposal provide for the opportunity for challenge course area(s), orienteering type activities, and/or other similar type activity?			
D-6	Does the use proposal have community support?			
D-7	Have alternate locations for the use proposal been considered, including park property outside of Natural Areas and Greenbelts and non-Parks and Recreation property? If the purpose of the proposed use can be met at an alternate location, then a location in a Natural Area or Greenbelt should be considered only as a last resort.			
E. Acquisition		Yes	No	Not Sure
E-1	Does the use proposal preserve and/or reclaim Parks' property for public use and benefit?			
E-2	Does the use proposal leverage grant funding for natural area or greenbelt acquisition?			
E-3	Does the use proposal prioritize natural area and greenbelt acquisitions of parcels that expand land holdings and increase habitat continuity?			
E-4	Does the use proposal repair damaged and fragmented natural systems through the acquisition of parcels that expand existing landholdings?			

APPENDIX B

CLASSIFIED NATURAL AREAS AND GREENBELTS

