

# *Pierce County Open Space Task Force*



**Report and Recommendations  
July 18, 2011**

A pdf file of this report may be downloaded from the  
Pierce County Parks and Recreation website at:  
[www.piercecountywa.org/parks](http://www.piercecountywa.org/parks)





### **Technical Assistance**

Task force facilitation and production of this report was provided by a grant of technical planning assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program of the National Park Service – Seattle, Washington. This assistance was requested by the Pierce County Department of Parks and Recreation Services (P&RS) through a written grant application.

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**Special Thanks to:**

Task force members Ryan Mello, James DePew, Curtis Hancock, Joe Kane, Kirk Kirkland, Krystal Kyer, and Tom Sayre for serving on the sub-committee that developed the first draft of most of the recommendations in this report.

The Cascade Land Conservancy for GIS support and mapping; in particular Christopher Walter (Geospatial Director) and Jesse Strock (GIS intern).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pierce County Open Space Task Force (OSTF) was established by a formal resolution of the County Council on October 27, 2009. The task force was created to conduct a comprehensive review of open space needs and issues and develop recommendations for strategically financing future open space resources in Pierce County. This report is the culmination of the work of the task force. It represents a rare opportunity to implement consensus driven recommendations that integrate the goals of diverse stakeholders with interests in parks and trails, agricultural and forest lands, riparian corridors, special habitat areas, and marine shoreline.

The report includes recommendations for open space acquisition and resource protection over the next ten years in each of the following categories:

- Parks
- Trails
- Agriculture
- Forests
- Biodiversity/Habitat
- Lakes, Rivers and Streams
- Marine Shoreline

### **Priority One: Appoint an Open Space Coordinator**

Task force members were unanimous in their desire for County leadership in facilitating a comprehensive county-wide open space program. This coordination would include county departments working collaboratively with cities, towns, state and federal government, and other open space stakeholders. Such facilitation would enhance everyone's efforts to protect and manage Pierce County's substantial natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

The Task Forces' highest priority recommendation is to hire or appoint a full-time Open Space Coordinator reporting to the County Executive's Office. The Open Space Coordinator would coordinate actions among county departments responsible for open space long range planning, acquisition, and stewardship programs.

**Priority Two: Establish an Open Space Council**

The Open Space Coordinator would also facilitate a newly created ‘Open Space Council’ thereby providing the desired County leadership and streamlining county participation in a comprehensive countywide open space program. The Open Space Council would take a more active role in implementation of the county’s open space programs, projects, policies, and initiatives established by the County Council over the last two decades.

The Open Space Council would include jurisdictions and stakeholders from agencies, land trusts, and other groups that fulfill active roles in implementation of open space programs, projects, policies, and initiatives at local, state, federal, and private levels. Much of the Council’s initial work would be to oversee the implementation of the recommendations provided in this report.

**Priority Three: More Efficient Use of Existing Fund Sources**

Many land acquisition opportunities are lost because of the limited availability of local match funds that are flexible and readily available. There are numerous funding sources available to assist with land acquisition but most of these require local matching funds. Increasing the availability of local funding would provide a missing tool that the county, land trusts, and other stakeholders could use to package and leverage collaborative approaches to land acquisition and resource protection opportunities as they arise (often on short notice).

**Priority Four: Conduct a Public Opinion Poll**

The County Council asked the Task Force to propose new funding sources and several have been identified. However, the first order of business for the newly formed Open Space Council would be to conduct a public opinion poll to determine support for the best kind of open space tax.

The opinion poll would:

1. Determine public support and likelihood of passage;

2. Help define the specifics of the tax proposal including type and amount; and
3. Identify which projects or components would insure voter approval.

A public opinion poll was conducted in Pierce County prior to 2009 by the Trust for Public Lands. This poll showed proposals for Open Space with trail components had a reasonable chance of passage. If the 2011 poll shows public support for an open space tax increase, then the Open Space Council would cooperate with the County Council to place a ballot issue before the public. In addition, the Open Space Council (and the stakeholders they represent) would manage a public relations campaign to promote voter approval for funding open space programs and the 10-year acquisition plan.

The remaining recommendations of the Task Force are organized under the following subjects:

- Revenue (market-based solutions and public funding options)
- Policy & Regulatory
- Smart Acquisition Strategies
- Program Alignment
- Land Stewardship (Maintenance and Operations)
- Agriculture

This report presents an opportunity for Pierce County to invest minimal resources in providing simple coordination among open space stakeholders that would effectively leverage millions of dollars of new and existing funding. This 10-year acquisition plan would effectively maximize the collective efforts of multiple stakeholder groups resulting in permanent benefits to the citizens and environment of Pierce County.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Pierce County Open Space Task Force was established by County Council Resolution R2009-97s that was adopted by the Pierce County Council on October 27, 2009. The task force was established in large part as a response to stakeholder group's interest in sending an open space ballot measure to the citizens of Pierce County.

The County Council deemed it prudent to first authorize an Open Space Task Force (OSTF) to conduct a comprehensive review of open space needs and issues and develop recommendations for strategically financing future open space resources in Pierce County. Specifically, the resolution directed the task force to “(1) ...undertake a comprehensive review of resources related to open space; (2) identify existing and potential funding opportunities; (3) develop a strategy for funding unmet needs; and (4) provide recommendations on a countywide effort to fund open space preservation starting in 2011.”

The resolution directed the Pierce County Parks and Recreation Department (P&RS) to coordinate with the County Executive in recruiting a facilitator for the OSTF and to assist the facilitator as needed in recruiting task force members, meeting logistics, and inter-departmental coordination. P&RS applied for a grant of technical planning assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program of the National Park Service (NPS) to facilitate and assist the task force in completing its assigned work. Assisting communities achieve their conservation and recreation goals is one way the National Park Service achieves its mission of “...extending the benefits of conservation and recreation to the nation and world.” The National Park Service approved the grant request in October 2009 and awarded RTCA assistance to Pierce County to facilitate the OSTF.

## TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS

Working together, P&RS and the NPS first established a time line for implementation of the project. During November and December, a ‘Planning Team’ was established and Task Force members were contacted and recruited. The purpose of the Planning Team was to manage and guide the task force process and development of this report. The *Planning Team* consisted of representatives from P&RS, the Cascade Land Conservancy and ForeverGreen.

The *Task Force* consisted of representatives from key open space stakeholder groups and organizations as well as individuals with specialized subject matter expertise. The first meeting of the OSTF occurred in January, 2010.

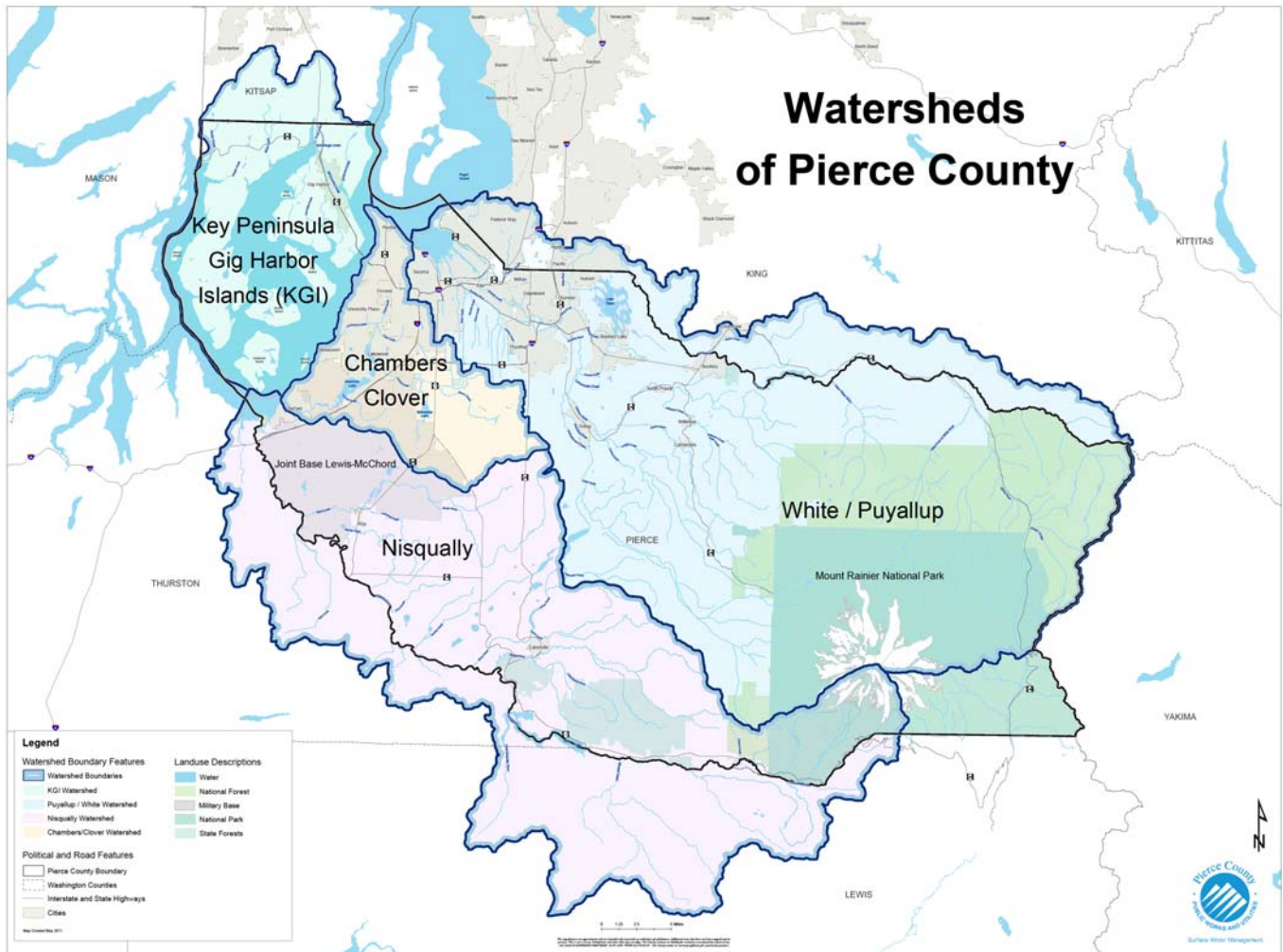
The project time line for the OSTF was organized into the following components:

### *Information Gathering*

Task force members were grouped into four sub-regions of the county and asked to present information at consecutive meetings about open space plans, issues, goals, priorities, and recent accomplishments in their region. These discussions were useful to inform task force members about the similarities and differences in open space programs and issues around the county and for surfacing ideas about how stakeholders can better work together. The four sub- regions were:

- Nisqually Watershed
- Puyallup Watershed
- Chambers/Clover Creek Watershed
- Peninsula





***Existing and Potential Funding Sources & Programs***

The OSTF reviewed and discussed existing and potential funding sources for acquisition and management of open space with an emphasis on the Conservation Futures (CF) program. Currently the CF program has approximately \$1.8 million dollars annually to dedicate to a grant program where the county, cities & towns, and local land trust all compete for a portion of the funds.

These discussions were useful to inform task force members about the wide array of

open space funding sources, programs, and program requirements that already exist. These discussions surfaced the realization that many opportunities are not being acted on because of the limited availability of local open space funding that is flexible and that can be used to meet the matching requirement of other funding sources. Increasing the availability of local, flexible funding would provide a missing tool that the county, land trusts, and other stakeholders could use to package collaborative approaches to land acquisition and resource protection opportunities when they arise.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities***

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities in open space acquisition and management were reviewed and discussed at length by the OSTF. These discussions included an emphasis on interdepartmental collaboration and coordination. Task force members were unanimous in their desire for County leadership in facilitating a comprehensive county-wide open space program that includes county departments working collaboratively with cities, towns, state and federal government, and other open space stakeholders to enhance efforts to protect, conserve and manage Pierce County's substantial natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

### ***Writing and Plan Production***

Writing and production of this report was the last major element on the project timeline. It should be noted that a sub-committee of the Task Force was established at the very first meeting. This committee (chaired by the Cascade Land Conservancy representative) was tasked with drafting significant elements of this report that included the following sections:

- Revenue (market-based solutions and public funding options)
- Policy & Regulatory
- Smart Acquisition Strategies
- Program Alignment
- Land Stewardship (Maintenance and Operations)
- Agriculture

## **TASK FORCE FINDINGS**

### Pierce County Adopted Planning Documents

The work of the task force was not new open space planning. Its starting point was a literature review of adopted city and county planning documents, particularly the adopted Parks and Recreation Open Space (PROS) plans. This review revealed a tendency in planning documents towards broad, policy-driven documents that are light on specific prioritized actions and/or timeframes.

The best sources of specific information pertaining to open space are found in the Pierce County and other community PROS plans and the various Community Plans produced by Planning and Land Services (PALS). P&RS is the county department tasked with the responsibility of comprehensive planning for open space. The Pierce County PROS plan is a component of the County Comprehensive Plan.

The Pierce County PROS vision as adopted by the Pierce County Council is for the Pierce County Parks and Recreation Services Department to have “...*an innovative, inclusive, and interconnected system of parks, recreation services, and open space resources that promotes recreation, health, and environmental conservation as integral to a livable community.*”

The PROS plan was adopted in 2008 and includes the following open space goals:

- Provide a quality, diversified park and open space system that supports opportunities for active and passive recreation and conserves and enhances significant environmental and historical resources and features.
- Provide a regional system of off-street trails and corridors that links parks, open spaces, and significant environmental features.
- Incorporate natural areas and unique ecological features into the park and open space system to protect threatened species, conserve significant natural resources and habitat, and retain migration corridors that are unique and important to local wildlife.

- Incorporate features and amenities in the park system that fit the local context; contribute to environmental sustainability; and are accessible, safe, and easy to maintain for the long term.
- Serve as a regional... coordinator, forging partnerships and fostering opportunities for countywide collaboration among all major...providers in the provision of parks, facilities, programs, and services.

Other planning documents containing open space policy and actions tend to be specific to individual categories of open space (e.g., agricultural land, marine shorelines, forest lands, etc.). For the most part the OSTF recommendations for the next 10-years (later in this report) are derived from other existing planning documents such as the Agricultural Strategic Plan, the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda, and the Cascade Agenda.

This review surfaced the problem of good plans “sitting on the shelf” without implementation. Planning documents provide good policy and direction but it takes committed people taking purposeful action to implement those plans. Task force discussions on this subject suggested the need for County leadership in organizing and facilitating a comprehensive group of open space stakeholders to work collaboratively with the County, on a regularly recurring basis, to coordinate the implementation of the policy and direction provided through numerous planning documents that guide the work of local, state, and federal agencies and non-profit groups engaged in open space projects and programs.

### Public and Private Market Based Funding Sources

The task force reviewed and discussed the most common sources of funding used for open space projects and learned that there is quite an array of existing funding opportunities for different purposes. Task force members tended to have specific knowledge of funding sources for their specialized area of interest, but few had broad knowledge of all possible funding sources.

These discussions bolstered the idea for recommending creation of a collaborative ‘Open Space Council’. There is a strong need for better coordination among stakeholders, working collaboratively with the County, to effectively leverage millions of dollars of potential funding by packaging deals that result in multiple benefits (smart

acquisition). The possibility exists that potentially available money is not being utilized to the best advantage or is being ‘left on the table’. Recent examples of highly successful projects that leveraged multiple funding sources and that achieved multiple objectives include the Devil’s Head purchase on the southern end of Key Peninsula and the Mount Rainier Gateway initiative in the Upper Nisqually Valley approaching Mount Rainier National Park.

### Potential Funding Sources

In its review of existing funding sources, the task force surfaced a primary need for locally controlled, flexible money that can be used to provide match money required from other funding sources. This would also provide a tool for a collaborative approach to deal closing when opportunities arise. The availability of local funds was instrumental on the Devil’s Head project because it provided the Cascade Land Conservancy with the confidence they needed to ‘close the deal’. The best potential sources of local money for open space would come from a bond, levy, sales or property tax, and/or increase in conservation futures.

### Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program

The resolution establishing the task force specifically requested a review of the TDR program. The TDR Program was established by the Pierce County Council in 2007 and is currently in its beginning stages of program development. The program is dynamic and PALS has made great strides in program functionality and implementation. In 2009 and 2011, PALS was awarded grants from the Environmental Protection Agency for further developing the TDR program. One of the grants specifically helped develop agreements between Pierce County and the cities of Tacoma and Puyallup to develop compatible TDR programs. Two other cities are currently working with the County to establish TDR programs.

The Task Force review of the TDR program revealed the program is still in its infancy and hasn’t been fully implemented. There is a great deal of support for the TDR program among stakeholders and a belief that it will succeed if more resources are committed to it. Specific findings of the task force include:



- Responsibility for TDR implementation is a collateral duty of a PALS program manager
- A TDR advisory committee has never been established
- Building permit staff are not trained on the use of TDR's
- Pierce County towns and cities do not have incentives for establishing compatible TDR programs in partnership with the County
- Marketing and publicity of the TDR program is minimal

### Pierce County Inter-Departmental Cooperation

The task force reviewed the roles, responsibilities, and functions of Planning and Land Services (PALS), Public Works and Utilities (PWU), Facilities Management (FM), and P&RS in the: 1) administration of the TDR program; 2) habitat and open space planning; 3) property acquisition; and 4) management and stewardship of Pierce County open space lands. This review revealed there is a willingness to collaborate among county agencies but there isn't a mechanism in place to ensure it happens on a regular and consistent basis.

Specifically, Title 19A – County Comprehensive Plan LU-OS Objective 60 has not been implemented in a comprehensive way. That objective states:

*Ensure that Pierce County open space properties, open space passive recreation parks, conservation easements, and conservation futures covenants are managed and maintained to provide long-term stewardship of the open space function and value.*

One of LU-OS Objective 60 action items is the identification of a "...function within an existing County department or create a new County department that will provide a level of management and comprehensive coordination that will enhance the County's long-term stewardship of open space."

## PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

Task force members felt this could be accomplished in one of the following two ways:

1. Create a new ‘Open Space’ coordinator position at the Executive’s Office to coordinate and implement LU-OS Objective 60; or
2. Assign this responsibility to P&RS. This change would require mission modification to include open space and resource management as a function of P&RS.

The identified department or Executive Office hired coordinator would be responsible for the implementation of LU-OS 60 and other recommendations contained in this report as adopted by the County Council. These responsibilities would include:

- Management of Pierce County open space properties, open space passive recreation parks, conservation easements, and conservation futures covenants.
- Coordination with County departments to ensure that day-to-day decisions consider the open space policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Coordination with the Cities and Towns of Pierce County to establish an interconnected network of open space.
- Development and administration of open space stewardship and management plans for the Pierce County open space properties, open space passive recreation parks, conservation easements, and conservation futures covenants.
- Serving as a central clearinghouse for information on open space.
- Organizing and coordinating volunteer efforts that help maintain the Pierce County open space properties, open space passive recreation parks, conservation easements, and conservation futures covenants.
- Completing and maintaining an inventory of existing publicly owned properties, and evaluating them for their value as open space. Privately held properties, such as those held by land trusts, should be considered in the inventory.

## PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- Working closely with local and National land trusts and with other private and non-profit organizations interested in open space in the management of Pierce County open space properties.
- Reviewing Pierce County land holdings to determine if any parcels fall within the adopted open space/greenbelt network that might be suitable for transfer to a local land trust.
- Ensuring that publicly owned and/or purchased open space sites are protected and maintained in perpetuity.
- Providing oversight on conservation easements on any open space lands prior to transfer to a land trust.
- Providing oversight on conservation easements or covenants on existing and acquired publicly owned open space sites that restrict future uses to passive open space recreation activities.
- Developing a public policy that would require any proceeds from the sales of publicly owned open space sites be used to purchase an equivalent or greater amount of land for passive open space recreation use and/or land which provides an equivalent or greater ecological function and value.
- Development and administration of public policy that requires the inclusion of stewardship as a component of the management plans prepared for all properties purchased with public funds.

## **TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Recommendation I: Establish ‘Open Space Council’ and ‘Open Space Coordinator’***

The highest priority recommendation from the Task Force is to create a permanent ‘Open Space Council’ supported by a full-time Open Space Coordinator position at the Executive Office to coordinate and implement open space programs. The staff person would coordinate action among county departments responsible for open space long range planning, acquisition, and stewardship programs. This position would also facilitate a newly created ‘Open Space Council’ thereby providing leadership and streamlining county participation in a comprehensive countywide open space program. The Council would include jurisdictions and stakeholders from agencies, land trusts, and other groups that fulfill active roles in implementation of open space programs, projects, policies, and initiatives at local, state, federal, and private levels.

This recommendation evolved from several task force conversations that revealed a strong desire among open space stakeholders for County leadership and facilitation among all agencies, jurisdictions, and organizations countywide in coordination of a comprehensive countywide open space program. The recent acquisition of the Devil’s Head property on Key Peninsula was frequently referenced as an example of what can be accomplished with this type of leadership, coordination, and adequate funding. The possibility exists that other similar opportunities are ‘lost’ because of the lack of available funding, resources, technical expertise and County Executive and Council involvement.

A minimal investment in providing simple coordination among open space stakeholders can effectively leverage millions of dollars of existing funding that isn’t currently being utilized. This recommendation represents an opportunity to maximize the efforts of multiple stakeholder groups thereby creating ‘win-win’ projects on a regular basis resulting in permanent benefits to the citizens and environment of Pierce County. The Council would consist of many members of this task force and would implement the recommendations in this report as one of its responsibilities.

This would be a new initiative requiring funding from either a future increase in the General Fund or from revenue from any future Open Space initiative as described in this report. The County Executive and/or the County Council may have other ideas for funding this initiative as well. Establishment of such funding should be viewed as an investment that would return millions of dollars in permanent benefits to the citizens and environment of Pierce County.

***Recommendation II: Revenue – Market Based Solutions and Public Funding Options***

Open space provides significant function for Pierce County including recreation, flood control, water recharge, cleaning our air and water, habitat for wildlife and hosts significant sectors of our economy including agriculture, forestry and fisheries. These lands must be protected to promote these functions while respecting the property rights of private landowners. Funding strategies to permanently acquire and protect these lands fall in two categories 1) Market Based Solutions and 2) Publicly Funded Solutions. The solutions listed below are not in priority order.

**Market Based Solutions**

Near Term (1-2 years):

**1) Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

*Implement the County's TDR program:*

- Establish a consistent source of funding to provide for continued program development and implementation. Funding should be established for:
  - a) Two full time equivalent staff positions to implement the TDR program;
  - b) Seed money for the TDR/PDR Bank (approximately. \$250,000); and,
  - c) Program marketing efforts (e.g. public outreach, workshops and brochures)
  
- Incorporate proposed code revision changes that improve the TDR program's effectiveness and implementation.



- Modify TDR Sending Site eligibility list to include:
  - a) Lands within the Biodiversity Management Areas and/or Gap Connector lands; and
  - b) Forest lands with 60% of tree cover and/or under Current Use Assessment for forestland, open space-timberland, regardless of zoning.

Note: In May 2011 the Governor signed SB5253 which creates the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure program whereby cities will have access to infrastructure monies (tax increment financing) to fund street, utility and other community improvements in exchange for accepting development rights from regionally significant lands such as working farms and forestlands. This is a key incentive cities have been requesting in order to accept more density over the long term. SB5253 will be implemented through the Puget Sound Regional Council and the County should fully participate in its implementation so that the County's conservation goals are met through this process.

### 2. **Timber Harvest Sales**

- a) **Establish a Local Conservation Authority:** Use the County's bonding authority to establish a Local Conservation Authority (LCA) to acquire forestland at risk of conversion. The bonds would be repaid through revenues from timber harvest and transfer of development rights. (An LCA would operate much like a Public Development Authority, such as the one created to restore and redevelop the Thea Foss Waterway in Tacoma.)
- b) **Enroll in FSC Certification:** If the County harvests timber, certify those harvests through the Forest Stewardship Council to receive a premium price, ensure sustainable forest management practices, and create new markets. Play a leadership role in the development of the FSC program regionally.

### 3. **In-Lieu Fees**

**Explore creation of an In-Lieu Fee (ILF) program:** An ILF is a fee a permit applicant pays to a third party in lieu of conducting project-specific mitigation or buying credits from a mitigation bank. The ILF represents the expected costs to the

third party of replacing the wetland functions lost or degraded as a result of the applicant's project. Typically, ILFs are held in trust until they can be combined with other ILFs to finance a mitigation project. The entity operating the trust is typically a nonprofit organization such as a local land trust, private conservation group, or government agency with demonstrated competence in natural resource management. (Both King County and the Puget Sound Partnership have proposed ILF programs.) Note: this recommendation is currently under consideration as part of the shoreline master program update.

Medium Term (3-5 years)

**Conservation-forestry bonds:** Support the Community Forestry Act introduced in Congress by adding it to the County's legislative agenda. Under the proposed legislation, Congress would provide a means to protect timberlands at high risk of conversion and sub-division by authorizing qualified non-profit organizations to use funds from municipal-bond sales to purchase working forests and keep them working. The bonds would be re-paid with timber-harvest proceeds. The proposed legislation would make \$250 million available in Washington State.

Long Term (6-10 years)

**1. Ecological Services**

**Capture value from ecological services:** Commission an economic analysis of the value and types of ecological services provided by the County's natural environment and explore options for capturing value from them, such as through carbon-trading markets and certified timber sales.

**2. Private Equity Partnerships**

**Partner with private equity to take advantage of economies of scale and business expertise:** For example, work with a private bank or similar organization to design a business plan for and fund a timberland purchase that creates a county park supported by a sustainably-harvested tree farm.

### **3. Wetland Mitigation Banking**

**Explore creation of wetland mitigation bank(s):** A wetland mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other aquatic-resource area that has been restored, established, enhanced, or preserved to compensate for unavoidable impacts to other aquatic resources. Wetland mitigation banks allow for purchase and restoration of wetlands in a systematic way to produce high-value wetlands systems and provide ecosystem services.

### **Publicly Funded Solutions**

Near Term (1-2 years):

#### **Open Space Tax – Public Opinion Poll**

Conduct a public opinion poll to determine support for an open space tax. The purposes of the poll would be to determine public support (likelihood of passage) and to help define the specifics of the tax proposal (type, amount, projects/components to include, etc.). A public opinion poll was conducted in Pierce County prior to 2009 by the Trust for Public Lands that showed proposals for Open Space with trail components had a reasonable chance of passage.

Following are the most likely types of tax initiatives people would be asked about in a public opinion poll:

#### **Levy Lid Lift**

A levy lid lift requires a countywide vote that includes all 24 towns and cities in the county and 317,000 unincorporated /rural voters. While a property tax increase requires 60% voter approval, a levy lid lift permits the county to increase the tax collected to the size of the previous levy and only needs voter approval of 50% plus one vote.

This recommendation proposes a levy lid lift to fund open space buffers, regional

trails and park maintenance. It would include funding for the TDR program to buy forest, agriculture buffers and other priorities outlined in the 10 year acquisition program of this report. Funds for trails would be shared with Metro Parks Tacoma, Lakewood Parks and Pen Met Parks to complete portions of the countywide system of trails. These urban areas are necessary to win the ‘yes’ vote (rural areas of the county voted ‘no’ on the Pierce Transit proposal in 2011). The cities of Fife, Bonney Lake, Puyallup, and Sumner are large enough to benefit from these revenues and participate in the ballot, but would only be included if they have a quantifiable regional park and trail proposal and an identified population saying they would vote “yes”.

An 11 cent increase would raise 10 million annually. In 10 years that would provide \$100 million in local fund availability that could be used to package deals and leverage other fund sources to accomplish Task Force recommendations.

*Pros:* Does not require legislative approval; much greater funding potential than an increase in Conservation Futures.

*Cons:* Would require approval (50% +1) by County electorate; would have a set time limit – likely ten years or so – after which a new vote would be required to retain funding; would require a campaign to pass, which would likely be expensive.

### **Metropolitan Park District(s)**

Create metropolitan park district(s) that can acquire open space. As currently allowed under the Regulatory Code of Washington, this could generate up to \$22 million annually. (Note: As of April 2011, the County Council was reviewing the option of creating a metropolitan park district in the remaining unincorporated portion of Pierce County. At a rate 24 cents per \$1000 of property value, the proposed tax to support the district would generate about \$6.5 million annually. The original proposal passed by the Council in July provided funding for recreational parks and deferred maintenance, but nothing for acquisition of open space for habitat or other uses.)

**Pierce Conservation District (PCD)**

Support a \$5 property-tax increase to fund PCD. PCD is seeking to raise its per-parcel fee from \$5 to \$10, as in King County. The County could use the new funding to promote local agriculture and purchase development rights from farmers. The County could also bank those development rights in the County’s TDR bank.

**Trails, Parks, and Open Space Sales Tax**

Proposed legislation supported by Metro Parks Tacoma, the City of Tacoma, Pierce County Parks and Recreation, and a broad coalition of community groups would allow the County to ask voters for a 1/10 of 1% sales tax countywide to be used for trails, parks, and open space. As currently written, the legislation would fund acquisition and maintenance of trails, regional parks and open space. The tax increase would generate an estimated \$10 million dollars annually. One million of this would be used for open space acquisitions countywide. The remaining nine million would be distributed to Pierce County Parks, Metro Parks Tacoma, cities with regional trail system, and other Metropolitan Park Districts in Pierce County. The legislation asks the state legislature for new taxing authority for Pierce County only. It is not likely to pass the state legislature until 2013 or 2014.

Medium Term (3-5 years):

**Open Space Tax – Act on Public Opinion Poll Results & Findings**

If feasible, place an open space tax initiative on the county ballot (depending on the results and findings of the public opinion poll).

**Establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF):** An RLF is a pool of funds that recycles money as loans are repaid. The initial capitalization could come from a variety of sources, such as the general fund, bonds, grants, etc. RLFs provide agencies a quick source of cash to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.



***Recommendation III: Policy & Regulatory***

Maintain and improve existing policy and regulatory tools for conserving open space.

Near Term (1-2 years):

1. **Keep urban growth within UGA boundaries** to ensure responsible, efficient use of existing lands in the face of regional population growth.
2. **Actively support and enforce open-space values identified in community plans** adopted by the county and incorporated into its comprehensive plan. Continue to support, fund, and implement the work of the Land Use Advisory Commissions (LUACs).
3. **Maintain zoning and tax structures** that encourage keeping land in forestry, agriculture, and open-space uses through programs such as the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs).
4. **Develop priorities for enforcement of land-use violations**, including proactive enforcement, and increase resources to fund staff time in the field.

Medium Term (3-5 years):

1. **Protect Biodiversity Management Areas through Comprehensive Plan amendments** during the Plan’s upcoming major amendment cycle:
  - Advance a Rural Sensitive Resource (RSR) Zoning Overlay, a valuable tool for open-space protection. RSR zoning would not affect underlying zoning or density but might require use of Low Impact Development strategies during planning and development. In particular, revise zoning to apply RSR to tax parcels in Biodiversity Management Areas and Gap Connector Lands, with the exception of parcels zoned Agricultural Resources Lands (ARL) or located within urban-growth boundaries.
  - Adopt Stewardship Plans for the Biodiversity Management Areas (as identified in the Pierce County Biodiversity Network Assessment – June 2004), as Title 19D Comprehensive Plan, Other Documents.
  - Amend the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Open Space Corridor Map and Biodiversity GIS Layer to incorporate refinements to BMA boundaries and/or to correct inaccuracies.

## PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- Add language to include areas that represent high levels of biological diversity as fish and wildlife areas
  - Add language to community-plan updates to include Biodiversity Management Areas and Rural Sensitive Resource (RSR) zoning
  - Add language to Shoreline Management Plan updates to include Biodiversity Management Areas
2. **Revise zoning and tax structures** to encourage private timber-harvest prescriptions that maintain key open-space values, such as scenic view sheds, trails, and priority wildlife habitats. Incentivize the property-tax code to protect specific sensitive areas.
  3. **When building must occur in rural areas, support concepts such as** compact development and incentives such as bonus densities that discourage sprawl and large-lot development, promote clustering and compact communities, and protect adjacent working landscapes.
  4. **Evaluate the structure and thresholds of the current use taxation program.** Some citizens may be purchasing forested property, logging, and then switching into the Open space or Agriculture tax reductions category. There are no disincentives to switch from forestlands to agricultural lands.
  5. **Explore innovative initiatives** (e.g., Conservation Villages).

### Long Term (6-10 years):

1. **Create an inventory of historic landscapes, scenic vistas, and scenic byways in Pierce County**
2. Seek new opportunities **to leverage federal conservation funds by** prioritizing historic landscapes, scenic vistas, and scenic byways such as the Mather Memorial Parkway (S.R. 410) and the Mountain Highway (S.R. 7) and applying for grants.

***Recommendation IV: Smart Acquisition Strategies***

1. Maximize the efficiency of the county’s economic resources by making partnership, leveraging, and strategic coordination core values for all departments and programs involved in open-space acquisitions.
2. Within county government, encourage collaboration by giving priority consideration to open-space projects that meet the acquisition goals of multiple departments and programs.
3. Outside county government, partner with private interests to leverage county funds through economies of scale – incorporate county projects into larger, multi-partner projects with complementary components. For example, make a regional park one piece of an acquisition project that includes wildlife habitat acquired by a nonprofit organization and working forest acquired by a timber company.
4. Maximize habitat and recreation values by creating links between protected lands identified in existing plans. Prioritize projects that expand and enhance habitat blocks and create connecting corridors.
5. Buffer undeveloped lands by making strategic acquisitions along or near urban-growth-area boundaries.
6. Maximize efficiency of urban open space by prioritizing linkages between public spaces and by teaming with incorporated areas to meet per-capita open-space targets.

***Recommendation V: Program Alignment***

The current structure of county government with regard to open space is inefficient, with different and sometimes competing or conflicting goals, priorities, and practices and a lack of communication and coordination among agencies, departments, and jurisdictions. Overall, open-space management, acquisition and restoration should be a higher priority than it is today.

Near Term (1-2 years):

**Make Conservation Futures a competitive grant process:** County Council should approve Conservation Futures purchases as a package without change in priority ranking, thereby making it a competitive grant process similar to that of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) and other Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant programs. The County should rely on objective, quantitative, technical and scientific review to evaluate and prioritize Conservation Futures applications based on criteria established by the County Council.

Medium Term (3-5 years):

1. **Build a permanent revolving fund for development-rights acquisition:** Leverage Conservation Futures funds by allowing development rights purchased with County funds to be sold through the County’s Transfer of Development Rights program; use the proceeds to fund a permanent revolving fund for fee-simple and easement acquisition.
2. **Elevate open space as a priority within county government:** Identify and reduce areas of intra-governmental conflict over open-space conservation, align acquisition priorities, and promote collaboration across agencies and departments to make conservation of open space a unified priority.

***Recommendation VI: Land Stewardship (Maintenance and Operations)***

Open-space properties, whether held publicly or privately, require perpetual stewardship. Stewardship expenses include annual monitoring, maintenance and operations (M & O), management, neighbor and community outreach and administrative support related to a wide variety of land use issues such as legal defense. These expenses are an integral, ongoing component of open-space purchases that should be planned for and included in acquisition costs. In addition, many open space properties are suitable for the development of public access which requires additional funding for the development of facilities and ongoing M & O. Providing public access to open space properties should be an automatic requirement unless a documented reason for not doing so exists. Providing public access to open space helps encourage, promote, and grow public stewardship for these lands and for future acquisitions.

1. **Clarify County open space acquisition policy:** Revise current policy to better reflect actual practices and desired goals and outcomes. Specifically, revise the Open Space Policy (LU-60) in the County’s Comprehensive Plan. For example the current policy encourages the county to give land it purchases, and easements it acquires, to a land trust for maintenance and stewardship. This is not always practical for the land trust or the county.
2. **Clarify County public access to open space policy:** Develop policy requiring automatic consideration of public access to open space lands unless a documented reason for not doing so exists.
3. **Fund transaction support:** Pursue contractual agreements with all private-not-for-profit land trusts operating within Pierce County to allow for partnerships that may arise quickly in order to take advantage of opportunities to preserve, conserve, or acquire open space that is of priority to the county. These agreements would allow for appropriate compensation for partner organizations doing business on the County’s behalf. Organizations often are actively involved in executing property transactions for the County, but under current policies they cannot be compensated for staff time and expenses.
4. **Fund maintenance and operations:**
  - Allow Conservation Futures funds to provide for stewardship of lands the county transfers to private organizations, but design a ranking process that rewards lower stewardship costs.

- Include maintenance and operations funding in any new acquisition funding sought by the County.
- Fund the development and implementation of stewardship plans for county-owned properties that include stewardship-cost calculations and a plan for meeting them. For example, the Nature Conservancy asks for a stewardship endowment of 20 percent of a property's cost.
- Consider alternatives such as contracts for stewardship costs. For example, rather than requiring a lump sum upon purchase, stewardship costs could be met with payments over a specified period. If a large number of properties were acquired, the County might agree to a long-term maintenance contract to cover stewardship costs for all of them. This would allow the county to pay a portion of the stewardship fund to the appropriate land trust each year. Using dedicated funds such as a sales tax or regional funds for parks, trails and open space would assure a reliable funding source for the contract period.

### *Recommendation VII: Agriculture*

Preservation of agricultural lands requires maintaining agriculture as a viable economic choice for our community. The Agricultural Strategic Plan (adopted by Resolution 2006-35 on April 11, 2006) and county community plans build upon the historical practices and natural attributes of the county by strengthening the agricultural industry through policies, programs, and actions aimed at raising the income of the farmer while reducing the costs and barriers to farming. According to the '2007 Census of Agriculture' the total market value of products sold in Pierce County was \$83,402,000. This was a decrease in value of 11% from the 2002 census when the total market value was \$94,170,000.

#### Near Term (1-2 years)

1. Retain "high priority" classification for preservation of agricultural lands (Pierce County Code Section 19D.170.040, Pierce County Open Space Priorities)
2. Support activities that encourage a viable agricultural industry and thereby promote retention of agricultural lands as open space:

- a) Encourage market-based tools that assist farmers to be profitable, such as farm-to-industry buying programs, agricultural infrastructure development, and local market development.
  - b) Implement the Pierce County Agriculture Strategic Plan. Maintain and restore funding to agencies and programs noted in the Plan that support agriculture.
  - c) Support programs that help farmers be good stewards of the land, such as programs that encourage best environmental management practices and certification programs like Salmon Safe.
3. Support programs that facilitate legacy planning for farms or coordination of linking farmers with farm land property owners.
4. Support policy changes that support agriculture:
- a) Develop and adopt a County purchasing policy that supports local agriculture; for example, require use of Pierce County products in County dining facilities and correctional facilities whenever possible.
  - b) Secure sufficient water rights to assure the long-term viability of local agriculture. Inventory County water rights and explore innovative methods for water-right retention.
  - c) Support flood plans that retain agricultural land as working land and use it as beneficial open space in flood events. Adopt a policy that supports infrastructure updates designed for flood emergencies; for example, livestock pads and structures anchored into sub grade.
  - d) Adopt a long-term vision that balances healthy waterways and habitat with agriculture.
  - e) Consider reducing surface storm-water fees for agricultural lands.
5. Preserve the agricultural resource base:
- a) Implement and fund the County's Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights programs at levels that assure full staffing, including training and outreach, and full development of the rights banks.
  - b) Make it a County priority to preserve contiguous agricultural lands around Urban Growth Area borders and protect agricultural land on the urban fringe.



Medium Term (3-5 years)

1. Retain “high priority” classification for preservation of agricultural lands (Chapter 19D.170.040, Pierce County Open Space Priorities)
2. Support policy changes that support agriculture:
  - a) Support smart-growth strategies that preserve areas designated as Agricultural Resource Lands (ARL) and encourage higher density development in urban areas.
  - b) Discourage subdivision and development within areas designated as ARL.
  - c) Research the creation of Agricultural Districts.
  - d) Revise current regulations so all communities have access to Rural Farm zone and provide incentives to ARL and Rural Farm properties.
3. Preserve the agricultural resource base:
  - a) Leverage agricultural open-space preservation by combining it with other open- space priority areas, such as wildlife habitat, trails, and forests.
  - b) Prioritize preservation of agricultural lands with the most productive soils and contiguous to the urban fringe (i.e., be strategic in action with limited resources)
  - c) Give careful consideration to UGA amendments that include Agricultural Resource Land. When cities and towns propose to amend their UGA’s, every effort should be made to avoid ARL lands.

Long Term (6-10 years)

Retain “high priority” classification for preservation of agricultural lands (Chapter 19D.170.040, Pierce County Open Space Priorities)

*Recommendation VIII: Land Acquisition*

For the purpose of this report the task force developed open space land acquisition recommendations for the next 10 years in each of seven categories of open space. Sub-committees were formed for each category to develop these recommendations and task force members with specific expertise in that subject participated on those committees. The committees were instructed to develop their recommendations utilizing existing planning documents and to keep their recommendations realistic and pragmatic (i.e., acquisitions that can be reasonably accomplished over the next 10 years). The seven categories are listed below followed by the recommendations from each committee.

- Parks
- Trails
- Forests
- Biodiversity Habitat
- Freshwater Lakes, Rivers and Streams
- Marine Shoreline
- Agricultural Land

*PARKS*

Park land acquisition priorities come from adopted Pierce County and other community Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plans. The committee polled 26 cities, towns and park districts to provide their two to three highest park acquisition needs during the next ten years. Eight of those agencies responded and their priorities are described in the following table and indicated on the map.

The priorities range from small (less than an acre) to large (200 plus acres) depending on the agency. Note: the list below only shows the park acquisition priorities for those entities that responded to this request for information. There are additional park acquisition needs in communities around the County that are not documented in this table. For the purpose of this report the park acquisition priorities are intended to be

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

inclusive of the top two to three highest park acquisition priorities from Pierce County and all the cities, towns and park districts in the county.

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

Park Ten Year Land Acquisition Priorities			
Agency	Location	Size/Acres	Type
Pierce County	1. Acquisition opportunities adjacent to existing park sites	Varies	Varies (opportunity based)
	2. Lake Kapowsin Area	100 – 200 acres	County Park (opportunity based)
	3. Graham Area	100 – 200 acres	County Park (opportunity based)
Bonney Lake	Kelly Farm	270 acres	
Gig Harbor	1. Gig Harbor North Park	20 acres	Community Park
	2. Developing areas	Varies	Neighborhood Parks
Lakewood	1. Western Lakewood	5 acres	Neighborhood Park
	2. Central Lakewood	5 acres	Neighborhood Park
	3. Central Lakewood	20 acres	Community Park
	4. Southern Lakewood	5 acres	Neighborhood Park
	5. Wards Lake	5 acres	Community Park expansion
	6. American Lake	5 acres	Community Park expansion

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

Agency	Location	Size/Acres	Type
Metro Parks Tacoma	1. Acquisition opportunities adjacent to existing parks and green spaces	100 acres	Varies (opportunity based)
	2. Downtown area	25 acres	Urban Parks
	3. Shoreline Area	25 acres	Water Access
Pacific	1. Interurban Trailhead	3 acres	Open space habitat
	2. Manufacturing District	1 to 2 acres	Green buffer
Steilacoom	Chambers Bay shoreline	Parcels 0220294009, 4021	Shoreline access and pocket park
	Open Space	Parcels 2305001509, 1511	Wetlands and "Tunnel of Trees"
	Washington Street	Parcels 6655200260, 281, 270, 192, 282, 290	Wetlands
Key Peninsula MPD	1. Anderson Parcels	55 to 60 acres	Regional park
	2. Elgin Clifton/Rocky Creek area	2 to 5 acres	Neighborhood Park







*TRAILS*

The following prioritized list of trail projects was developed jointly with the ForeverGreen Council, Tacoma Wheelmen’s Bicycle Club and the Foothills Trail Coalition. The board of each group approved the list during the summer of 2010. Priorities were set in anticipation of a future proposal requiring voter approval (i.e., projects most likely to have a broad appeal to a majority of voters). The project list was selected from the county Park Department’s 2009 Master Trail Plan (which did not prioritize trail projects). Projects were prioritized using these guidelines provided by Pierce County park department staff:

1. Complete Park Department projects under construction first.

2. Add new construction in areas of dense population & anticipated growth. Nineteen county trail projects were prioritized totaling approximately 60 miles of new trail construction. Assuming an average cost of around one million dollars per mile to acquire right-of-way, plan, permit, and build twelve foot wide, paved asphalt trail, the total projected cost for these projects is \$60 million dollars. Approximately half of this money would come from grants and the other half would come from local matching dollars. The local match (\$30 million) would come from voter approval of some type of parks, trails, and open space measure on a future ballot.





**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Trail Name(s)</b>	<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>Miles</b>
1	Foothills Trail/Puyallup Riverwalk Trail	Puyallup Connector (Foothills trailhead at bulb farm to Puyallup Riverwalk trail)	1.2
2	Foothills Trail	South Prairie to Buckley	2.7
3	Foothills Trail	White River Bridge in Buckley (to Enumclaw)	0.15
4	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Fredrickson to Graham	4.5
5	Pipeline Trail (Quad C Trail)	Orangegate Park south to 144 <sup>th</sup> Street	3.0
6	Puyallup Riverwalk Trail/Ruston Way	Freight House Square (Tacoma) to Puyallup Riverwalk Trail (way station trailhead on River Road)	6
7	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Graham to Kapowsin	7.1
8	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Along Lake Kapowsin	7.1
9	Pipeline Trail (Quad C Trail)	Orangegate Park north to Portland Avenue (city limits)	6.0
10	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Lake Kapowsin to Ohop Lake	3.2

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Trail Name(s)</b>	<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>Miles</b>
11	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Ohop Lake to Eatonville	5.3
12	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Eatonville to Elbe	10.4
13	White River Flume Trail	Buckley to Lake Tapps	4.0
14	Cushman Trail	North Gig Harbor to Purdy	2.0
15	Foothills Trail	South Prairie to Wilkeson	3.7
16	Foothills Trail	Wilkeson to Carbonado	3.7
17	Foothills Trail	Carbonado to Fairfax	6.5
18	Foothills Trail	Fairfax to Mount Rainier National Park	4.0
19	Fredrickson/Ashford Rail w/Trail	Elbe to Ashford	6.0
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58.2</b>

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

	<b>City/Town Projects (not prioritized)</b>	<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>Miles</b>
	Fennel Creek Trail	Fennel Creek to Victor Falls	4.90
	Fennel Creek Trail	Victor Falls to Foothills Trail (connector)	3.00
	Town of Eatonville Unnamed Trail	Rimrock Park to Nisqually/Mashel State Park	4.00
	Interurban Trail (Auburn to Puyallup Riverwalk)	Algona Section (Algona to Pacific)	0.25
	Interurban Trail (Auburn to Puyallup Riverwalk)	Pacific Section (Pacific to Sumner)	1.75
	Interurban Trail (Auburn to Puyallup Riverwalk)	Sumner Section (Sumner to Puyallup)	2.00
	Interurban Trail (Auburn to Puyallup Riverwalk)	Puyallup Section (connect Riverwalk Trail to Sumner)	0.50
	Interurban Trail (Pacific to Milton)	Edgewood Section (Edgewood to Pacific)	1.50
	Interurban Trail (Pacific to Milton)	Milton Section (Milton to Edgewood)	0.40
	Fife to North Tacoma Trail	North Tacoma to Fife using BPA Powerline Corridor	3.10
	Tacoma Bicycle Boulevards	Varies – refer to City Transportation Element	51

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

	<b>City/Town Projects (not prioritized)</b>	<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>Miles</b>
	Tacoma Bike and shared Lanes	Varies – refer to City Transportation Element	78
	Tacoma Cycle Tracks <sup>1</sup>	Varies – refer to City Transportation Element	4
	Tacoma Shared-Use Paths <sup>2</sup>	Varies – refer to City Transportation Element	42
	Ruston Way Extension to Point Defiance	Pt. Defiance Park to Ruston Way	2.00

<sup>1</sup> A cycle track is a hybrid type bicycle facility combining the experience of a separated path with the on-street infrastructure of a conventional bike lane. Cycle tracks provide exclusive space for bicycles that is physically separated from pedestrians and cars. Cycle tracks are appropriate on streets with higher traffic volumes where greater separation is needed, and where cross-traffic is limited.

<sup>2</sup> The Revised Code of Washington defines shared-use paths as “a facility physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic within the highway right of way or on an exclusive right of way with minimal cross flow by motor vehicles. It is designed and built primarily for use by bicycles, but is also used by pedestrians, joggers, skaters, wheelchair users (both non-motorized and motorized), equestrians, and other non-motorized users” (RCW 1020.03). Shared-use paths provide additional width over a standard sidewalk and, when constructed next to the road, shared-use paths must have some type of vertical (e.g., curb or barrier) or horizontal (e.g., landscaped strip) buffer separating the path area from adjacent vehicle travel lanes.





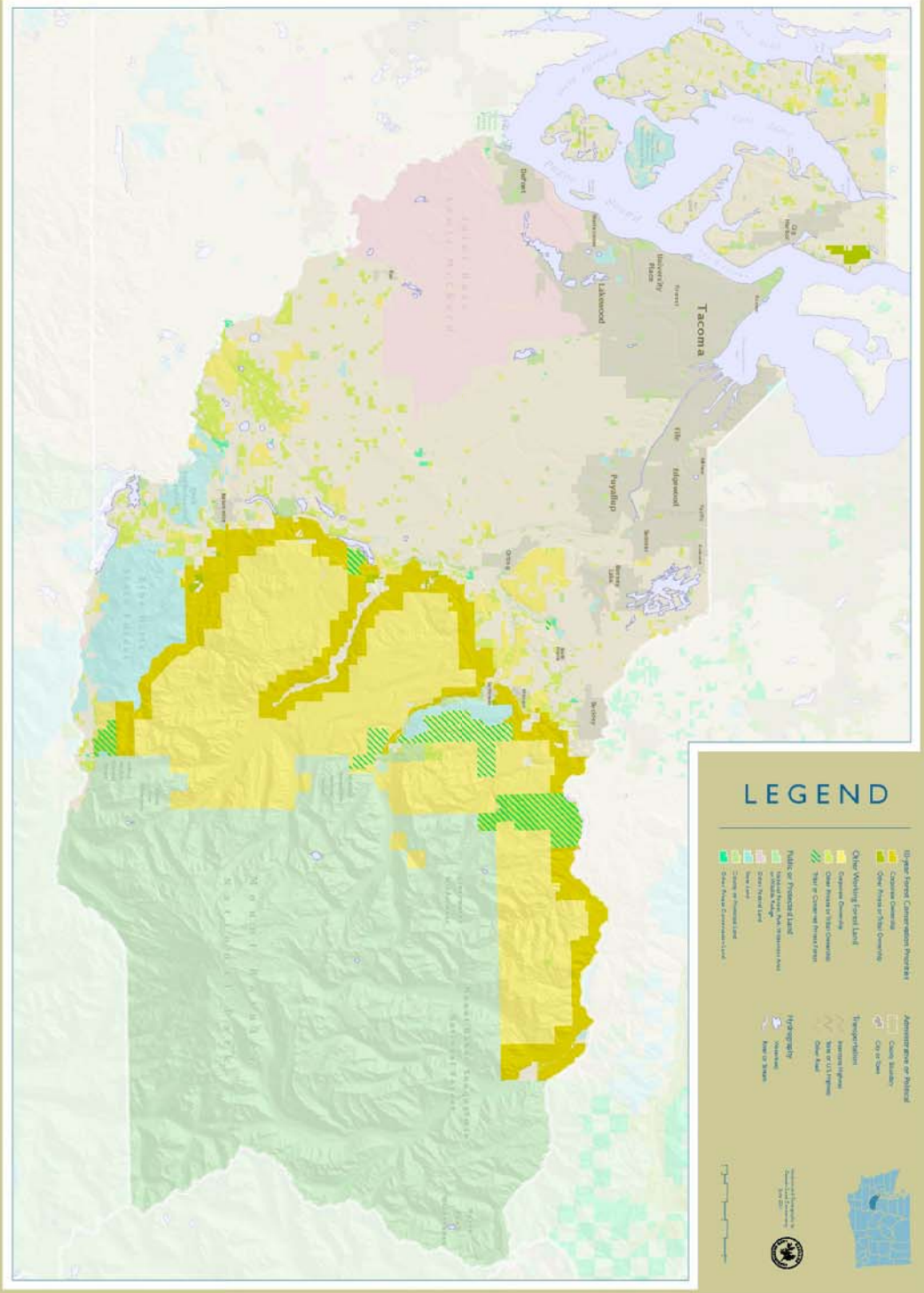
*FORESTS*

Forest priorities are to focus acquisition efforts on the two large corporate owned forests (i.e., White River and Kapowsin Tree Farms) located north and west of Mount Rainier National Park. Both of these are managed by Hancock Timber. The reason for this recommendation is the economy of scale and efficiency gained by dealing with one large landowner who is willing to sell for business purposes. It requires the same amount of work to acquire a large tract of forest as a small parcel. For the next 10 years the committee recommends focusing on acquisition of a narrow strip of land on the western edge of these forests to create a ‘conservation buffer’ between these two tree farms and non-forest lands in unincorporated Pierce County. The goal would be to acquire or conserve an average of 4,000 acres per year for a ten year total of 40,000 acres. The purpose of the buffer is to discourage future conversion of forest land to other purposes and retention of these lands in active forest production. The committee also recommends acquisition of 1,000 acres of forest north of Gig Harbor that is one of the largest remaining intact tracks of land on the peninsula. This forest is also part of the Crescent Valley Biodiversity Management Area (BMA).



# PIERCE COUNTY Open Space Task Force

## 10-year Forest Conservation Priorities





### *HABITAT BIODIVERSITY*

Through the work previously done by the GAP Analysis, the 2004 Open Space Network Assessment, and the ground truthing of citizen science Nature Mapping and Bioblitz projects sponsored by the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance (PCBA), the land areas of value to habitat and biodiversity throughout Pierce County are identified as the 267,784 acres of Biodiversity Management Areas (BMA's), previously adopted by the County in the Comprehensive Plan. It is worth noting that many of the BMA's follow river corridors. These BMA's are not ranked against each other – all are of high value for biodiversity. This was the starting point the Habitat/Biodiversity Committee used to develop their ten year acquisition recommendations.

By utilizing the existing Open Space Network map and eliminating BMAs located within existing protected areas, the committee narrowed in on priority land areas. BMAs located on lands under Tribal, Federal, State, Municipal, and/or non-profit ownerships were eliminated from further consideration because they are already under some protection. This includes large swaths of land and BMAs located within Mt. Rainier National Park, National Forest and State Forest lands, State Parks and DNR lands, Pierce County-owned properties, land owned by park districts, land owned by local jurisdictions, and privately-owned lands managed by land trust organizations. Thus, BMA's that were eliminated as priorities for ten year acquisition action include: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Remaining BMA's consist mostly of privately owned lands. The ownership varies and these lands may currently have a variety of uses, such as residential, farming, forestry, commercial or floodplains.

For acquisition purposes, the committee recommended prioritizing privately owned lands within the remaining BMA's which are:

- 3 – Gig Harbor
- 4 – Greenwater River
- 8 – Upland



- 10 – Nisqually
- 11 – Puyallup
- 16 – White River
- 17 – Lower White River

Through the PCBA’s previous work in some of these BMA’s, specific private lands have been identified as priorities for acquisition, including:

- 3 – Gig Harbor – undeveloped lands adjacent to Crescent Creek and Crescent Lake
- 17 – Lower White River – Puget Sound Energy properties, if they were to be sold

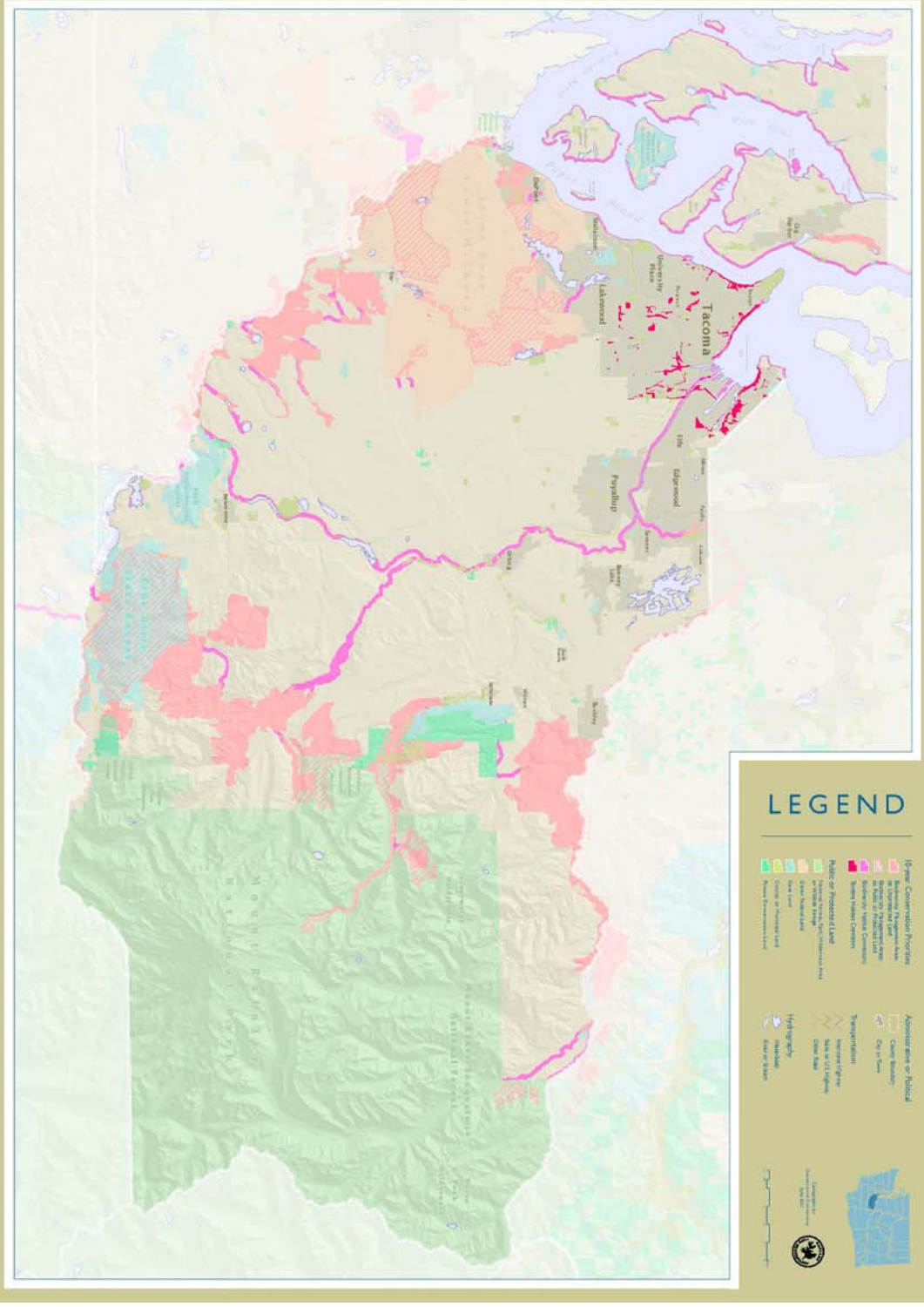
Recognizing that prioritizing roughly 100,000 acres for acquisition in ten years is not realistic, and that the Task Force is developing acquisition recommendations for other categories of open space, the Habitat/Biodiversity Committee recommends overlaying the recommended priority areas of each committee onto the Open Space Network map and prioritizing potential acquisition of those areas that fall within the BMAs listed above.

To ensure equitable distribution of conserved lands within urban areas, a second recommendation is to prioritize areas for acquisition that are within a certain distance (to be agreed upon) from the Urban Growth Areas where the UGAs are located within BMAs.

Finally, for a more detailed analysis and prioritization, the Habitat/Biodiversity Committee recommends that language be added to any future large funding source pursued, such as a tax measure, to include sufficient funding to complete a thorough GIS mapping, analysis and prioritization. Identification of the BMA’s uses GAP Analysis and other data to reflect where species richness and representation (including all terrestrial species) is concentrated within Pierce County. A qualitative comparison can be insightful in revealing areas that are important locally and that have eco-regional significance.

# PIERCE COUNTY Open Space Task Force

## 10-year Biodiversity Conservation Priorities



*FRESHWATER LAKES, RIVERS AND STREAMS*

The Freshwater Lakes, Rivers and Streams Committee developed ten year acquisition recommendations within the following watersheds/regions of the county:

1. Chambers/Clover Creek
2. Puyallup River Mainstem and Tributaries
3. Hylebos Creek
4. Nisqually River Mainstem and Tributaries
5. Key Peninsula/Gig Harbor Streams



Chambers/Clover Creek Watershed Acquisition Priorities

- Leach Creek – Acquire properties or a 15 foot wide trail easement corridor from the confluence of Leach Creek and Chambers Creek upstream (northeast) to a large wetland purchased by the Department of Transportation as a mitigation bank for SR 16 improvements. The wetland is located east of the intersection of Alameda Avenue and 48<sup>th</sup> Street West.
- Spanaway-Morey Creek – Acquire 100 foot shoreline corridor from the boundary of Joint Base Lewis McChord to the confluence with Spanaway Creek.
- Clover Creek – Acquire 100 foot shoreline corridor from Pacific Avenue to Brookdale Golf Course

Puyallup Watershed Acquisition Priorities

Main Stem Puyallup, White and Carbon Rivers

- Properties identified under Pierce County’s SWM Levy Setback Feasibility Study, 2008

Carbon River Tributaries

- Voight Creek to Voights Creek Falls – Acquire minimum 300 foot shoreline corridor
- Coplar Creek to Source – Acquire minimum 300 foot shoreline corridor
- South Prairie Creek to commercial forest boundary – Acquire minimum 300 foot shoreline corridor
- Wilkeson Creek from mouth to commercial forest boundary – Acquire minimum 100 foot to 300 foot shoreline corridor where appropriate (e.g., 100 foot buffer would likely be more appropriate in the town of Wilkeson, and 300 foot buffer more appropriate elsewhere)

Puyallup River Tributaries

- Horse Haven Creek to top of South Hill – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor
- Fennel Creek above Victor Falls – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor
- Fennel Creek below Victor Falls – Acquire minimum 300 foot shoreline corridor
- Clark’s Creek from mouth to source – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor
- Clear Creek from mouth to Pioneer Avenue – Acquire minimum 300 foot shoreline corridor
- Clear Creek from Pioneer Avenue to source – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor
- Swan Creek from the mouth to Swan Creek Park – Acquire minimum 1300 foot shoreline corridor
- Swan Creek from Swan Creek Park to Source – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor.

White River Tributaries

- Salmon Creek from mouth to source – Acquire minimum 100 foot shoreline corridor

Clearwater River – include in forest corridor conservation buffer protection

Hylebos Creek

Acquire minimum 200 foot shoreline corridor from the mouth to Pierce County boundary

Nisqually Watershed Acquisition Priorities

- Primary Focus
  - a) Nisqually River (main stem)
  - b) Mashel River (main stem)
  - c) Ohop Creek and Lake
- Secondary Focus
  - a) All other anadromous streams and lakes to which they are attached
- Tertiary Focus
  - a) All other lakes and wetlands
- Area of interest is the full channel migration zone plus 200 feet of the shoreline
- Nisqually River Above Horn Creek
  - a) acquisition of all parcels larger than 5 acres (and a few in the McKenna area)
  - b) three major landowners (priority on acquisition of these properties)



## PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- Nisqually River Below Horn Creek to Joint Base Lewis McChord
  - a) 2-5 acre rural lots (priority is on acquisition of intact shoreline parcels)
- Mashel River Above Boxcar Canyon
  - a) Include in forest corridor conservation buffer protection strategy (goal is to retain upper Mashel watershed forest land in long term forest management)
- Mashel River Below Boxcar Canyon to Highway 7
  - a) Acquire rural lots as opportunity presents (with added emphasis within the Town of Eatonville for greenbelt purposes)
- Ohop Creek Restoration Area
  - a) Acquire remaining land rights for Phases II and III as identified in Nisqually Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan
- Ohop Creek Above Restoration Area to Ohop Lake (lower priority)
  - a) Acquire rural lots as opportunity presents
- Ohop Lake
  - a) No acquisition recommendations
- Ohop Creek Above Ohop Lake
  - a) Acquire 200 foot shoreline corridor for 1 mile above Ohop Lake
- 25 Mile Creek
  - a) Acquire 200 foot shoreline corridor for 1 mile upstream from confluence at Ohop Creek



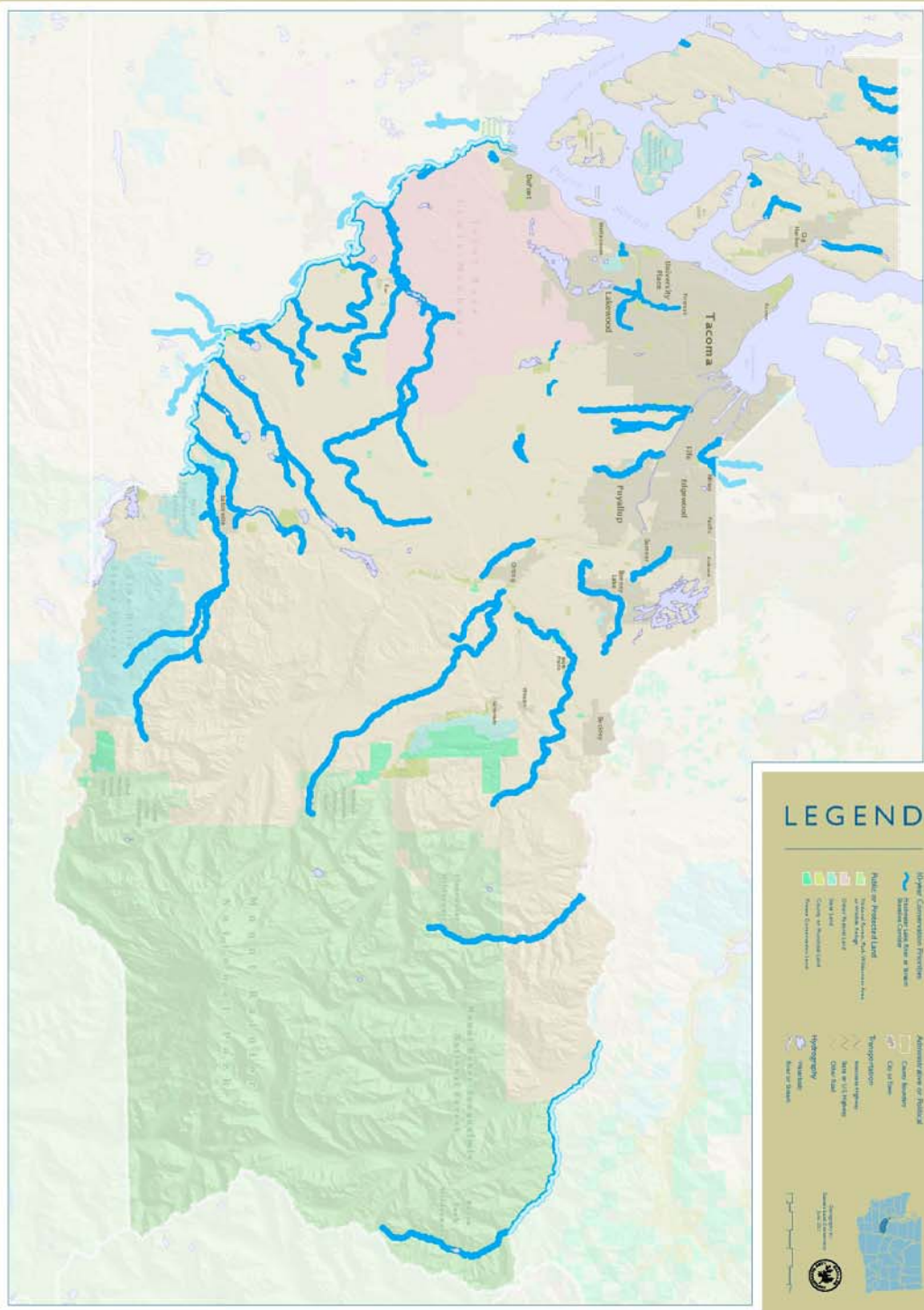
Key Peninsula/Gig Harbor Stream Acquisition Priorities

The following recommendations are identified within the Key Peninsula Basin Plan as good to excellent riparian habitat:

- Crescent Valley BMA: 50' minimum shoreline buffer from mouth to source.
- Warren Creek: 100' minimum shoreline buffer from Hale Passage to Warren Drive
- Artondale Creek: 50' minimum shoreline buffer from Maloney lake to Wollochet Bay
- Wollochet Creek: 100' minimum buffer from East May drive to Wollochet Bay
- East fork Rocky Creek: Acquire minimum 200' shoreline and forest easement buffer from 144<sup>th</sup> to mouth.
- Rocky Creek: 200' shoreline buffer from 168<sup>th</sup> street to mouth.
- Minter / Huge creek: Acquire 100' shoreline buffer from mouth to source of main stem
- Kingman's Creek: 200' Shoreline buffer from Russel Road to Case Inlet
- Schoolhouse Creek AI: 200' shoreline buffer from E. Josephine Blvd to Oro Bay
- Huge Creek: 100' shoreline buffer from County Line Road to Minter Bay

# PIERCE COUNTY Open Space Task Force

10-year Lake, River and Stream Conservation Priorities



*MARINE SHORELINE*

The Marine Shoreline committee recommended focusing marine shoreline acquisitions to meet the vision and goals that are identified in the draft Pierce County Shoreline Master Plan (plan has not been adopted). The draft plan sets forth objectives to expand or preserve priority habitat, extend open space connectivity, and/or diversify public access along the 179 miles of marine shoreline located in Pierce County. According to the draft there are 45 unique marine reaches in Pierce County. The plan specifically targets the following twelve areas:

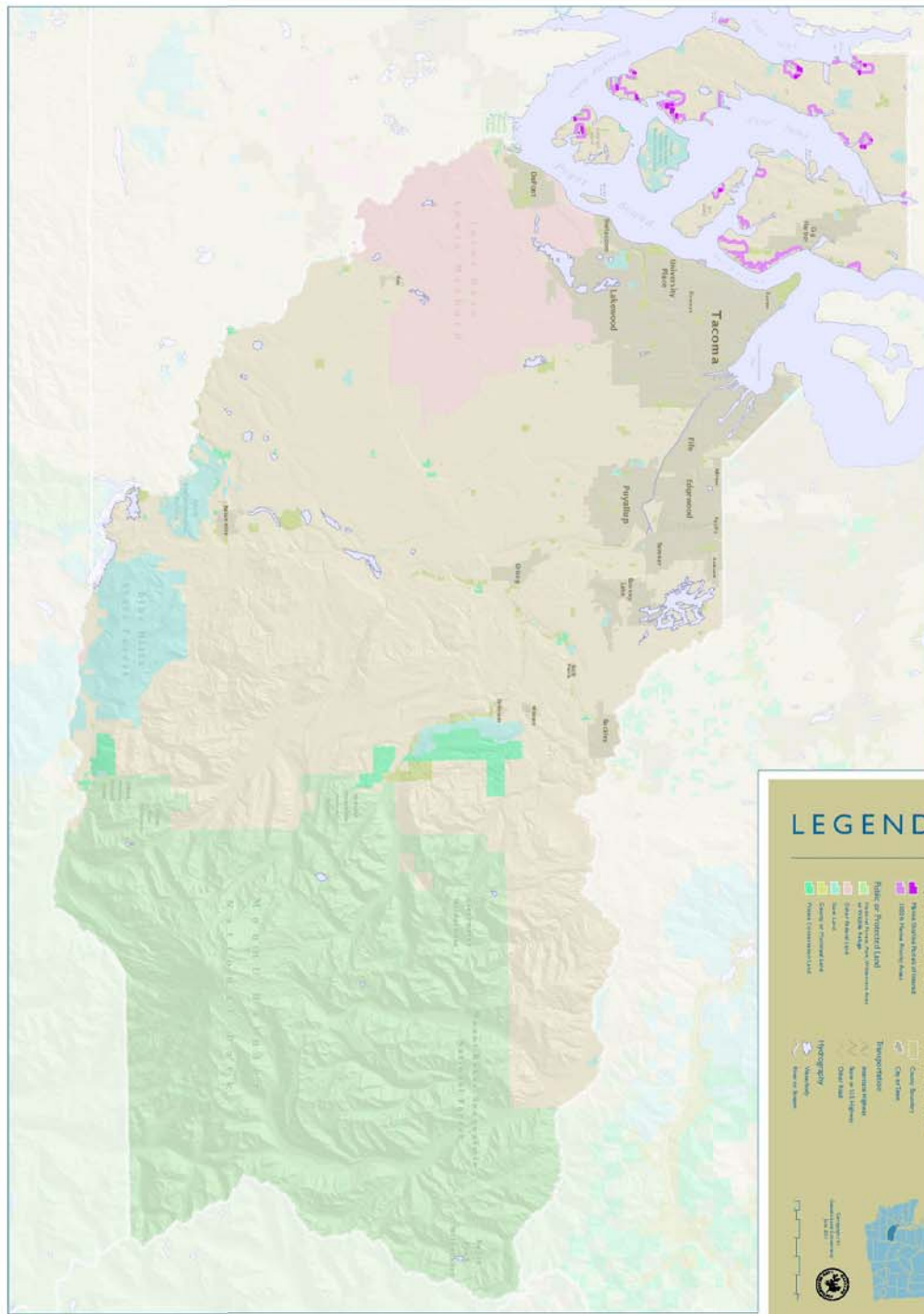
- Wollochet Bay
- Chambers Bay
- Titlow (pocket bay)
- Dupont shoreline
- Vaughn Bay
- Filucy Bay
- Oro Bay
- Rocky Bay
- Taylor Cove/Devil's Head
- Ray Nash
- Minter Bay
- Dutcher Cove



The acquisition goal is to acquire one-tenth of a mile of shoreline per year for the next ten years in each of the above target areas. This would result in an average of 1.2 miles of shoreline acquisition per year for a ten year total of 12 miles. (Note: this is a gross goal; actual acquisitions will be opportunistic and will vary from one area to the next).

# PIERCE COUNTY Open Space Task Force

## 10-year Marine Shoreline Conservation Priorities



*AGRICULTURAL LAND*

The Agricultural Land Committee derived its acquisition recommendations in part from the following plans:

- American Farmland Trust Study (2004)
- Pierce County Agricultural Strategic Plan (2006)
- Pierce Conservation District Agricultural Capacity Study (2008)
- Community Plans (Alderton/McMillian, Graham, Gig Harbor, etc.)

Currently there are approximately 39,000 ‘Farmable Acres’ of agricultural land in Pierce County. Much of this acreage is at risk of conversion to other use from various annexation and/or development proposals. The criteria the committee used to develop acquisition priorities included the following:

Land Qualities

- Lands zoned Agricultural Resource Land (ARL) due to soil type/productivity
- Lands outside UGAs not zoned ARL but currently or historically in agricultural production
- Parcel has additional or multiple open space functions
- ARL zoned lands which are not fragmented
- Lands which add to contiguous tract of preserved open space

Acquisition Readiness

- Lands identified by Pierce County PDR/TDR program
- Lands identified or prioritized by local land trusts
- Desire of landowner to preserve land as open space

Following are the acquisition priorities for the next 10 years for agricultural lands meeting the above criteria:

- Puyallup Valley – 100 acres per year totaling 1,000 acres
- Orting Valley – 100 acres per year totaling 1,000 acres



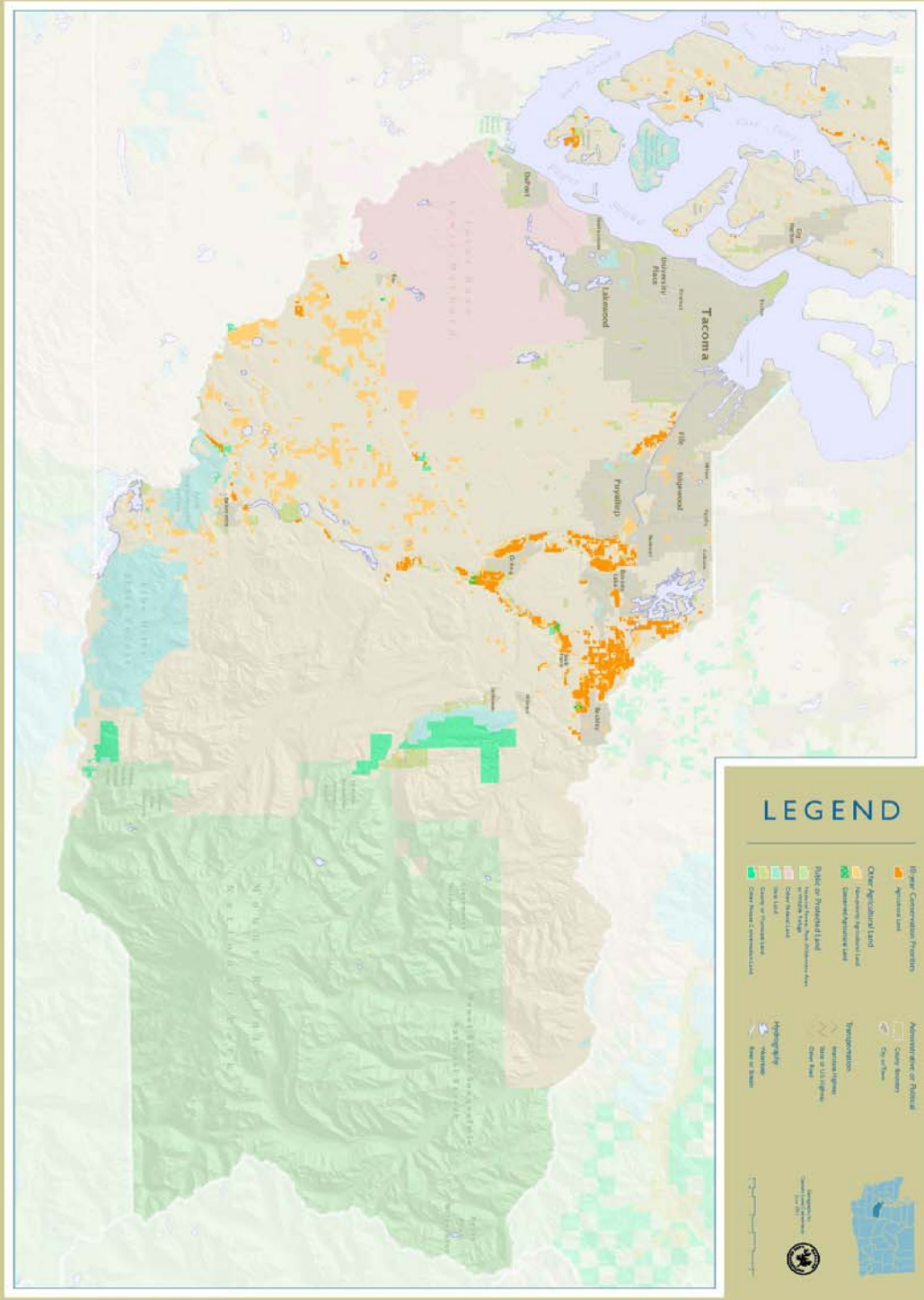
## PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- Bonney Lake Area – 50 acres per year totaling 500 acres
- Buckley Area – 50 acres per year totaling 500 acres
- South Prairie Area – 75 acres per year totaling 750 acres
- TOTAL – 3,750 acres



# PIERCE COUNTY Open Space Task Force

## 10-year Agricultural Conservation Priorities





COMPREHENSIVE MAP—ALL CATEGORIES



**NEXT STEPS**

1. *Establish an Open Space Council.* Pass an ordinance authorizing/establishing the Council and authorize a budget.
2. *Hire or appoint an Open Space Coordinator.* The County Executive should establish an open space coordinator position and recruit (or appoint someone) to fill the position.
3. *Facilitate the newly formed Open Space Council.* Begin convening the Council. Establish charter and first year work plan.
4. *Conduct a public opinion poll* to determine support for an open space ballot measure.
5. *Prepare a Ballot Measure for Voter Approval.* In collaboration with the Council and County Executive prepare a ballot timeline, determine type of ballot, obtain Pierce County Council approval for placement on ballot, and manage a public relations campaign to obtain voter approval for funding to run the program.
6. Implement the County's TDR Program per the recommendations provided earlier in this report.

Appendix

1 Sponsored by: Council member Terry Lee  
2 Requested by: County Executive/Parks and Recreation Services  
3  
4

5 **RESOLUTION NO. R2009-97s**  
6  
7

8 **A Resolution of the Pierce County Council Establishing an Open Space Task**  
9 **Force to Develop a Strategy for Expanding and Funding Open**  
10 **Space Resources in the County; Providing a Work Program and**  
11 **Schedule for the Task Force; Designating Membership;**  
12 **Requesting the Recruitment of a Facilitator; and Providing a**  
13 **Sunset Date.**  
14

15 **Whereas**, in Pierce County the term open space is broadly defined as a  
16 landscape that is primarily unimproved and may be comprised of a variety of  
17 components including: ecologically significant areas, zoned open space, wetlands,  
18 stream and/or wildlife corridors, lakes, beaches, tidal marshes, flood plains, geologically  
19 hazardous areas or unusual features, wooded areas, farm lands, golf courses, trails,  
20 nature preserves, greenbelts, utility corridors and other vacant rights-of-way, cultural,  
21 historical and view sites, as well as parcels providing access to and/or linkage with other  
22 open space areas; and  
23

24 **Whereas**, the Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A, requires every county in  
25 the state to address open space areas in their comprehensive plans.  
26

27 **Whereas**, Pierce County Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies  
28 addressing open space lands; and,  
29

30 **Whereas**, Ordinance 96-17S2 adopted an Open Space Corridors Map; and,  
31

32 **Whereas**, Pierce County updated the Open Space Corridors Map in 1999 based  
33 on the recommendations of the Open Space Implementation Committee, the GAP  
34 Analysis and the Biodiversity Network coverage and again in 2004 based upon the  
35 Pierce County Biodiversity Network Assessment report; and,  
36

37 **Whereas**, Pierce County Code Chapter 19D.170 establishes Open Space  
38 Priorities; and,  
39

40 **Whereas**, Pierce County utilizes a number of tools and programs to preserve  
41 open space including TDR/PDR, Current Use Assessment, Conservation Futures, and  
42 grant sources; and  
43

44 **Whereas**, farmlands and open space lands continue to be converted to  
45 subdivisions, commercial uses and other developed uses; and  
46

# PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

1       **Whereas**, the General Fund monies available for open space and farmland is  
2 limited and the costs for stewardship are accelerating; and

3  
4       **Whereas**, a significant funding shortfall exists for keeping and enhancing our  
5 treasured open spaces; and

6  
7       **Whereas**, options for funding have included sales tax, Real Estate Excise Tax  
8 funds, and other tax levies. All of these and new sources need to be re-explored for  
9 their future potential as sources for these needs within the framework of our existing  
10 economy; and

11  
12       **Whereas**, planning for open space, acquisition, and stewardship in Pierce  
13 County is divided among a number of agencies and private non-profit organizations who  
14 have various missions (e.g., agricultural lands, forestry, parks and recreation, riparian,  
15 etc.); and

16  
17       **Whereas**, cooperation and coordination between Pierce County agencies and  
18 special interest groups is needed now more than ever in order to preserve our open  
19 spaces; and

20  
21       **Whereas**, the formation of a task force with members with expertise and  
22 interests related to open space, including those knowledgeable about funding options  
23 and our fiscal constraints, is needed to develop strategies for meeting the needs of the  
24 citizens of Pierce County; and

25  
26       **Whereas**, the task force will also aid in gauging public interest and support for a  
27 significant open space effort in 2011-2012; **Now Therefore**,

28  
29       **BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of Pierce County:**

30  
31       **Section 1.** The Pierce County Council hereby establishes the Open Space Task  
32 Force (OSTF) to undertake a comprehensive review of public resources and financing  
33 options related to the preservation of open space and to develop a countywide strategy  
34 for increasing public revenues to support these purposes. The OSTF is also requested  
35 to provide recommendations regarding the initiation of a significant countywide open  
36 space preservation effort in 2011-2012. A work program and schedule for the task force  
37 is set forth in Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

38  
39       **Section 2.** The OSTF shall be comprised of members representing these interest  
40 groups, stakeholders and tribal governments consistent with its scale and countywide  
41 focus:

- 42  
43       • American Farmland Trust  
44       • Association of Realtors  
45       • Cascade Land Conservancy  
46       • Chambers /Clover Creeks Watershed Council  
47       • Clover Creek Council

Resolution No. R2009-97e  
Page 2 of 4

Pierce County Council  
330 Tacoma Ave. E., Room 1045  
Tacoma, WA 98402





# PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- 1 • Conservation Futures Program Citizens' Advisory Board
- 2 • Farming Assistant, Revitalization & Marketing Board
- 3 • ForeverGreen Council
- 4 • Friends of Pierce County
- 5 • Friends of the Hylebos
- 6 • Greater Peninsula Conservancy
- 7 • Key Peninsula Metropolitan Park District
- 8 • Key Peninsula – Gig Harbor – Islands Watershed Council
- 9 • Master Builders Association
- 10 • Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma
- 11 • Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- 12 • Nisqually Indian Tribe
- 13 • Nisqually Land Trust
- 14 • Nisqually River Council
- 15 • Peninsula Metropolitan Park District
- 16 • Pierce Conservation District
- 17 • Pierce County Parks and Recreation Citizens' Advisory Board
- 18 • Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- 19 • Puyallup River Watershed Council
- 20 • Squaxin Indian Tribe
- 21 • Tahoma Audubon

22  
23 Each organization or group shall designate one representative and one alternate.  
24 The designation shall be made in writing by the interest group or organization and shall  
25 be forwarded to the Park and Recreation Services Department and the Pierce County  
26 Council for recordkeeping purposes by January 1, 2010.

27  
28 The OSTF will be advisory to the Pierce County Council and the Pierce County  
29 Executive.

30  
31 Section 3. The County Executive is requested to coordinate with the Director of  
32 the Pierce County Parks and Recreation Department (P&RS), the lead County  
33 department, in recruiting a facilitator to assist the OSTF in completing their assigned  
34 work. The facilitator will assist the task force members in the implementation of the  
35 work program including timelines with benchmarks. The facilitator will help manage and  
36 facilitate the work of the OSTF including, but not limited to, scheduling work, meeting  
37 and agenda planning, establishing sub-committees, and delegating work (e.g.,  
38 research, drafting recommendations, mapping, etc.). Support may be provided as  
39 needed from P&RS, the Budget and Finance Department, the Planning and Land  
40 Services Department, the Facilities Management Department, and the Public Works  
41 and Utilities Department. Scheduling of meeting space and ensuring that all necessary  
42 notices of meetings are provided pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act shall be the  
43 duty of the P&RS.  
44

**PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE**

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Section 4. The OSTF is requested to conduct its first meeting by February 15, 2010, and the task force shall sunset on December 31, 2012, or as determined by subsequent Council action.

Section 5. The establishment of the OSTF and its work program is dependent upon the receipt of a grant for technical planning assistance.


ADOPTED this 27<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2009.

ATTEST:

**PIERCE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
Pierce County, Washington



**Denise D. Johnson**  
Clerk of the Council



**Roger Bush**  
Council Chair

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**Open Space Task Force (OSTF)  
Work Program and Schedule**

The Pierce County Open Space Task Force (OSTF) is requested to undertake a comprehensive review of resources related to open space; identify existing and potential funding opportunities; develop a strategy for funding unmet needs; and provide recommendations on a countywide effort to fund open space preservation starting in 2011. The duties of the OSTF include the following:

1. Review Pierce County (PC) adopted planning documents including: The PC Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan (PROS); Other Community PROS plans; PC Community Plans; Other open space plans, capital facilities plan, Transfer and Purchase of Development Rights program (TDR), PC Comprehensive Plan (relative to open space), Salmon Recovery plans, Biodiversity Plan; and the adopted Pierce County Open Space Map and Open Space Priorities, Chapter 19D.170.
2. Identify all public, private and market based funding sources used for acquiring and managing open space in the past 10 years; and determine their current availability and constraints.
3. Identify all potential funding sources which need State legislative or ballot action to develop and determine the constraints and limits that would apply. Examples include: new sales tax initiatives, new Conservation Futures levies, etc.
4. Review the current TDR program and recommend strategies for funding the program, estimate the level of public support expected, and identify other external factors that may influence the success or failure of each strategy/scenario.
5. Recommend a 10-year acquisition plan and identify potential funding sources and/or conservation actions.
6. Review the roles and responsibilities of Planning and Land Services (PALS), Public Works and Utilities (PWU), Facilities Management (FM) and Parks and Recreation Services (P&RS) in the administration of the TDR program, habitat and open space planning, property acquisition and in the management and stewardship of Pierce County's open space lands. Make recommendations that may enhance the effectiveness of these programs.



# PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

- 1 7. Perform other tasks necessary to complete the OSTF's work as listed  
2 above.
- 3
- 4 8. Prepare an initial draft report for the County Council and Executive for  
5 presentation in October 2010, discussing open space needs and strategies  
6 and methods for meeting those needs.
- 7
- 8 9. Present final recommendations, including a funding plan by May 2011. If it  
9 is determined that an open space funding effort should be pursued with the  
10 public in 2011-2012, then the recommendations should also include a public  
11 outreach plan and timeline for a ballot measure, if applicable.
- 12
- 13



# PIERCE COUNTY OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE

## DISTRIBUTION:

Pat McCarthy, County Executive   X    
Pierce County Library   X    
Municipal Research and Services Center   X    
Law Library   X    
State Examiner   X    
Susan Long, Code Revisor   X    
Council Record Book   X    
Kathy Kravit-Smith, Director, Parks and Recreation Services   X    
Skip Ferrucci, Resource Stardship Superintendent   X    
Janet Krillich, Superintendent of Administrative Services   X    
Paula Folkins, Parks and Recreation Services   X    
Patrick Kenney, Director, Budget and Finance   X    
Bret Carlstad, Facilities Maintenance   X    
Chuck Kleeberg, Director, Planning and Land Services   X    
Brian Ziegler, Director, Public Works and Utilities   X  

11/5/2009 jms  
Date/initials

