

MEMORANDUM



DATE: September 6, 2006

TO: Jim Owen,

FROM: Alex Cohen

CC: Jennifer Kiusalaas, Ikuno Masterson

Environmental Solutions

RE: WSPRC Miller Peninsula Property Opportunities and Constraints

Technical Memorandum:

Potential Opportunities and Constraints for Park Development on Miller Peninsula

Introduction

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC) has initiated a process to develop a park vision and program plan for the 2,800-acre Miller Peninsula property and the nearby 100-acre Sequim Bay State Park. The purpose of this technical memorandum is to identify general opportunities and constraints for siting park facilities through a quick review of aerial photographs and readily available wildlife, habitat, and aquatic resources data.

Several data sources were used for this review, which was conducted in a compressed timeline from August 25 to September 5, 2006. Wildlife, habitat, wetlands, and critical areas data were received from Clallam County. The County's wildlife data was received from Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in January 2005 (Personal Communications with County GIS staff, 2006). Updated wildlife data (Priority Species and Habitats) has been ordered from WDFW, but has not yet been received. Stream data was acquired from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. USGS digital topographical mapping data was also used to view unimproved roads on the property.

Natural Heritage Data was reviewed, but no natural heritage points were identified on the Miller Peninsula property from this source. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation database of known historic archeological sites was not searched. No site visits or fieldwork was conducted for this project.

Two types of aerial photographs were reviewed. The first set was comprised of WDNR ortho-images taken in 2005 and provided by from Clallam County. The second set was comprised of Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) aerial photos of marine shorelines accessed online August 31, 2006.

Findings

Based on the data collected, the Miller Peninsula property appears to be undeveloped and composed of conifer forest managed for timber with smaller areas of open landscape. The forest occurs in patches of various ages due to previous logging. Most of the younger patches are located toward the southern boundary of the property along existing logging roads. Logging or

unimproved roads are present throughout the property. Not all of the roads are visible from aerial photographs. The beach along the Straight of Juan de Fuca and Discovery Bay are characterized by high bluffs above rocky beaches. It does not appear as though there are any low bank beaches on the property.

In general, opportunities for park facility development are recommended for areas with disturbed natural resources, existing infrastructure, and/or potential access. Areas that present constraints to development are typically the least disturbed, have difficult topography, or are on or near documented sensitive natural resources.

Opportunities and constraints are presented at two scales. The first scale includes landscape-wide findings that apply to the entire Miller Peninsula property. The second scale includes specific areas and are divided into opportunities and constraints. All of the areas representing opportunities or constraints are labeled and shown in Figure 1. Areas that are potential opportunities are indicated by a green "O" and areas that are potential constraints are indicated by a red "C".

Landscape-Wide Recommendations

- **Disturbed Areas (O1, O2, O3, O4, and O5).** It appears from the aerial photographs that the Miller Peninsula property has been logged at various times in the past. The existing landscape is a mix of forest patches of varying ages. As forests age, their value as ecosystems and habitat increase. We recommend avoiding development activities in older forest stands to protect existing higher value habitats.

Where possible, development of park facilities should take place within younger stands labeled in Figure 1 as O1, O2, O3, O4, and O5. These disturbed areas are generally also located near existing logging roads, which could be improved to provide access to potential park amenities with the least damage to existing natural resources.

- **Logging Roads.** Several miles of logging roads of various sizes and levels of improvement exist on the property. These roads represent a good opportunity for possible vehicle access and non-motorized trails, as well as potential access to future park development. Using these existing roads may minimize further landscape disturbance caused by construction of new infrastructure.
- **Stream Corridors (C1 – C9).** Several stream corridors (Shown in Figure 1 as C1 through C9) are mapped within the Miller Peninsula property. The streams are all unnamed and classified as Type 5 by the County (except for part of the stream labeled C6, which is classified type 4). The County Critical areas ordinance classifies streams as 1 through 5, with type 1 streams having the highest ecological value and function and type 5 having the lowest. All of the stream corridors are at least partly designated as erosion hazard and/or landslide hazard areas. These streams provide valuable riparian habitat for wildlife and plant diversity. They also provide contiguous forest cover that serves as important corridors for wildlife. Several bald eagle nests are located within or near these riparian corridors. Development within these areas should be avoided.
- **Wetlands (C10 and C11).** According to County data, there are two wetlands on the Miller Peninsula property, shown as C10 and C11 on Figure 1. Development activities should avoid these areas.

Site-specific Recommendations

The following site-specific recommendations are grouped into constraints and opportunities, although some represent both.

Constraints

1. **Endangered Species.** According to WDFW PHS data, several bald eagle nests are present along bluffs and stream corridors within the Miller Peninsula property (Figure 1). Where possible, development should avoid these areas or be limited to infrastructure for low-impact activities.
2. **High Value Natural Area 1 (C12).** A natural area along the shoreline, extending west from Thompson Spit east to the park boundary (shown in Figure 1 as C12), contains several high value natural resources. Major development in this area should be limited. The area contains wetlands at Thompson Spit, a stream corridor and associated riparian area, several bald eagle nests, a mapped waterfowl concentration area, mature conifer forest, bluffs and beach.

According to USGS maps of the area, several trails/logging roads (shown in Figure 1) lead from Fireweed Road down the stream corridor toward the water. This area includes the park's primary beach access trail and access to viewpoints located along the bluff. Views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Protection Island would be available. Existing logging roads in this area also could be improved to offer opportunities for non-motorized trails, bird or wildlife watching, or other low-impact activities.

3. **High Value Natural Area 2 (C13).** A similar natural area is located along Discovery Bay and is labeled C13. This area contains two stream corridors and associated riparian areas, mapped bald eagle nests, areas of mature conifer forest, bluffs and beach. There appear to be several logging roads that may provide non-motorized access to the beach or viewpoints along the bluff.

Opportunities

1. **Fireweed Road (O6).** A logging road, named Fireweed Road on County maps, extends from Diamond Point Road west to Cassie Boyce Lane (O6 in Figure 1). This road offers access through the property and could be used to provide future access. Additionally, smaller existing roads radiate from Fireweed Road and could be improved and used for access. The less developed roads also present opportunities for restoration or potentially non-motorized trails.

A section of Fireweed Road crosses the potential restoration site, O7, which is discussed below. An alternative route utilizing other existing roads could be used to bypass this sensitive area.

2. **Restoration Site 1 (O7).** Based on aerial photographs it appears that a relatively large area of stream corridor C6 has been disturbed. This area, labeled O7, represents a good opportunity for restoration of a potentially high value natural resource. Restoration of the upper section of a stream near the headwaters could improve water quality in the stream, reduce erosion potential of the associated slopes, and improve wildlife habitat and plant species diversity. This area is also along Fireweed Road. Access to the area would provide an excellent interpretive opportunity to explore restoration techniques and stream corridor functions.
3. **Restoration Site 2 (O1).** A second disturbed area, labeled O1 in Figure 1, also presents an excellent opportunity for restoration. The area appears to have been recently logged and contains regenerating conifer forest. It is located adjacent to a wetland (C11) and an associated stream (C1). Preservation and restoration activities could enhance the function of the adjacent wetland and provide a contiguous upland forest. Depending on the condition of the wetland, enhancement opportunities may also be available in the wetland itself. The combined restoration activities could provide an interpretive opportunity for visitors.

4. **Area O2.** The area labeled O2 in Figure 1 represents a good opportunity for development. The area is close to Diamond Point Road, which provides direct access to the park from SR 101. The site is also one of the younger forest stands, discussed above, that appears to be regenerating forest and contains several logging road spurs. Development and/or habitat restoration would be appropriate at this location.
5. **Areas O5, O8, and O9.** The areas labeled O5, O8, and O9 in Figure 1 are suited for limited development because access to these areas could be provided by existing logging roads. Areas O9 and O10 are located in relatively undisturbed areas, so special care would need to be taken to limit impacts to natural resources. Area O5 is located in a more disturbed area.
6. **Beach Access (O10, O11, and O12).** Based on review, topography data and Ecology's aerial photos of the shorelines, it appears that the property's shorelines have high, steep bluffs. While non-motorized access to the beaches may be possible, motorized access to the beaches within existing property boundaries appears difficult without major impacts to existing resources.

More favorable water access points are possible outside of the park boundaries, at locations O10, O11, and O12 adjacent to the Miller Peninsula property as shown in Figure 1. Development of vehicular access or boat launches at these locations would require acquisition of right-of-way from the Miller Peninsula property to the shoreline. The access point labeled O12 would be of particular value because it would provide a marine link to Sequim Bay State Park across Sequim Bay.