

Don Hoch  
Director



STATE OF WASHINGTON

## WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

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November 21, 2019

### **Item E-2: Park Acquisition and Development Strategy - New Park Selection - Requested Action**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** This item asks the Commission to select the Miller Peninsula property for development of a new full-service state park. This item advances the Commission's strategic goal: "Provide recreation, cultural, and interpretive opportunities people will want."

**SIGNIFICANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** In July 2016, the Commission adopted a *Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy* (Appendix 1) to guide the agency's decision-making on land acquisition and park development. The Strategy indicates that the first implementation effort will be to identify a property for new park development from among those currently being held for future development.

The State Office of Financial Management (OFM) requires a predesign study for capital projects with costs exceeding \$5 million. A predesign report is a document that explores alternatives, conveys programming information, and provides a cost estimate for a proposed capital project. The 2017-19 State Parks capital budget included funding to prepare a predesign report for development of a new state park. This predesign process involves considering alternatives and selecting the Commission-owned property that is best suited to and ready for development. The process then goes on to identify appropriate park facilities and other amenities, estimate development and operation costs, anticipate financing, and detail necessary regulatory compliance, construction, and other critical paths toward completing the project. This information will then form the basis for subsequent agency capital and operating budget requests.

#### Previous Commission Actions

On November 17, 2016, the Commission approved the top three candidate properties for new park development:

- Fisk State Park Property
- Miller Peninsula State Park Property
- Nisqually State Park

In 2018, the Governor's office expressed support for beginning development of a new state park and was particularly supportive of Nisqually State Park due to its proximity to Tacoma, potential partnership with the Nisqually Tribe, and completed master plan. Because of this support, staff

moved forward with a predesign study at Nisqually right away, putting it on a separate track than the other two candidate properties. The predesign report for Nisqually should be complete in early 2020. Acceptance of the report by OFM will then make available a \$2.9 million appropriation for design, permitting, and construction of the initial phases of development.

With Nisqually proceeding independently, at its September 2018 meeting, the Commission selected Westport Light to replace Nisqually as a candidate for new park development.

Candidates currently include:

- Fisk State Park Property
- Miller Peninsula State Park Property
- Westport Light State Park

### State Park of Tomorrow

Funding for the new park predesign creates an opportunity to take stock in what has been learned during the past decade, find inspiration from state-of-the-art park facilities around the world, and draw together public stakeholders, agency experts, and leaders to craft the *state park of tomorrow*. The predesign effort will allow State Parks to develop an integrated model for park design, development, operation, and resource management. Existing source materials and experiences to draw from include:

- Strategic Plan
- Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy
- Real Estate Policy (Recreation Concession Areas)
- Ten-year Capital Plan guidance
- Major facility predesign reports from other parks
- Nisqually predesign report

In the context of building the state park of tomorrow, it has become evident that the Miller Peninsula property is best suited for development of the next new full-service state park. There is clearly a need and support for a state park in all three locations, but Miller Peninsula has the space necessary to accommodate the widest range of experiences and amenities, the fewest constraints on development, and it is most ready to proceed. Staff's evaluation is summarized below and in Appendix 2.

### Westport Light

Westport Light State Park is within the City of Westport in Grays Harbor County. The enormous popularity of camping at nearby Grayland Beach and planned reduction of camping at Twin Harbors suggest a strong demand for additional camping opportunities in the area. The City of Westport and surrounding areas are in dire need of the jobs and economic development that a new state park could help provide. The median household income in Westport is \$32,900 per year, compared to the state's median household income of \$61,062 (in 2015). Accordingly, the City of Westport and the public strongly support development of a state park at the Westport Light property.

Earlier this year, staff was approached by a group interested in developing a Scottish links-style golf course at the Westport Light property. In early October, staff met with stakeholders and held a public meeting in Westport to gauge support for such a development. While significant

environmental concerns were expressed, support for a combined state park and ecologically sensitive golf course was also strongly supported. While public input continues, staff currently anticipates developing a memorandum of understanding with Westport Golf LLC to initiate a park master planning process through which to consider golf course development at Westport Light. Staff therefore believes that planning for Westport Light is best advanced through the anticipated golf course-initiated master planning process, and further consideration as part of the new park development process is no longer necessary.

### Fisk

The Fisk Property is northwest of the City of Spokane in Spokane County. There is a very strong demand for additional parks and recreation opportunities in and around Washington's second largest metropolitan area. Nevertheless, Spokane also enjoys a considerable inventory of existing opportunities, including Riverside State Park, Mount Spokane State Park, and a large collection of local and regional parks and open spaces.

Through the years, the Riverside State Park Foundation has championed development of the Fisk property. Likewise, during the recent Classification and Management Planning (CAMP) effort for the Lake Spokane area of Riverside State Park, public participants also indicated a desire to develop additional amenities at the Fisk property. In part, participants urged development as a means of attracting more visitors to the site, assigning staff, and thereby discouraging inappropriate uses and mitigating the risk of wildfires.

However, the recent CAMP effort also found that the Fisk Property is part of a key migration pathway for elk and white-tailed deer, and the public expressed concerns about overdevelopment of the property. While Fisk does include a land base suitable for some recreational development, the opportunity to develop the broad range of facilities typically associated with a full-service state park may be limited. Staff therefore believes that development of the Fisk property should proceed cautiously and anticipates including a phased capital project for development of day use and water access facilities in the agency's ten-year capital plan. Facility improvements will likely include restrooms, picnic shelters, walking paths, a small boat access site, a trail network, and interpretive amenities.

### Miller Peninsula

The Miller Peninsula Property is east of the City of Sequim in Clallam County. Similar to Westport, the \$38,700 median household income in Sequim is much lower than the state's median. While nearby Fort Worden, Fort Flagler, and Sequim Bay State Parks provide considerable overnight and day-use recreation opportunities, heavy use of these parks suggests additional state park opportunities are needed, particularly along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The State's 24<sup>th</sup> Legislative District has also urged development of Miller Peninsula to further enhance economic, environmental, and tourism opportunities in the north Olympic Peninsula.

In 2007, the Commission adopted a mission, vision, core values, and development considerations for the Miller Peninsula property. This effort included the work of a park exploratory committee and incorporated extensive public participation. The adopted "nature within reach" concept suggested development of a central village of overnight accommodations and supporting amenities nestled within an extensive network of trails, interpretive opportunities, and access to

the water. While in need of refreshing, planning already completed for the Miller Peninsula provides a starting point from which to resume the park development effort.

At over 2,800 acres, Miller Peninsula is one of the larger land holdings in the state park system. A 2006 opportunities and constraints analysis for the property found that there were relatively few environmentally sensitive areas in the property, and that there were several previously disturbed sites suitable for more intensive park development. The amount of space at Miller Peninsula that is suitable for development provides an unmatched opportunity to explore a full suite of potential state park facilities and amenities, making it the ideal site in which to craft the state park of tomorrow.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission select Miller Peninsula as the next full-service state park and direct staff to develop an updated vision and principles to guide park planning, design, development, and operation. Staff should then proceed with park master planning and preparation of a predesign report.

**LEGAL AUTHORITY:** RCW 79A.05.030 Powers and duties - Mandatory

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION:**

Appendix 1: Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy

Appendix 2: Site Suitability Analysis Scoring

**REQUESTED ACTION FROM COMMISSION:**

*That the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission:*

1. Select Miller Peninsula State Park Property for development of a new full-service state park.
2. Direct staff to develop an updated vision and principles to guide planning, design, development, and operation of the Miller Peninsula State Park Property for Commission consideration.
3. Direct staff to proceed with park master planning and preparation of a predesign report consistent with adopted principles.

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**Reviewer(s):**

**Chelsea Hamer, SEPA REVIEW:** Following review, staff has determined that the proposed “Candidate Park Selection” was identified as a future phased action within the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist for the “Statewide Acquisition Development Strategy”. The “Determination of Non-Significance” for that action was issued on June 21, 2016. The consideration of candidate parks proposed in this agenda item is categorically exempt from further SEPA review under WAC 197-800(17). Future proposals, if any, for the selected sites will also undergo SEPA review as part of phased review under WAC 197-11-060(5). Those proposals may be categorically exempt or may require a threshold determination.

**Van Church, Fiscal Impact Statement:** Action requested has nominal fiscal impact at this time. Future fiscal impacts are expected and will be determined when agreements, infrastructure plans and staffing is implemented. Expected future fiscal impacts will involve both operating and capital funding sources.

**Andy Woo, Assistant Attorney General:** October 29, 2019

**Peter Herzog, Assistant Director**

Approved for Transmittal to Commission



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**Don Hoch, Director**

**APPENDIX 1**  
**STATEWIDE ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Statewide Acquisition & Development Strategy



Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission  
Adopted July 21, 2016



## Executive Summary

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) is developing a strategy to guide its land acquisitions and park developments in the years to come. The agency's mission is to connect all Washingtonians to the state's diverse natural and cultural heritage, and this mission provides the inspiration for the strategy.

The overarching strategic goal is for Washington's state parks to be recognized as the collection of places and experiences that are distinctly *Washington*. To achieve that goal, the state park system should include:

- **Places to be:** *Connecting people with Washington's iconic landscapes*
- **Stories to know:** *Engaging people in authentic Washington stories*
- **Things to do:** *Providing Washington's recreational mainstays*
- **Ways to grow:** *Inviting novices to experience Washington's outdoors*
- **Something for everyone:** *Improving the quality of life for all Washingtonians*

For each of these goals, State Parks will complete a gap analysis to determine:

- What State Parks has
- Whether it has enough of it
- What State Parks does not have
- Whether another government or nonprofit has it
- Whether another government or nonprofit should provide it instead of State Parks

This gap analysis will be used to identify which undeveloped properties should be developed into new state parks first, which existing state parks should be redeveloped, and which areas should be targeted for new park acquisitions.



## Background

For the past 20 years, State Parks land acquisitions have fallen into two main categories:

1. Acquisitions within designated long-term park boundaries inside or adjacent to existing state parks or properties
2. Opportunistic acquisitions of lands for new state parks.



About 90 percent of the acreage acquired by State Parks has been within or adjacent to existing park property. State Parks is developing long-range plans for each of its parks, and these plans include what is called a **long-term park boundary**. Long-term park boundaries identify the lands that should ideally be managed for park purposes.

In many cases, long-term park boundaries are larger than the current State Parks ownership, meaning the agency would consider purchasing the additional land, accepting it as a donation, or developing a management agreement with the owner. In some cases, existing park properties are found to be inconsistent with park purposes, and those properties are declared suitable for surplus. Long-term park boundaries are developed through a public process known as Classification and Management Planning (CAMP) and are approved by the seven-member [State Parks and Recreation Commission](#) (Commission).

Occasionally, State Parks has an opportunity to receive or purchase land for a new state park. In most cases, the agency has not intentionally sought out properties for new state parks, but has instead reacted to opportunities as they came up. For example, a landowner may contact State Parks seeking to donate or sell their property to the agency or a land trust may alert State Parks about a property being offered for sale.

Since the Great Recession, some legislators and members of the public have questioned why State Parks continues to acquire lands, since the agency's reduced budgets have made it difficult to properly care for the parks and properties it already has. In this new political climate, State Parks is no longer able to make so many of its land acquisition decisions opportunistically. With shrinking budgets and increased scrutiny, the agency needs to base its acquisition decisions on clearly described goals and strategies.



New land acquisitions are often held for years or decades before they are developed into state parks. Such state park properties are said to be “held for future development.” Some of the properties currently being held for future development include:

| Property Name                 | County          | Acres |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Burrows Island                | Skagit          | 395   |
| Dugualla                      | Island          | 601   |
| Elbow Lake                    | Thurston        | 319   |
| Fisk                          | Spokane         | 680   |
| Forks of the Sky              | Snohomish       | 1,383 |
| Harstine Island (Fudge Point) | Mason           | 160   |
| Harstine Island (Scott)       | Mason           | 100   |
| Loomis Lake                   | Pacific         | 400   |
| Haley                         | Pierce          | 163   |
| Hoko River                    | Clallam         | 400   |
| Lake Isabella                 | Mason           | 189   |
| Miller Peninsula              | Clallam         | 2,613 |
| Nisqually                     | Pierce/Thurston | 1,287 |
| Shine Tidelands               | Jefferson       | 243   |
| Skating Lake                  | Pacific         | 336   |
| Sol Duc                       | Clallam         | 443   |
| Washougal River               | Clark           | 474   |

Choosing which of these properties to develop next is not easy. New state parks cost millions to develop, and State Parks needs to divide its limited capital money wisely between new and existing parks. Such decisions should be based on how well a new park will support the State Parks [mission and goals](#).

Similarly, in many existing developed state parks, most of the facilities are nearing the end of their useful lives. These parks need more than a capital improvement project here or there. They need major park redevelopments, and the agency needs a way to determine which park redevelopments should come first, based on clearly defined goals.

**This Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy is intended to guide State Parks in acquiring, developing, and redeveloping lands in a more intentional and directed manner. And it hopes to do so in a way that inspires and enlists local communities and partners to support and participate in park acquisition and development.**

## Assumptions

State Parks developed this strategy with the following assumptions:

**Long-Term Park Boundaries:** Since the vast majority of State Parks land acquisitions occur within or adjacent to existing parks, long-term park boundaries adopted by the Commission during a CAMP process will remain the primary guidance for agency land acquisition and disposal. The CAMP process involves a tremendous amount of public outreach and input, opening lines of communication between State Parks, local governments, and adjacent landowners. The process and the product have been very successful, and this strategy assumes that will not change.



**Existing State Parks:** In the strategic planning effort leading up to the State Parks centennial in 2013, the agency reviewed its land holdings park-by park to determine whether each park was consistent with the agency vision. In cases where consistency with the vision was in question, State Parks considered transferring those parks to other public agencies. In almost every case, the public spoke out against such a transfer and against the notion that a park might be inconsistent with the State Parks vision. The process proved to be divisive and created ill will and distrust among those living near the affected parks. In the end, very few parks or properties were transferred to other agencies.

This Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy assumes that the positioning of existing whole, developed state parks is not being questioned. The CAMP process will still consider whether any properties associated with a park might be surplus to the park's purpose, but the agency is not seeking to divest of whole, developed state parks.

**System Size:** To continue meeting the needs of all Washingtonians, this new strategy assumes that the size and scope of the state park system will continue to grow and evolve to help address the demands of a growing and changing population. The state population is projected to increase by more than 20 percent in 20 years, and those bigger populations will need more parkland.

**Diversity:** This strategy assumes that the facilities and activities offered by state parks will need to adapt to meet the needs of evolving state demographics and values. [Data show that different](#)

[ethnic groups recreate in different ways](#). To serve all Washingtonians, state parks will need to provide facilities and activities that appeal to the diverse population of the state.

Another expected demographic shift will be toward an older population. The increase in the state's population is mainly due to migration. Population growth due to "natural increase" (births > deaths) is slowing. As the state's population ages, state parks will need to provide facilities and activities that appeal to, and are accessible by, older people.

#### MISSION

*The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission cares for Washington's most treasured lands, waters, and historic places. State Parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and provide memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.*

## Goals

The goals for the Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy stem from the State Parks mission, which is focused on connecting Washingtonians to their natural and cultural heritage.

The overarching goal is for Washington's state park system to be recognized as the collection of places and experiences that are distinctly *Washington*. In other words, if a Washingtonian were to introduce someone else to the state:

- What kinds of places would they visit?
- What kinds of stories would they tell?
- What makes Washington treasured and unique?

State parks should be the ideal places to connect with what makes Washington special.



The strategy for achieving that vision includes five goals. The Washington State Parks system should be made up of:

- Places to Be**
  - Connecting people with Washington's iconic landscapes
- Stories to Know**
  - Engaging people in authentic Washington stories
- Things to Do**
  - Providing Washington's recreation mainstays
- Ways to Grow**
  - Inviting novices to experience Washington's outdoors
- Something for Everyone**
  - Improving the quality of life for all Washingtonians

The following pages provide more detail on each of these goals.

## Places to Be

Washington State Parks should seek to acquire and develop places that connect people with the state's iconic landscapes, including:

- The Palouse
- Dry forests
- Rain forests
- Puget trough lowland forests
- Columbia basin coulees and reservoirs
- Columbia River Gorge
- Channeled scablands
- Shrub-steppe
- Salish Sea shorelines
- Ocean beaches
- Glacial lakes
- Wild rivers

Columbia Hills Historical State Park



Riverside State Park



Palouse Falls State Park



Daroga State Park



Curlew Lake State Park

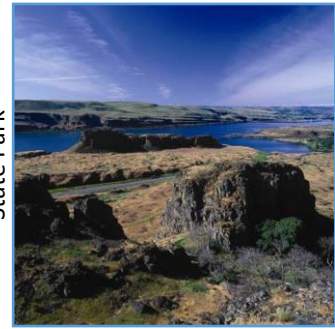


## Stories to Know

Washington State Parks should seek to acquire and develop places that engage people in authentic Washington stories, including:

- Ice Age floods
- Native American history and culture
- Lewis and Clark exploration
- Pioneer settlement
- Civil War
- Indian Wars
- Ethnic immigration
- Logging
- Coastal defense
- Depression era
- Hydroelectric power
- Aerospace
- Agriculture
- Mining
- Railroads
- Navigation

Columbia Hills Historical State Park



Jackson House State Park Heritage Site



Deception Pass State Park



Goldendale Observatory State Park Heritage Site



Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail



## Things to Do

Washington State Parks should provide places for people to enjoy Washington's recreational mainstays, including:

- Walking and hiking
- Cycling
- Horseback riding
- Picnicking
- Fishing
- Camping
- Geocaching
- Beach exploring
- Boating
- Skiing
- Climbing

Beacon Rock State Park



Deception Pass State Park



Spokane River Centennial State Park Trail



Potholes State Park



Riverside State Park



## Ways to Grow

Washington State Parks should provide opportunities for recreational novices to get outdoors, experience what Washington has to offer, and progress in their skills. Such opportunities include:

- **Urban gateways.** There should be state parks in proximity to the state’s urban populations, and those parks should provide activities accessible to novices.
- **Multi-park recreation opportunities.** State parks should offer systems of recreational facilities that encourage novices to explore multiple parks. Multi-park opportunities include:
  - Marine parks
  - Water trails
  - Cross-state trails
  - Winter recreation areas
  - Cabins and vacation rentals

Deception Pass State Park



Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail



Blake Island Marine State Park



Saint Edward State Park





## Something for Everyone

Washington State Parks should improve the quality of life for all Washingtonians. Some of the benefits that state parks should provide include:

- Health
- Conservation
- Economic development
- Transportation
- Environmental and heritage education
- Community identity
- Intergenerational continuity

Lake Sammamish State Park



Kopachuck State Park



Miller Peninsula  
State Park Property



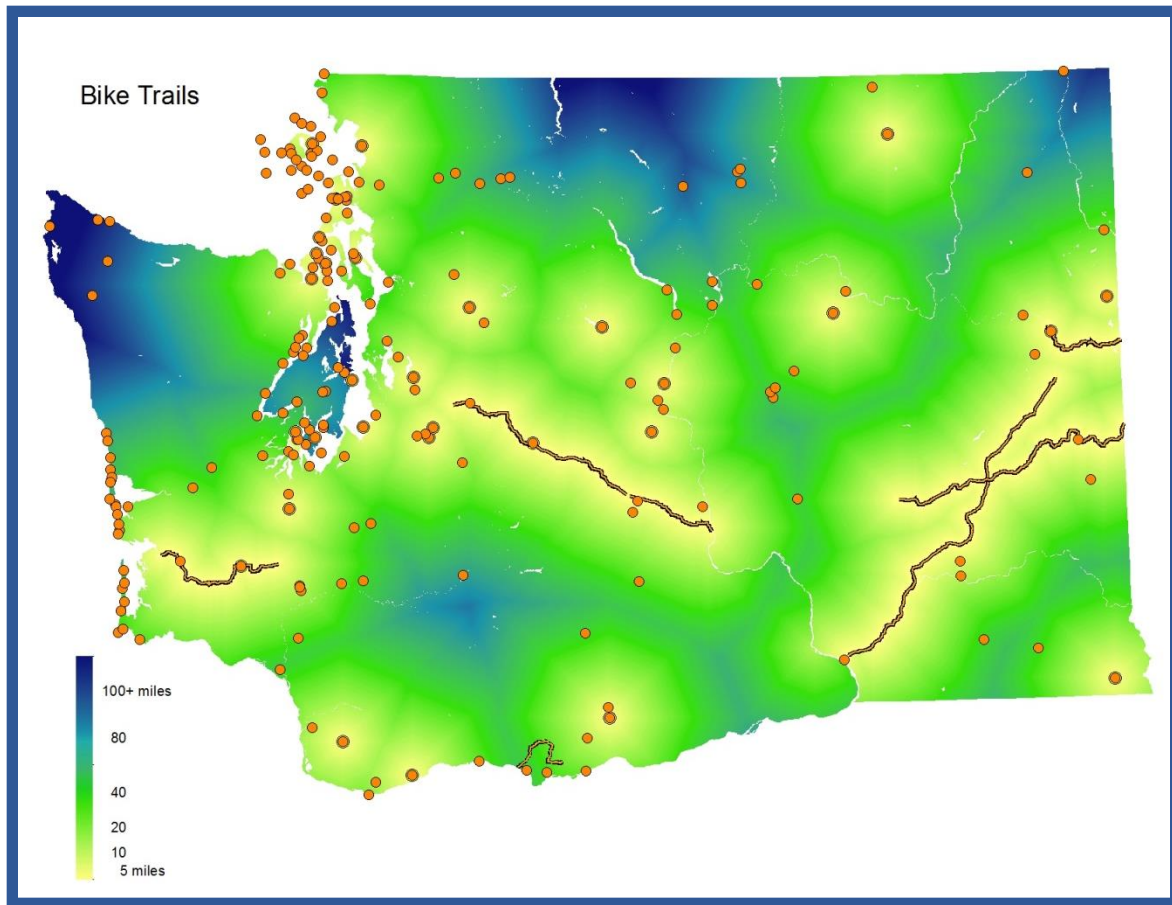
## Analysis

For each of the five acquisition and development goals, State Parks will analyze:

- *What does State Parks already have?*  
For example, Gingko Petrified Forest State Park includes a shrub-steppe landscape, and Cape Disappointment State Park is a good place to tell the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition.
- *Does State Parks have enough properties that meet each goal, or are more needed?*  
For example, the agency manages a number of parks that include Salish Sea shorelines. Should it continue to acquire shoreline properties?
- *What kinds of properties does State Parks not have?*  
For example, the agency is not yet telling the story of ethnic immigration in Washington. Should it seek out a place to tell this story?
- *Does another government agency have the kinds of properties missing from the State Parks portfolio?*  
For example, volcanos are an iconic Washington landscape, but the federal government provides opportunities to see Mount Rainier, Mount Saint Helens, and Mount Baker.
- *When a gap is identified, would another government agency or nonprofit be better positioned to fill it than State Parks?*  
For example, State Parks is not currently telling the story of aerospace in Washington, but perhaps that story is better told by the Museum of Flight or by local government agencies.



Wherever it makes sense, State Parks will use geographic information systems (GIS) to assist with a gap analysis. For example, the map on the following page shows the distance between state parks that offer bicycle trails. Yellow areas are less than 10 miles from a state park with bicycle trails, and blue areas are more than 80 miles from a state park with bicycle trails. Maps like this can help the agency determine where it might be appropriate to develop new bicycle trails or to purchase property suitable for bicycle trail development.



To better analyze the factors making up the Something for Everyone goal, State Parks has been working with the science-based economic firm Earth Economics to develop a tool to analyze current and proposed park properties. With the tool, one can input basic information and land-cover types for a property, and the tool will estimate:

- Park revenue
- Park visitation
- Tax contributions to the state General Fund
- Recreational benefits
- Health and social benefits
- Ecosystem services

More work is needed to refine the tool, but in the end, it will be used to analyze the benefits that a park or a potential acquisition will offer for the state.

## Strategic Direction

The strategy to complete a gap analysis and work toward the State Parks acquisition and development goals has two main phases: **initial direction** and **long-term direction**.

### Initial Direction (2016-2019)

The first effort in this strategy will be to identify a property for new park development from among those currently being held for future development. In 2016, State Parks will submit a 2017-2019 capital budget request for a predesign study for the next new state park without specifying which property will be targeted. Then, using the goals in this strategy, State Parks will establish priorities for the properties being held for future development.



When the properties that best help to achieve one or more of this strategy's goals are identified, State Parks will communicate with the communities near those properties to explain the benefits that state parks provide and to seek support and partnerships from the communities. State Parks will also seek feedback on the properties from the public statewide. The goal is for the Commission to select the next new state park in 2017. The agency will then use the capital funding to complete a predesign report on the selected park and request development funding for the 2019-2021 biennium.

State Parks will initiate a similar effort to decide which existing state park should be targeted for a major park redevelopment. The agency will request capital funding for a predesign report without specifying a park and then will use the Statewide Acquisition and Development Strategy goals and input from communities and the public to select a park in 2017 for redevelopment. State Parks will then complete the predesign report, and request redevelopment funding for the 2019-2021 biennium.

The initial strategic direction will also focus on refining the park benefits tool developed by Earth Economics and completing a first-run gap analysis using this strategy's goals to determine:

- What State Parks has
- Whether it has enough of it
- What State Parks does not have
- Whether another government or nonprofit has it
- Whether another government or nonprofit should provide it instead of State Parks

In the next three years, State Parks will also continue work designating long-term park boundaries through the public CAMP process. Currently, approximately 75 percent of the state parks have long-term boundaries, and completing this work will help significantly with land acquisition decisions for the rest of the parks.

### **Long-Term Direction (2018 - )**

The long-term strategy will be to complete a CAMP process for every park. Commission-adopted long-term park boundaries will continue to be the primary guidance driving land acquisitions within or adjacent to existing state parks.

State Parks will also continue assembling data to refine the initial gap analysis to target areas of interest to guide new park acquisitions. New park acquisitions will focus on properties that either satisfy several of this strategy's five goals or that satisfy one or two of them very well. For example, a property might be targeted if it were the best place in the state to tell an important Washington story. Although most new park acquisitions should stem from this strategy, State Parks will continue to remain open to acquiring new chance-of-a-lifetime properties if opportunities arise.

Another long-term goal is to continue using this strategy's goals to cyclically prioritize and select parks for development or redevelopment. This will allow State Parks to meet the needs of Washington's growing and shifting population.

Finally, State Parks will use the refined gap analysis to measure the agency's progress toward its goal to be recognized as the collection of places and experiences that are distinctly *Washington*.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Site Suitability Analysis Scoring**

|                         | Need  | Public Support | Opportunities vs. Constraints | Readiness | Total     |
|-------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Miller Peninsula</b> | ***** | *****          | *****                         | *****     | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Fisk</b>             | ***** | *****          | ***                           | *****     | 17        |
| <b>Westport Light</b>   | ***** | *****          | **                            | ***       | 15        |