

September 8, 2015

Seattle Nature Alliance
3723 SW Elmgrove St.
Seattle, WA 98126

Seattle Park Board of Commissioners
Department of Parks and Recreation
100 Dexter Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109

Dear Seattle Board of Park Commissioners,

We wrote to you two months ago, urging you to reject the Parks Department's Supplemental Use Guidelines for Seattle's Natural Areas and Greenspaces. Since that time, Parks has come up with two revisions. We see no substantive changes in either revision – as a matter of fact, some of the new material is worse than the original – and we strongly encourage you to vote NO on the revised guidelines.

- We should preserve these areas for the future as they were preserved for us. Rather than protecting these areas as they were defined in the 1993 City Council Resolution regulating their use, Parks is essentially inviting RFPs (requests for proposal) for how to “activate” them.
- There is no case made for need. Parks states: “If the purpose of the proposed use can be met at an alternative location, then a location in a Natural Area should be a last resort”. Parks never cited any documentation for lack of appropriate alternative locations to a zipline in Lincoln Park or a mountain bike park in Cheasty Greenspace. There are many other locations for active sports installations in already developed park land. Those areas almost certainly have considerably fewer ECA considerations than our natural areas and greenspaces, and many are currently unused. There is no indication of a process in place to ensure looking elsewhere first.

Continuing issues:

- Sanctuaries are areas that will not be developed, and are exempt from the supplemental uses guidelines. To repeatedly mention this is extremely misleading, as there is only ONE wildlife sanctuary on land, Kiwanis Ravine. The qualification for sanctuary status effectively precludes any more being added. This reference appears in all versions of the guidelines.
- Commercial development of our public park lands has never been addressed in any version of the guidelines, even though it has been mentioned repeatedly by critics. Our position is that our publicly funded park lands belong to all of the citizens of Seattle, and no public park land should be made available only to those who can afford admission or specialized equipment.

- Community decision-making about natural area and greenbelt use was introduced in the second revision. While this sounds good at first glance, we have serious equity concerns. Not all communities are created equally, i.e., some are very active, some are not. Some, like the West Duwamish Greenbelt, have essentially no community. And community make-up and values change over time. Our Natural Areas and Greenspaces must be preserved for ALL of the citizens of Seattle, for a long time. Once an area is developed for a specific, specialized use, it is nearly impossible to return it to a natural state.

Our petition has nearly 800 signatures asking you to reject the supplemental use guidelines. That petition is officially supported by 17 organizations, most of them involved in the restoration and maintenance of our natural areas and greenspaces. We have published 13 letters written to you by organizations urging you to say no to the guidelines. We have also published several compelling personal letters. We hope you will listen to their advice. We close as we ended our earlier letter to you:

We support increasing passive-use opportunities, especially in underserved neighborhoods, or in natural areas that have been long neglected by the city. Passive use is important because it is universally available to virtually everyone. Passive uses are compatible with one another, and with the other living creatures that depend on natural areas for habitat. Passive uses do not require their own specially allotted spaces, or ask people to pay fees for entrance. They do not favor organized groups who have the time and energy to provide ecosystem restoration services in return for usage privileges. Passive use is the best way to ensure that natural areas do not become used beyond their capacity, by adding potentially unlimited “new” modes of active sports. **Passive use is why we have natural areas today.**

Sincerely,



Seattle Nature Alliance:

Denise Dahn, Mark Ahlness and Rebecca Watson, Directors

www.seattlenaturealliance.org

cc: City Council President Burgess; Councilmembers Bagshaw, Godden, Harrell, Licata, O'Brien, Okamoto, Rasmussen, Sawant; Parks Superintendent Jesús Aguirre; Parks Deputy Superintendent Williams; Mayor Ed Murray