



Date: May 12, 2009

To: Bellevue Parks & Community Service Board

From: Dan DeWald, Natural Resource Division Manager

Subject: Natural Resource Division Overview
(Information only; no Board action is requested.)

Mission

To provide and promote stewardship of natural and cultural resources within the City of Bellevue

Who is served

Services are provided throughout the community to a wide spectrum of Bellevue residents of all ages, income levels, and ethnic backgrounds. Natural Resources also provides services within the Parks Department, interdepartmentally, and to local businesses who share an interest in the Street Tree and Arterial Landscaping program

History

As Bellevue has grown over the last 25 years, the City has taken extraordinary efforts to preserve open space lands. The City's Comprehensive Plan and Park Plan have supported the acquisition and management of forests, wetlands riparian corridors and open space properties to offset the impacts of growth and to provide the continuing benefits derived from these areas for future generations.

A major guiding principle for the Parks Department has been the creation of open space to enhance the connectivity of large tracts of land for wildlife movement and non-motorized circulation. The Lake to Lake Trail and Greenway which connects Lake Washington, Mercer Slough, Wilburton Hill Park, Kelsey Creek Park, Lake Hills Greenbelt, Weowna Park to Lake Sammamish comprises over 900 acres of Bellevue's open space park system. The greenway reflects the City's commitment to preserving natural and cultural resources and quality recreational opportunities within the City.

Budget, staffing, programs

Currently, the Natural Resource Division has 14.56 full-time staff and up to 40 seasonal and hourly workers, and an operating budget of approximately \$3,000,000. Natural Resource Division staff oversee and implement the management and maintenance of over 1800 acres of parks and open space system property, and the implementation of capital projects including Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) and Neighborhood Investment Strategy program (NIS) projects ranging from \$250,000 to over \$1,000,000 annually.

Program Areas

Managing and maintaining the City's natural resources and open space system involves the development of a comprehensive program. As such, the Natural Resource Division consists of eight integrated "sub-units" or program areas:

- **Forest Management and Native Growth Protection Areas**
 - 1800 acres of natural area, (Coal Creek, Mercer Slough, Lake Hills Greenbelt, Kelsey Creek, Wilburton, Weowna, Lewis Creek Park etc), 60 acres of NGPA – property transfers
 - 300 miles of public-private property line bordering approximately 3000 private properties

- **Street Tree, Arterial Landscaping and Development Review**
 - 9,000 + street trees on over 140 acres of streetscapes including the Central Business District, 148th AV SE, NE 8th, Bellevue Way, Northrup, Bel-Red Road. Street Tree Program provides maintenance to all Transportation CIP Projects that include street trees and landscaping

- **Greenway and Trails Program**
 - Trail management, maintenance and planning for over 70 miles of multi-use trails including the Lake to Lake Greenway, South Bellevue Greenway, Phantom Lake Loop Trail, Ardmore and Tam O'Shanter trails etc.

- **Community Parks and Visitor Centers**
 - 4 Visitor Centers (Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Winters House, Lake Hills Greenbelt Ranger Station and Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center), Visitor Center programs and Park Ranger Program, environmental education, public outreach and the Well K.E.P.T. (Kids Environmental Protection Training) program.
 - Community Farms – 3 farms (2 blueberry and 1 vegetable farm) totaling approximately 46 acres at the Lake Hills Greenbelt and Mercer Slough. Managed through public-private partnership
 - P-Patch Program – 100 garden plots
 - Park Patrol Program – May through Labor Day. Seven seasonal rangers, seven days per week - visiting park sites, waking trails and ensuring people's visit to Bellevue's park system is safe and enjoyable.

- **Volunteer Program**
 - 15,000 volunteer hours annually (approximately 3000 volunteers)
 - Stewardship Saturdays Program
 - Partnership with the Pacific Science Center at the Mercer Slough
 - Partnerships with Eastside Heritage Center at the McDowell House and Winters House
 - Partnership with WSU and Master Gardeners Program
 - Arbor Day/Earth Day – annual City event attracts hundreds of volunteers who plant trees and do City-wide cleanup on sites through Bellevue.
 - Natural Resource Week – For over 18 years Bellevue 4th and 5th grade students come to the Mercer Slough for a 3 days of hands-on environmental education. Classes are taught by local, state, county and federal agency volunteers from the US forest Service, National Park Service, King County, King Conservation District, WA State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Pacific Science Center, WA State Dept. of Parks and Recreation and City of Bellevue staff.

- **Lifeguard Program**

- Summer program to provide lifeguards at Bellevue's beach parks including Clyde Beach, Meydenbauer, Chism, Enatai and Newcastle

Future Direction

As the population and housing density in Bellevue grows, there is an increased need for the benefits that natural areas provide. Protection of water quality, buffering land uses, conservation of plant and animal habitats are objectives that are influenced by surrounding development. Trails, arterial landscaping and street trees offer respite from traffic congestion and urbanization. To maximize the benefits derived from forests and open space, we must manage these resources with same skill and diligence as any other community asset. The Parks & Community Services Department will need to continue to be a strong advocate for open space, trees and forests to insure continued program support.

The Parks & Community Services Department continually works on refining program goals and objectives where outcomes are evaluated based on identified performance measures. Service delivery is evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness in meeting customer needs.

