



June 25, 2015

**From:** Seattle Audubon Society Conservation Committee  
**To:** Seattle Parks and Recreation Board of Park Commissioners  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Natural Areas and Greenbelts Supplemental Use Guidelines

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To the Board of Park Commissioners,

The Seattle Audubon Society Conservation Committee appreciates this opportunity to voice our concerns about the use and management of our public park natural areas and greenbelts.

It is our judgment that natural areas and greenbelts within the purview of Seattle Parks and Recreation should be reserved primarily for the preservation of wild nature within the city limits. Such greenbelts and open areas provide habitat for a year-round diversity of resident and migratory wildlife, including critical resting and foraging stopover sites for migratory birds. Natural areas and greenspaces also provide rain infiltration, flood control, carbon storage, and passive recreation opportunities, such as walking, hiking, and nature and bird watching, for people willing to respect the natural world.

Seattle is one of the fastest-growing large cities in the U.S. Our projected rate of growth will mean the addition of 200,000 more people by 2040. According to the Seattle Times, Seattle grew faster last year than any other city in the surrounding King County.

The addition of so many more people to the City of Seattle proper will put a great strain on all our services, but the strain will perhaps fall most heavily on Seattle Parks and Recreation. There will be pressure to reduce the number of open spaces and natural areas in favor of additional housing. There will be pressure to convert natural areas to active recreational use, including zip lines, mountain bike trails, playfields, and dog parks. There will be pressure to think of natural areas and greenbelts as spaces for the use of humans. When human needs conflict with wildlife needs, wildlife usually loses.

We must remember, however, that nature, in its wildness within the city limits, provides immeasurable value in terms of ecological and spiritual benefits. Wild and natural areas have always made a critical contribution to the quality of life in Seattle, the Emerald City. Pocket

parks, lawns, paved paths, and playfields have their place in the recreational life of a city, but so does wildlife. Let us not be the generation that paves over such habitat or nibbles away at it to such an extent that wildlife is driven out of the city and out of our lives. We support providing opportunities for increased active recreation in the larger, regional parks designated for those purposes, while simultaneously preserving the wild areas that make Seattle the greenest city in the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

The Seattle Audubon Society Conservation Committee  
[conservation@seattleaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@seattleaudubon.org)