

The comments below were collected at an October 21, 2015 public meeting held in Freeland, WA. Comments are provided as submitted at the meeting and are organized by state park – South Whidbey State Park (SW), Possession Point State Park (PP), and Useless Bay State Park Property (UB) – and by issue area.

South Whidbey State Park

Day-Use Areas

- Better & more beach areas trails
- Maintain day use no matter what decision is taken with regard to the overnight campground.
- Re-open camping!!!
- For all parks and trails in the planning area: Interpretive signs noting indigenous groups who occupied specific sites. Take note in not presenting tribes as prehistoric or extinct. Be clan and/or tribe specific. No blanket names (Salish) etc.
- Continue with native based walk and talks (fungi, bird of prey) Re-imagine space. Involve more public events = cyclist day destination, martial arts/tai chi, Whidbey Island sketchers, etc.
- Keep ranger, park aid present particularly in summer.
- Be very judicious about removing trees in day use area. Weigh safety against habitat quality.
- Day-use trails provide recreational opportunities that have minimal negative impact on the forest, balancing natural resource preservation with appropriate recreational use.
- Calyx Student, use the stage more for event like cool animal talks.
- Remove questionable trees...open park for camping
- Protect natural resources with trails. Camping not so important
- Can park be hiker biker campground still or reuse bldg. for bicycle in hostel so hiker/bikers can get out of rain even in summer
- Accommodate kayakers by
 - Kayak storage racks on beach
 - Signage visible from water
 - Offering an opportunity for overnight camping
 - Work to have site become WWTA (WA Water Trails Association) recognized
 - Toilet facilities (sani-can) closer to shore (stairs)
- Up-grade Wilbert Trail (needs board walk improvements). Expand upland if possible.
- Cut dangerous trees down. Reopen camping & multi-use of “pink area” (as shown of South Whidbey land classification map)
- Campgrounds can be built pretty much anywhere. Old growth forest is a rapidly disappearing ecosystem. Any decisions should weigh heavily in favor of the forest.

- I heard...if RVs hurt roots of old growth trees? Assign RVs to OTHER safer sites like set up front parking picnic area for big rigs (closer to road...allows aging drivers a safe stop. – at planned distance.) Their TAXES SUPPORT State owned park lands
- Emotional response to sick trees isn't helpful they are sick and will fall over anyway. Remove sick trees in campground and preserve what is healthy.
- Overreaction closed entire park. Hiker-biker sites had NO identified risk. No staff & guest income due to park closure. Found a tree cut down without visible endemic problem no "heart rot". BLOCKING PICNIC SITES allows immigrant children use of park (school).

Long-Term Boundary

- More control of neighboring property dumping yard waste. Acquire more adjacent property on the SE side of the park
- Needs to connect to IC/WCLT (Trillium) Land
- Acquire more property for campground
- Connect SWSP with Trillium Forest – the bigger the habitat, the bigger the trees and the more forest birds protected.

Neighboring Property Owners

- Am a neighboring property owner- would be highly bummed if the "Classic U" area was considered non-essential to the mission
- Obtain acres that connect to Trillium Woods
- As a neighboring property, I am feeling great distress to hear of the possibility of losing some of our oldest trees in SW State Park. In the 15 yrs I have lived next to the park and now work as a mentor for the Calyx School the richness of this natural resource is priceless. It supports diversity of [unreadable] in [unreadable] to the family of SW and all the visitors who share in the experience. The possibility of losing these trees is too great, we need to preserve what is best for future generations.

Other Issues

- If the State Parks wants to [unreadable] the recreation aspect coinciding with hiking, please make sure to reference Geocaching as SW is a great place to hike and find some. Also if State Parks wants to consider ones in UB and PP, it could be arranged....assuming you would like more visitors
- Keep and encourage Calyx school and educational programs.
- Establish a partnership with Whidbey Children's Theater to promote children's activities/performances at the park.
- What is an average annual count of off-island people using the campground and group areas? What impact is there on the local economy if those people no longer camp on the island (or at SWSP?)
- Open some trails to bicycles
- Restrict bike use on trails
- Keep area "on leash" only

- Concern – money and personnel will not be available to maintain the park – hiking trails, facilities, etc.
- Increase staff presence to preserve purposes – ex. Not off leash dog use

Trails

- Build accessible trail from N end of Ryan Addition to old cedar or at least intersection w/ [unreadable]
- More interpretive signs for/on trails
- Save the trees! The trees support diversity of life that makes the park a rich experience for day use. Many people come to the park to experience the beauty and majesty of our old growth trees. Cutting the trees sends a confusing message regarding conservation, support of animal, bird, insect habitats that are rich part of our SW community. State parks are here to support and conserve natural resources.
- Maintain beach access
- Trails are well used and are well maintained.
- I like that the trails are ‘no bikes’, this provides a low conflict walking environment
- Love the trails the way they are. Just regular up keep.
- Maintain trails and look for other trail options
- More educational and interpretive signs on trails to make the day-use experience more interesting.
- Trail maintenance and improvements – especially Ridge Trail
- Maintain old growth trail access
- New signage with or without interpretive trails would be nice. There is only 1 sign in the older tree part of trails and virtually none elsewhere. Plant/tree identifications, info of trails, and key viewing points could use new signs to highlight this park.
- [unreadable] lot of maintenance and bridges and other “infrastructure”
- Really enjoy trail system and for continued use
- Improve trails to increase usage
- Consider more appropriately located trails. 3.6 miles a [unreadable]
- Extend Hobbit Trails to the beach. Would be nice to be able to do a beach loop walk.
- Water trail access – consider establishing a boat “pull out” area (e.g. platform constructed above high water line) for use by kayaks and canoes. Further, allow walking access to campground from there.
- Wilbert trail needs more signage
- Having been to over 120 state park properties, just want to make sure the older cedar trees part of the forest (East of highway) remains most preserved as its natural beauty is one of the best in WWA
- Sometimes I use the park roads as trails - as a semi-ADA option would like to see that maintained.

Volunteers, Programs and Events

- [unreadable] derby! More to friends/park.
- Maintain and leverage relationship to “friends” group to [unreadable] public activities which enhance public use of the park, education, and support of state parks.
- Expand park programming
 - Trail walks
 - Summer events
 - Beach monitoring
 - Music

Natural Resource Protection

- We were told several times during our 9/15 “field trip” walk HOW and WHY SWSP is a UNIQUE and VALUABLE WS-SP ASSET due to:
 - It’s setting
 - The number and % age of “OLD GROWTH” trees for a lowland area = RARE!
 - The number and types of recreation and natural resources located at and available
THUS: top priority to protect and keep/make available for public use!
- Invasive species removal! And protection at rest zone and [unreadable] issues.
- Good diversity in forest. Keep and expand it.
- Important to protect old-growth section. Forested area and [unreadable] and beach comprise 3 valuable habitats for birds.
- I appreciate the preservation of the natural resources in this 300 acre parcel
- Save as many old trees as possible please.
- Clean up fallen trees from beach to expand beach access.
- Let the trees [unreadable] keep trees and either close camp ground or have users sign risk waiver.
- Preservation of what is one of the few lowland old growth forests (less than 1% exists of what once was) is more important than camping convenience. Long term planning, not short term goals
- Long term weed invasion monitoring and treatment.
- Are tree pathogens a normal occurrence because of human pressures on the SW park environment?
- Are the arbor services to eliminate tree failures going to proceed whether or not campground are ultimately closed, and does this sort of intervention extend to park areas east of south Smugglers Cove road?
- The presence of our night campers degrade the experience of hiking and day use activities such as bird watching and nature place observation/identification. Removing trees will change the habitat severely and limit resources native species.
- If forest preservation will conflict with campsites, forest preservation should be the priority.
- Keep natural forest areas intact as designated now.
- Are tree pathogen occurrences limited to camping area or do they include other areas of SW park?

- Mature forest is a unique natural resource that should be prioritized for preservation above recreational use.
- The South Whidbey economy won't collapse just because there is no camping. Natural resources are priceless. Money comes and goes.
- Develop alternative(s) for what can be done with existing tree issues
 - Leave standing
 - Limb
 - Top
 - Selective log
 - Create structures on property with milled lumber/logs (lean to, cook shelters, etc.)

Campgrounds

- TREES STAY CAMPING GOES!
- Camping at SW provides an economic bonus to South Whidbey. Total campground closure would be detrimental. Perhaps relocation would be possible or partial closure.
- The SW park is in a stage of normal risk and activity for a Pacific Northwest stand of trees. The elevated risk is just the presence of campers.
- We need to keep camp ground open. There are no other camp areas open for families to go other than Ft. Casey now that Ft. Ebey is closing for the season.
- Continual use of the SW campground will require continual mitigation and in the long run leave that stand of woods impacted.
- I think that the bad trees need to be cut down and open up the park.
- Primary concern is that the campground area would be closed to walking.
- Turn campground area into an educational lab for students and others (and N. Cascades institute) to learn about human/forest interaction, forest ecology, etc.
- Impact to hi-bank (and erosion) as old trees die/are removed.
- Have interim or "middle ground" alternatives been discussed and considered? The options listed seem to only include solutions on opposite ends of the spectrum...ie, full closure or do nothing.
- Ok to take out dangerous trees and re-open campground.
- I would rather not allow camping than have trees removed. Removing the big trees ruins the park.
- Is there any middle ground available re: opening the park?
 - Remediating only the high risk areas?
 - "camp at your own risk" in other areas?
- Does WA state parks have the flexibility to move selected campsites at SW to other locations that are less risky? For example: moving the current group campsite to another location.
- Discontinue camping – make it day-use only, keep trees.
- We want to keep campground open. Don't turn it into Rockport St. Pk. (SAD) or donate to SW Parks District
- Some of the oldest trees are in the campground and would be cut down. There isn't much old growth left on Whidbey and if those trees get cut down there will be even less. (A.K., Age 9)

- The standing nation (trees) has a lot of knowledge that we don't have (A.K., Age 9)
- Would easing pressure from camping slow the process in any of the diseased trees? Or is that not relevant?
- I'd like to have danger trees near hike/bike sites removed to allow camping there.
- Look for other possible campground locations
- I feel strongly about the trees getting cut down. My great grandfather helped save the trees at SWSP. My favorite tree in the park is in the campground. If camping reopens, it will need to be cut down. If the decision is made to cut the trees down, I will do what my grandfather did, which is protect the trees. And I won't be the only one.
- If the campground closes consider adding more campsites at Ft Casey, south of the boat launch.
- Campground: Close it
- Can corrective action solutions include actions to change the campgrounds in a way that accommodates continued and increasing human pressures? i.e. recognize that the "natural" aspect of the campgrounds may need to be degraded by more paving and open areas so that other park areas can be preserved in a natural state.
- Concerned about the removal of approx. 43 trees within the campground area. The trees are a greater resource than camping in the area. This is a remnant packed at low land old growth and every effort should be made to preserve the resource within the state owned banks. I am concerned with the skewed language being used of "elevated" risk. This is a normal process within the forest. If it is deemed necessary trees should stay and camping should be moved elsewhere.
- I want my children and grandchildren to enjoy the park and all the trees.
- Does State Parks have the ability to extrapolate the experiences with other parks with diseased trees and apply them to SW so as to have a solution that is neither all black (no camping) or all white (all campsites open)?
- Do what's necessary with the damaged trees to be able to open the campground
- What is the forecast for progress of the pathogen at the park? If we take down diseased trees now, do we do anything to stem the progress of the pathogen with other trees?
- If vehicle camping cannot be re-established due to tree health, consider marine access or walk-in camping in areas that are not in danger of falling trees (if any exist). If vehicle camping is a priority it should be balanced against the natural resources. There are many high-impact camping opportunities, the draw of SW is the natural resource.
- Increased day use that brings kids and families to the park brings people to Whidbey from Seattle, other states and even abroad (for calyx camps). This translates into revenue for SW.
- Camping is important! Consider establishing campgrounds on far side of Smugglers Cove Rd. Consider making ready the northern most existing campgrounds by performing necessary tree work to re-open that area – at least as trial.
- If the campground is reopened, budget some money and time to repair and upgrade the campsites themselves so every site has a flat tent spot and serviceable fire pit and a picnic worthy picnic table.

- Cut down/remove any/all trees that pose a real dangers asap. to reopen the entire campground area.
- I love camping, but I love the trees more.
- When the campground closed this year, opportunity opened for increased programming for children in the park. Camping brings heavy road traffic and pollution from RV's and cars in the park. Making the park a difficult place to bring groups of kids in the summer. With reduced traffic Calyx increased its reach and brought kids to the park – many from the city and many showing signs of “natural deficit disorder” for four weeks during the summer. The experience was transformative. There is huge potential for more day use, programming throughout the year.
- Water trails site for SWSP
- To what degree would anticipated remediation change the character of the campground? Would this be expected to be a high enough change to make it a less attractive place to camp? Would campers stay away anyway?
- Close down only the campground sites with the trees that present a real danger then remove those trees asap.
- We were told several times during the 9/15 “walking field trip” how valuable, what a unique treasure SWSP is. Due to its setting the number and percent of “old growth trees.” The number of types of unique recreation all natural resources contained there. So it needs to be reopened to camping asap and any and all trees that are dangerous be removed asap.
- Loss of campsites on south half of island.
- Look at other potential campground areas with fewer old growth trees.
- Close only sites and open replacement sites elsewhere.
- If any trees need to come down convert them into works of art – arrange grants and have wood carvers carve up the bottom 20-30 feet, reduce the risk yet honor the trees.
- Have professional assessment of the risk – if nothing is done to the trees what is the real risk in statistical terms? How much more risky is camping at the park compared to driving to it? How much is the risk reduced if there is a mitigation plan (e.g. empty campground when very windy)
- What is the likelihood a healthy tree falls in the forest at SWSP? As in, % chance on a given day that it falls.
 - What is the likelihood a diseased tree falls in the forest at SWSP? % chance on a given day. How big is the difference? 2x more likely to fall? 5x more likely to fall? 10x?

Possession Point State Park

Day-Use Areas

- Access to boat launch.
- Add picnic area in upland.
- Maintain beach access
- Beach access
 - From water
 - From land
- Keep uplands forested so bluff doesn't slide. Don't sell that part off – danger of losing low lands.
- Relocate historic cabin and use for day use (i.e. picnic shelter or divers or kayakers)
- Accommodate kayakers by
 - Signage visible from water promoting day use/camping
 - Toilets located closer to tent camping area
 - Picnic table
 - Day shelter
 - Signage noting it as a WWTA (Whidbey Water Trails Assoc) site
- No “mission creep”, maintain as kayak park/marine access
- Improve for water activities, etc. *marine camping

Neighboring Property Owners

- Narrow road w/ limited sight distances for drivers. Wells too close to road. Park visitors trespass on private tidelands.
- Move campsite to south side of residence furthest from neighbors.

Other Issues

- Inadequate publicity that these parks would be included in the CAMP process strongly consider 2nd stage 1 public comment meeting to obtain representative community comments on these parks.
- Same question – why are these properties undergoing a CAMP process?

Trails

- No open fires due to lack of fire-fighting capabilities. Site is carry-in/carry-out.
- Maintain water trail access/camping.
- Keep/maintain trails.
- Expand hiking trails

Natural Resource Protection

- Maintain as natural area
- Keep what is there.
- Limit upland use due to eagle nesting

Campgrounds

- Better facilities for kayakers: porta potty, camp area, fire rings
- Do the utilization rates you have at the marine trail campsites demand more than 3? If so, are there any opportunities to add sites at the property?
- Whidbey seems to have a shortage of areas where people powered boats can camp. It would be nice to preserve this feature.
- Increase camping fees to pay for insurance

Useless Bay State Park Property

Day-Use Areas

- Build an access plan and establish UB as Tidelands Park with shell fishing access, programs, education programs.
- Add informational & interpretive signs along the Deer Lagoon Dike(s).
- Signage needed to inform public of access and/or parking.
- Add public parking to these lands
- Need to work to improve parking for the general public and boaters (kayakers)
- There is not much public beach access in Southern Whidbey (except Double Bluff and some on Bush Point...) Useless Bay would be nice if feasible unless it's being used as sanctuary or something, even if it's just beach walk only and access is clear.
- Leave alone for now. Future-consider connecting with Island County's Deer Lagoon property.
- More information re: access
- Expand trails for [unreadable] (building)
- Kayakers
 - Acquire land to accommodate kayakers
 - Work to make it a WWTa (Whidbey Water Trails) site

Long-Term Boundary

- Gain access points. Gain/obtain parking
- Any chance at getting upland access to Deer Lagoon??
- Expand public access to UB areas
- Acquire property at UB for more public shoreline access and kayakers
- Deer Lagoon: need to acquire upland access to, and connect, all currently owned tidelands.
Double Bluff: need signage at north end boundary to prevent adjacent upland property owners from stealing it.
- Need to increase access (property acquisition?) Keep it and expand.
- Would be nice to know the boundary and what activities would be good in that area.
- Add signage to indicate location and extent of State Park land.
- Build a LTB plan that yields public access to the Tidelands.

- If land access is currently unavailable, rather than abandoning the park, establish broader permanent boundaries for future acquisition. Abandoning the park represents a great loss of open space that will be difficult to replace.
- Acquire property for upland marine trail site

Neighboring Property Owners

- Property Owner- work to obtain access to this natural resource.

Other Issues

- The tidelands are heavily used but by locals & tourists – primarily towards double bluff
- Secure existing public owners if it exists.
- The tidelands towards double bluff are currently used as part of an off leash dog area. This is a limited resource and much enjoyed by pets and their owners.
- Inadequate publicity that these parks would be included in the CAMP process strongly consider 2nd stage 1 public comment meeting to obtain representative community comments on these parks.
- Same question – why are these properties undergoing a CAMP process?

Trails

- Water Trails
 - Is this site suitable for water trail?
 - Are these upland property purchase feasible?
 - Is there tideland above tide mark currently?

Volunteers, Programs and Events

- Work with Audubon to have bird walks/talks
- Develop more partnership (e.g. Audubon beach watcher schools)
- What programs and events have proven most successful at our tideland state parks? Is there a site out there that would serve as a good model for what could be done at UB?

Natural Resource Protection

- Identify the area with signs showing it is state park land.
- Protection – esp for water fowl migration
- This is a very important migratory area for wintering sea birds and should not be sold! If not appropriate – give it to Whidbey Island Land Trust
- Deer Lagoon
 - This is a treasure
 - How can this remain in park hands?
 - It has good boat access at high tide and is a favorite for birds

Other/All Parks

Day-Use Areas

- Smaller sticky notes

Other Issues

- Need regular staff presence for protection of park resources. Example: prevent tree poaching, bikes on hiking trails, etc.
- Never, ever, ever dispose of properties. Once the property goes into private hands it can never become public again. Save any properties we have for future generations.
- Recreation. Includes trail walks, beach walks, and other low-impact activities. Recreation should not require major adverse impacts on preservation of natural resource. Day-use recreational activities can provide strong community and state-wide citizen support for natural resource preservation.

Trails

- There is a serious need for water trails on south end of Whidbey; kayakers on tour need overnight campsites along the water. The one at Possession could use couple more tables, fire rings would be great and improved bathroom facilities. SW parks needs a place to keep boats and nearby sites.
- Trail signs and better[unreadable] of trail

Volunteers, Programs and Events

- Do more to promote and [unreadable] volunteer participation in park development and maintenance.

Natural Resource Protection

- Dogs on leash or not at all.

[END]