



Grand Forest North Mountain Bike Area Proposal

Frequently Asked Questions

Who initiated this idea?

As far back as far as 2017, the Park District started getting requests from mountain bike enthusiasts and organized biking groups, such as the Gear Grinders, for trails to be built to mountain bike trail standards. This idea was assigned to staff to vet the feasibility, need, and impacts of such a trail. Staff, working with the Park District's Trails Advisory Committee, a group of citizen trail advocates, has been investigating whether this activity is appropriate on Park District land, and, if so, where to include it.

Why not just multi-use trails?

Mountain biking numbers have grown significantly on Bainbridge Island. Park District program enrollment has grown over 55% since 2016 to over 300 enrollments in Park District classes. The Gear Grinders participation has grown over 35% to over 50 team members in the same time frame. These increases, along with recent efforts to encourage more hiking and bike riding, have also increased non-motorized use of the island trail systems. With the recent crowding of the trail systems, this proposal is an attempt to minimize user conflicts on the rest of the Grand Forest by establishing a riding area within the less used portion of the Grand Forest.

Why here?

The Grand Forest North is an isolated piece of property with no critical areas. A critical areas study conducted by Ecological Land Services in July of 2019 revealed no wetlands, steep slopes, or other critical areas present on the site. The entire site is impacted by traffic noise to the west on Miller Rd and to the north by Koura Rd. Further adding to the traffic impacts and neighborhood noise is the intersection of Arrow Point and Miller Roads in the southwest corner, and the private residential Hart Lane to the east. The sloping and rolling terrain lend

itself readily to downhill flow trails while not impacting environmentally sensitive areas. Other sites were considered but removed from consideration due to sensitive areas, soil types, conservation easements, and heavy use from all trail users.

Were other sites considered?

Yes, most other sites were more heavily used by all trail users, had sensitive areas, or would have more of an impact on wildlife because of the more remote locations. Other setbacks at the studied locations included grant restrictions, conservation easements, or land transfer restrictions on those properties. Sites investigated included Grand Forest East eastern slopes, Gazzam Lake Nature Preserve at the Westwood shore property, Sakai Park, and Fort Ward Park.

Will it be exclusive use for bikes?

No. The perimeter trail will remain multi-use. As the plan has been initially presented, the perimeter trail would remain as a multi-use trail (including horses). Currently, the perimeter trail accommodates bike, horse riders, and walkers; this would not change. The proposed new trails would be Class 3 trails, which are narrow (2 to 3 foot wide), winding, and in this case, mostly one-way downhill. There would be one center trail that would run two ways for walkers, and only one way (uphill) for bikers. These are crafted in a way to keep distance from the dedicated trails and the perimeter trail, thus enabling potentially safer trails for both types of users.

What about safety for all users?

The interior trails will be spaced a safe distance from the outer loop trail and designed to control speed at intersections, have visible sight lines, and well delineated merging locations. The idea is to create an internal system so bikers will only access the perimeter trail when entering or exiting the site.

What about parking?

Parking is anticipated to be along Koura, near Miller Rd. The plan does not intend to utilize the private drive to the east, Hart Ln. It is also anticipated that many will bike to the site via the recent Miller Rd improvements or up the City's Mandus Olson trail right of way, then down Koura to the site.

What about signage and trail etiquette education?

Signage will be posted informing users of the biking area, encouraging proper trail etiquette, and establishing use rules and guidelines for all users.

Will there be trees removed?

No, trail construction will be very similar to all Park District trails. The Park District routes trails around trees and in a manner to minimize and avoid negative impacts.

What about the wildlife?

The District has requested a wildlife report from Ecological Land Services of the site. The preliminary information appears to point to minimal long-term impacts to the type of wildlife present on this portion of the Grand Forest. Construction of the trails will have temporary impacts to the use, with most of the wildlife using the site today moving back to their normal activities once the trails and use are established. These assumptions will be reviewed and updated once the report is complete. The full report will be added to this project page when complete.

How will this project be funded?

Funding for construction is anticipated to come from private donations.

How will these trails be maintained?

Park District staff, along with volunteer support from the Gear Grinders, currently maintain the outer loop trail and will provide ongoing maintenance of the site. It is likely and supported by historical participation from the mountain bike groups that much of the maintenance will be conducted through volunteer efforts with the mountain biking community.

Why didn't I hear about this sooner?

The process for this proposal is consistent with Park District policy. Typically, a project proposal goes through a robust vetting process with careful oversight by the Board of Commissioners and staff to ensure the proposal provides a public benefit, fills a community need, is consistent with the Park District's mission, and is appropriate for the park or trail site proposed.

The Board's first look on this topic was Feb 18, 2021. It was originally scheduled to be shared with the Board in March of 2020. The COVID-19 situation delayed the presentation because District Board and staff felt that the issue was important enough to be presented and be discussed in a live, face-to-face meeting. Unfortunately, we have been prevented from meeting

in person, and rather than wait any longer, have decided to put the proposal on the agenda for a first look.

After hearing the presentation, the Board directed staff to investigate several items and report back at a future meeting. This is a very standard part of the public vetting process.

What is next?

The topic is scheduled to be revisited in April, when staff will be reporting back to the Board on their findings. Should the Board opt to proceed, a process will be decided upon in open public session and notice will be posted.

How do I stay informed?

Send an email to helen@biparks.org and request to be added to the meeting agenda distribution list, or you can request to be added to the general email list to be alerted of all future Park District Board agendas.

How do I get involved?

We appreciate your interest in this and other trail projects. The community's love for our trail system has only grown during these difficult times. If you are interested in volunteering once our COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and we get back to hosting our monthly work parties, or you want to become a trail steward of your favorite trail, contact us at info@biparks.org.