

Miller Peninsula Planning Public Comments October 25, 2022-May 29, 2024

Director Dupuis,

Thanks to you, your staff, and the three Commissioners for putting on last week's Miller Peninsula State Park meeting in Blyn. I think one point of total agreement is that this is a wonderful asset in the park system. I live near the southern edge of the park and hike its trails several times a week.

I am glad that there will be an EIS done before development decisions. A "no change" option was preferred by many and is a part of any EIS, but rarely, if ever the chosen option. Unlike, perhaps, others who attended, I favor a certain level of development. Hike in, ride in, bike in, campgrounds would enhance and expand the day experience to overnight, and maybe multiple days. This would increase its attractiveness to both local and statewide users.

I have heard repeatedly about the need for maintenance at Sequim Bay State Park, including at the Blyn meeting from park staff. As a former Sequim public works director, I was involved with improvements to the sewer system. Though, in talking to staff at the meeting, there doesn't seem to be a plan to fund repairs, rather the plan is to close sections of the park to camping. The slope stability issues in the park can be solved, and some of the money targeted for more intense development at Miller Peninsula should be diverted to do this. If your roof has a leak, repair the roof, don't build a whole new house. The two parks are yin and yang, a beautiful full service park at Sequim Bay, and a more natural experience at Miller Peninsula.

One charge at the meeting I need to address--that a lodge is needed to serve those poor people that don't have RVs. Neither I, nor most of my friends have an RV, yet we find a way to enjoy the outdoors without the need for a lodge where we go. I don't think even the gentleman who made this argument took it seriously. The guiding principle for Miller Peninsula State Park should be, "the lesser the development, the greater the experience". Sincerely,

P.S. I continually hear and read that the park is all second growth. Much of it has been logged but significant portions are old growth habitat. Because of poor soils and low rainfall, trees grow very slowly. A sixteen inch diameter trunk can be several hundred years old. This is why Rayonier has their seed farm here; stressed trees produce more seeds. ¹

Dear Commissioners,

Do any of you on this board live in Diamond Point, Sequim or anywhere on the Olympic Peninsula? I got the idea at the meeting that you think those of us who are going to be most impacted by development of this park (living in Diamond Point/Gardiner area) are a bunch of NIMBYs, at least that is the attitude that Nikki Fields seems to exude at the meetings I have attended previous to this most recent one at the casino. Glad she will no longer be a part of this planning. Traffic is going to be a nightmare, especially in summer months. It already IS a nightmare. A roundabout needs to go in BEFORE the park is developed OR a roundabout at a completely separate, dedicated entrance would reduce some of the impact on those whose only exit to Hwy 101 is Diamond Point Road. And what about all those whose properties are literally at the edge of the park? Will they be required to build fences to keep park-goers (with ill intentions) off of their property? I am writing to urge you to consider a 4th option, and that is to leave the park as is, or limit camping to tent sites only, with pit toilets and limited water taken from aquifers we who live here are relying on. We already HAVE an RV park in Diamond Point. Did you miss the statements made by the Douglas family member, a marine biologist, who mentioned the excessive spring rain we had this year as possibly giving a false expectation as to how much water will be available in the future? Please consider doing something DIFFERENT with this park. If

people want climbing walls and waterslides perhaps the tribe can build them at their casino? Seems to me they are keen to develop this park in order to bring more people into their casino. Thank you,

P.S. Have any of you even hiked in this park and looked at the areas your plans will destroy? As far as I can tell from the maps, you are going to tear out one of the most beautiful areas where all the arbutus (Madrone) trees are growing. I'd be glad to lead you all on a tour because I have walked or off-road biked over the entire park. ²

Michael Hankinson,

I attended the public planning meeting October 18 in Blyn, one of the mostly local attendees concerned about our cherished state park's future.

I listened to the various veins of anxiety should a large campground be situated in the middle of this vast quiet natural gem. Fire, water source deletion, increased traffic congestion on the dead end Diamond Point road and at its 101 intersection.

The comments which seemed most poignant came from equestrians, fearing that all their work to establish and maintain trails suitable for their activities, might be overwhelmed by a big influx of vehicles, hikers and bikers unfamiliar with trail etiquette on narrow single track muddy trails.

I am a hiker, living in Sequim for the past 9 years. Miller Peninsula State Park was our 2nd hike, from Craig Romano's hiking book, and it was as delightful as described. It has remained a favorite ever since, and I've explored the mysterious trails, made my own maps, and been a hike leader for my two local hiking groups. I have volunteered to help with maintenance. The new kiosks with maps at major intersections are very helpful.

There are new additions outside the park boundaries of trails made by the Jamestown tribe and DNR. Our hiking clubs use it especially in the cooler wetter season, when the high trails are snowed in.

Should three campground loops and a group campground be sited in the middle of all this, it is hard to envision peace for hiking and horse riders. Mountain bike riders are rare in winter, with so many muddy spots.

As I talk with others, many fear that if the state park system doesn't get this development, to provide revenue from camping and lodging, you will sell it to a private developer?

At the Blyn meeting, the moderator said that people from the Seattle area don't know about the park or how to use it. I might suggest more marketing as a place to hike, bike, ride horses, and more directions as to how to access it. Perhaps make another parking lot. The parking area off East Sequim Bay road is small, unpaved, and hard to find for outsiders. Could there be parking at the junction of Aerospace road and Diamond Point road? If you must make a camping area, could it be east of Diamond Point road in that little used area of the state park, to leave the main area more "as is"?

These are my comments as a local who opposed all three of the options presented. ³

Regarding Miller Peninsula State Park development planning- Washington State Park and Recreation Commission folks,

By way of background, my wife and I live on East Sequim Bay Road, which serves as in/out west access to Miller Peninsula State Park property. We walk 5-6 miles trails within the park nearly every day, and in every season, during which we regularly encounter many hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians enjoying the extensive trails.

Graduating from Washington State in Forestry (BS Forest Soils, 1978), I appreciate the abundant regrowth of trees, flowers and shrubs in the area from the original harvesting, as well as the prolific wildlife that flourish in the undisturbed acreage. The Park, in its' minimally developed state, is a true treasure, the likes of which are rare and especially within easy access from a major highway.

The 3 options presented by your Commission threaten to remove the ability to reconnect with our natural environment on Nature's terms. With campgrounds, RV camping and lodging currently well within reach of the Miller property, the Park functions perfectly as a same-day destination. East Sequim Bay Road can only just handle the existing traffic. In fact, accidents and even a recent death on the road demonstrate its' inadequacy even now. The influx of more traffic will only exacerbate this problem. Diamond Point Road is only slightly more capable of facilitating additional car and RV traffic. We strongly encourage you to consider a fourth option for the future of this jewel of the Olympic Peninsula, leave the property as-is, and in doing so, leave a unique opportunity for all to appreciate Nature and well within reach. Many thanks for your consideration. Be well, ⁴

Miller Peninsula park is perfect just the way it is. I am a Sequim resident and my family and I are regular users of the park. The "unimproved" nature of the park is the main reason that we enjoy it so much. There are plenty of parks around that cater to RV's and folks who prefer not to get out into the woods and it is rare to find a park that is as wild as this one. The money that you folks would spend "improving" Miller Peninsula would be better spent acquiring more parks or maintaining the parks that already exist. Thank you for your time. ⁵

Dear Commissioners and Director Dupuis,
Thank you very much for hosting the recent informational session and open house focused on the future of Miller Peninsula State Park. We appreciate the outreach as well as your flexibility in refocusing that event based on the interests of those who attended. We know you heard about the myriad concerns held by those who live on the Miller peninsula and expect that many of these concerns will be addressed as the planning process moves forward. We do encourage you to formally consider a fourth option for Park development, namely the "Natural Forest Area, Day Use and Educational Purposes" option that many Diamond Point residents are requesting. This is different than the "no changes" analysis that will be embedded in the SEpA process and outlines a different vision for future use of this state asset. As you work through the next phases of planning we hope that you will give sufficient attention to the realities surrounding planning for natural disasters. We know you are already building plans related to wildfire danger and want to be sure you are also considering planning for a major seismic event like the Cascadia earthquake. When we experience a major seismic event our expectation is that Clallam County will be divided into a series of "micro-islands" created when bridges and/or shoreline portions of our single transportation corridor Highway 101 are damaged or destroyed. The entire Miller Peninsula is one of these "micro-islands" with anticipated pinch points being Blyn and Discovery Bay. We have been advised to prepare for being cut off from most major forms of aid and relief for as long as a month. Should Miller Peninsula State Park improvements include camping and/or overnight capacity we will want to understand what plans are in place to assist local residents and emergency responders — in this case, most likely CERT volunteers - with supporting potentially hundreds of additional people for a sustained period of time.
Thank you again for your outreach and for working hard to engage with the concerned residents of the Diamond Point area. ⁶

I have had a house on Diamond Point on the Miller Peninsula for over a decade. I will retire from teaching this year and move there full time. We bought the place due to how quiet it is and all the lovely trails, fauna, and flora in the neighborhood. Developing this park in the way the state is leaning will DESTROY all of that!! Trees will go which we need to protect us during climate change, beautiful Rhodendrons will be destroyed, and the eagles and other animal life will also be decimated. How is this good for our state? Encouraging horrible big RVs is another

thing we should no longer be doing - fossil fuel guzzlers that they are. This is totally irresponsible.

With climate change, it has become even drier to the point of drought in the area. We were told by the firefighters in the neighborhood that they don't have enough water to save our homes if one burns. Yet, the state wants to put in a huge lodge, cabins, dining area, 90 RV slots! No water and constant burn bans are not conducive to large amounts of overnight lodgers!!

There is only one way into our community and ever so much traffic on 101 during the tourist season especially. This would make it hard for us to escape any fires. At a minimum, fires from late spring to late fall should be prohibited.

As an avid hiker, backpacker, and snowshoer, I have noted the disrepair of roads and trails in this state due to lack of budget. How can we possibly afford to set up another park that may not end up getting maintained properly!?

The parks people keep saying it's not being done for the money but to bring people to nature. I call lies on that one. People are already out in nature much more and many of them deface it. You are planning to destroy some beautiful places here with this plan.

We are fine with it being more developed as a day use facility and have enjoyed the better maintenance of the current trails. It is simply irresponsible to destroy more of this beautiful place for all the reasons above. Sincerely, ⁷

8 October 2023

Re: Large, commercial development proposed by WA State Parks

Dear Director Dupuis,

My concerns are related to further development of Miller Peninsula State Park in Clallam County. Currently, we have a largely undeveloped public lands parcel with a well established network of trails used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. These lands are also habitat that support native plants and animals. I am not opposed to ecologically-friendly development of this park to accommodate state residents and visitors. ***I am opposed to our Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission getting into the luxury lodging and restaurant business.***

I understand that State Parks has been working with a consultant and is currently favoring a Village Center Alternative Concept for development of Miller Peninsula State Park. This plan includes a large lodge (100 rooms), restaurant/dining area, 16-20 cabins, administrative buildings, amphitheater, and 90 RV and tent camping sites. This is a huge commercial development being proposed by State Parks.

This is a major change in practice for State Parks, perhaps for Washington government itself – building a large, commercial facility for public use.

As far as I can tell ***State Parks has completed no business analysis and has no business plan for this development.*** No bank would lend funds for such a large development without a business plan or market analysis.

State Parks has completed no socioeconomic analysis and has based development goals assumptions about increased need for overnight accommodations I'll admit a few more campsites would be welcome in the area, but... ***Is State Parks now in the business of competing with private, commercial enterprise by building lodges and restaurants?***

State Parks does a great job providing lands with recreational opportunity, camping facilities for the average-income citizens, and modest facility development. Lets focus on providing those services to our residents – not a new, government-owned hotel and restaurant and mini-village.

Sincerely, ⁸

I have been informed that the Parks has made a final recommendation of building a Village Center with hotel and campground with 90 campsites tp develop Miller Peninsula. It seems reasonable to have a campground and make the beautiful peninsula more accessible to Washington residents. However building a hotel seems like overkill. The tribe has a large hotel with their casino, and Sequim has multiple hotel and motel options. Please keep the development minimized to protect the natural beauty of this area. Sincerely, ⁹

It has come to my attention that the Washington State Parks Department is considering changes to the Miller Peninsula State Park that will dramatically alter the usage of the park and negatively impact the natural environment of the park.

Currently Miller Peninsula State Park is a day use park with extensive second growth forest. This forest has substantial understory growth with abundant fungi. It is well on its way to becoming an old growth forest. The current trail system allows people to wind their way through the forest and observe this regrowing ecosystem without disturbing it. Future generations will be able to learn about this gradual progression to a climax forest.

My understanding is that the proposed plan would open up the park by clearing away portions of the forest for car camping, RV camping , concessions, etc. This would disrupt the continuity of the developing ecosystem and perhaps stop the forest from ever attaining old-growth status.

There are a number of other campgrounds and RV parks in the area. Are they being used to their maximum capacity? Why would the state of Washington be investing in park development that puts it in direct competition with the private sector when there is no obvious need to do so?

In order to increase public access, I would suggest improving the current trail system to make it more accessible and with more information signs to educate walkers about a long term process that will benefit future generations. In a century how many old growth forests will be easily accessible to our fellow citizens?

Thank you for taking the time to read this. ¹⁰

Dear WA State Parks and Recreation Planners,

We are asking for your assistance in preventing the excessive and disruptive development of a 'Destination Park' which will devastate the pristine and quiet nature of Miller Peninsula State Park and its adjacent residential and wildlife communities.

As you probably know, the plan is to install a lodge, concessions, zip lines, cabins, and 150 RV & Tent sites!

The plan is extreme and unbalanced, sacrificing diverse ecosystems that are essential for protecting the area and its precious aquifer. Those who want to make money on this project are not being realistic or responsible. We need help stopping these excessive, unnecessary projects that destroy such important resources.

There is already enough development in our area:

- > There are two RV campgrounds already located on the Peninsula, and a new private, luxury RV site is being planned.
- > There are a wide variety of camping options already in existence nearby.
- > It is unlikely our State Parks will ever recoup the \$25+ million in cost being asked to develop this Park.
- > Washington State Parks currently has a \$45 million backlog of needed repairs at other State Parks.
- > Further development of overnight sites increases the fire risk for our entire area.

Please use the power of your office to be a voice of reason and influence in protecting Miller Peninsula State Park from this money-making endeavor that puts so much else at risk. We are tax-paying homeowners who care about our community and we understand and love it in a way that developers do not.

Thank you for your help ¹¹

Hi,

I live in the Diamond Point area on Miller Peninsula. Unlike most of my neighbors, I am a big fan of the Miller State Park development. If done right park development could be great for all involved.

The boating segment of state park users do not seem to be represented. I think this is a missed opportunity. The portion of the park along the Strait of Juan De Fuca does not provide much in the way of boating access, because of rough water and tall cliffs. However the portion of the park along the Discovery Bay Trail does have a location that could accommodate some mooring buoys. There is an ephemeral creek (at about mid trail) that could provide a path to connect the beach to the main trail system. A dinghy dock would be nice, but as with other state park buoy sites, it may not be needed. Discovery Bay is little used by boaters, it does not have many good anchoring locations. Mooring buoys could make it a convenient location for a stop when transiting from the San Juan Islands and Point Wilson. Maybe you can add this to your plan.

Thanks¹²

Senator VanDeWege; Representative Tharinger; Representative Chapman; Clallam County Commissioners; WA State Parks Director Dupuis; WA State Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Members of the Save Miller Park Coalition, I am writing this note because I want you to be aware that I and many residents of Diamond Point are totally, completely 100% against the plans to "upgrade" the Miller Peninsula State Park to a destination park with overnight camping and other unpopular amenities.

There are many reasons for this and I will list a few that worry me:

- Traffic - we have one road in/out of Diamond Point. It is already dangerous

when someone is turning left (east) on Highway 101. Adding in tourists with campers and boats will make it a nightmare.

- Fire Danger - overnight campers will increase the fire danger in our woods
- Water - where will you get all the water to sustain all the people wanting to shower, use the bathrooms, wash dishes, etc?
- Waste water - if you do get enough water for all the campers to use, where will the waste water go? Please not into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There is a delicate balance in our waters for supporting sea life, our fragile orca population, seals, crabs, halibut, etc. Plus all the sea birds that are supported by the waters of the Strait
- Public Meetings - I attended several of the public information meetings. I heard many people speak against the proposed changes. Not one person was in favor of the proposed changes. Were you listening?
- Noise - I can picture the park full of campers, partying, playing loud music and yelling "Elmer!" Don't we have a right to quiet enjoyment of our property
- People - do you really think that people will come visit and stay in the park? No, they will explore the area - my neighborhood. Currently we enjoy a lovely, quiet, safe area. Many residents take walks daily with their friends and their dogs. We aren't worried because traffic is minimal and other people who live here know that there are lots of retirement age people out walking and they know to look out for walkers in the streets.
- Money - I get it, you have been allocated money to spend. Why not use the funds to repair and maintain all parks in Washington State. Some of the funds could be used for forest maintenance to reduce the fire hazards already present in Miller Peninsula State Park and other State Parks. I suggest that access to Highway 101 be improved for our safety.
- Other campsites already available. There are other places for people to camp overnight without altering Miller Peninsula State Park's day-use only designation.

Thank you for listening. I implore you to reconsider and keep our park as a natural forest area and day-use only facility.

Thank you, 13

I live on Cat Lake Rd which borders the Miller Peninsula park land on the south. For the almost 20 years I've lived here I enjoy the tranquility of walking the woods taking in nature. I would hate to see a full-blown developed state park with a lodge, many RV sites, and cabins. There is no water access as is found at other parks. There are many other parks nearby with these amenities. We don't need a duplication.

Has there been any thought to how you will handle all the traffic off Hwy. 101 and along Diamond Pt. Rd.? The proposed entrance is in the worst place you could put it...on a sharp curve at the access to Cat Lake Rd. What are thinking??? The best place is further north on a straight section of road where it wouldn't block roads that local residents use.

Most importantly, since there is only one road to the "point", where many people live, I'm concerned about fire hazards and how these people will be able to flee the area. Not to mention trespassers on private property and vandalism.

I would propose Miller Peninsula park land be developed more as a preserve for DAY USE ONLY with a picnic area and a small building for educational purposes. Taxes are high enough now, we can't afford to pay for the upkeep of a full-service park and don't want "city people" destroying the beauty that's out here. ¹⁴

State of Washington, State Parks Department

RE: MILLER PENINSULA STATE PARK

The project you are planning and the development of the Miller Peninsula State Park is moving in the wrong direction. I am a park user, have volunteered in many capacities for lands and parks and have a college degree in outdoor recreation resources management. I understand many of the pressures encountered in order to provide recreational opportunities to our residents and visitors.

I, along with many residents nearby and on the Olympic Peninsula, greatly value the natural beauty and primitive landscape in these 2800 acres along with the 3 miles of waterfront. I believe there is more value in the park land just the way it is. I believe the **highest and best use** of this land is as a primitive area with minimal trails, just the way it is today. Honestly, I do not see opportunities in the future for the Washington State Parks Department to procure another similar 2800 contiguous areas of forest land on the Miller Peninsula including 3 miles of waterfront in a similar condition such as the state park land in question.

Individually, I believe that each person tasked with the proposed project in the State Parks Department has some appreciation for conservation, ecology and nature. You are probably skilled at park planning and assessing needs for the future of Washington State Parks and its users. I think the Miller Peninsula State Park development plan is the wrong project, at the wrong time, justified and driven by the wrong people for the wrong reasons. The persons participating in the 2020 survey provided opinions that are misinformed resulting in flawed conclusions about the park's future. In my experience, surveys such as the one done regarding the future of this park yield results that are inaccurate.

The peninsula does not need an amusement park and destination resort that is in competition with local private business. The economic development agencies, including the port district, that exist in the county are already engaged in creating business opportunities and exploring revenue producing ventures. One universal truth about state parks is that they never pay their own way and whatever future revenue expected from activities creating funds will never be sufficient to cover costs for operations and maintenance. The local people and neighbors have a better feel for the park located at their doorstep. Locals are the ones maintaining trails, brushing windfall and watching out for other park users.

I support the "OPTION 4" (no development) being considered and strongly oppose any of the 3 development options the department is considering. Those options spell disaster for the park as we now know and love it.

Respectfully submitted comments for your consideration, ¹⁵

Dear State Parks & Recreation Commissioners,

Pease stop the carving up of Miller Peninsula State Park for hundreds of campsites, a lodge, overnight cabins, zip lines, rock climbing, and more despite the fact that existing state parks are underfunded and in need of repair. All of these amenities will be costly and much less affordable to those with lower incomes.

Washington State Parks currently has a backlog of \$45 million in needed repairs at other State Parks. There are already a variety of camping options in this area.

We already have an existing water shortages throughout Clallam County and rapidly melting glaciers. As is, this park is a Natural hydrological and climate solution, as forests like these infiltrate and recharge ground water and store carbon beyond compare. Development like the proposed plan will drastically reduce ground water recharge and create a high water demand on an aquifer with a limited capacity, especially during the ever increasing drought events seen for the last 3-4 years in summer and surely to come.

Please consider the future benefits in ecotourism, recreation, economically equal access and the future of the water supply to residents and visitors alike. This park has such diversity in wildlife and ecosystems and offers over 35 miles of well marked and established trails and is ideal for horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking.

The natural beauty of the Olympic Peninsula is what people come out west for.

Thank you for being the leader that your grandchildren can be proud of, and for preserving this park for our future generations.

Respectfully,¹⁶

Dear Commisioners ,

I thank you for all your hard work as an elected official. I am writing to urge you to protect and preserve the Miller Peninsula State Park. This new state park is a jewel that should be preserved for future generations. While I think some development is positive, such as the proposed campground with 90 sites for tents and RV's. I strongly oppose turning this new park into a "destination resort" with a 100 room hotel, 20 cabins, pool/sauna restaurant, concessions and amphitheater. It seems out of scale with the property. Thank you for considering my feedback. ¹⁷

The last thing Miller Peninsula needs is a destination or enhanced State Park. Two other commercial ventures explored turning the area into a destination resort and both were canceled because of the lack of water. Climate change continues to diminish water resources in the area as fire danger continues to increase. When you start adding campsites, RV sites, and entertainment sites that will bring more people to the area, you are increasing the chances of a catastrophic fire. It would not be a question of if it will happen, it will only be a question of when.

Then there's the problem of destroying a native forest that actually helps with carbon reduction and environmental stabilization. You simply cannot justify destroying trees so you can accommodate more carbon spewing cars and RV's. This would be a totally irresponsible project. ¹⁸

As a resident of Diamond Point, at the tip of the Miller Peninsula, the thought of a full-service state park on the Peninsula terrifies me. Diamond Point Road is a narrow, winding road that provides the only ingress/egress route for thousands of residents at Diamond Point. In the event of fire, earthquake, or tsunami--all of which are very real possibilities--the flight to safety will be a nightmare. Compounding that with the addition of campers and visitors who aren't familiar with the road and area is foolish and a risk I wouldn't think the state would want to take. ¹⁹

Most local have traveled this road before. When presented, citizens were told of three options. One was an over the top lodge, zip lines etc (little Disney) One was to pretty much leave as is, except no ADA accommodations, no camp sites, water etc. with only 9 parking spots, it looked like that was what parks and recs was hoping for. So after getting locals all worked up, The state didn't have the money to even start. They said they did when brought to citizen groups, but who would know? Projects probably ran a muck with funds. No hurry, just don't sell state properties to greedy developers. Changes will come and funds will be available.²⁰

Don't want this to happen. The Park is fine just the way it is. I'm concerned about our water quality and supply. Also the road traffic.²¹

As most all residents of Diamond Point my MAIN concern is fire--one road in, one road out--tie that up with campers and trailers and it's a disaster waiting to happen. Many residents are elderly and cannot walk to the water for evacuation and the road to the water will be jammed at a standstill. We cannot go to the airport to be air evacuated because planes cannot fly in smoke. Please don't do construction until you widen DP Road and add another road perhaps to West Sequim Bay.²²