

Supplemental Budget Request

Parks & Recreation

Suppl ID # 4040	Fund 175	Cost Center	Originator: Bennett Knox
Year 1 2023		Add'l FTE <input type="checkbox"/>	Priority 1

Name of Request: Property Acquisition - Gateway to Nessel Farm

X

Department Head Signature (Required on Hard Copy Submission) **Date**

<i>Costs:</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Object Description</i>	<i>Amount Requested</i>
	7320	Land	\$1,400,000
	Request Total		\$1,400,000

1a. Description of request:

Purchase of a 40-acre property to provide public access to Nessel Farm and future access to hiking and equestrian trails through DNR easements.

1b. Primary customers:

Park users, students, and tourists who will be attracted to Nessel Farm as a historical property interpreting early pioneer life in Whatcom County and also those seeking to taking advantage of the subject parcel's value as a natural area and gateway to additional trail experiences in the foothills.

2. Problem to be solved:

The primary issue this purchase solves is public access to Nessel Farm. Nessel Farm was purchased in 1998 with a Conservation Easement held by the Whatcom Land Trust. Access was originally planned from the north via a trail across DNR easements which has not yet materialized due to cultural concerns. Alternatively, Parks has an Access and Road Maintenance agreement through a private farm parcel along Saxon Road, but this agreement limits access to that necessary for maintenance including access to a caretaker residence. It excludes access by the general public. Acquisition of the subject parcel will resolve the issue of public access to Nessel Farm and allow the County, after 25 years, to move forward to develop Nessel Farm as a park.

3a. Options / Advantages:

Access from the north (via a trailhead located at South Fork Park) was the initial option for access to Nessel Farm upon its purchase. This trail would have been a long trail (5+ miles) and not conducive to convenient educational field trips to the site. Access was planned using a combination of easements through DNR property and Whatcom County properties. However, due to issue associated with cultural concern, this route has not yet materialized. Access through the private farm has been considered, but the current property owners have made clear that they do not wish to negotiate public access through their property. Purchase of the subject parcel resolves these issues by providing the opportunity for development of parking and trailhead facilities and creation of a trail that provides relatively convenient public access to Nessel Farm

3b. Cost savings:

N/A

4a. Outcomes:

Property acquisition will be completed by the end of 2023 with future trail and trailhead development to provide access to Nessel Farm occurring over the subsequent 3-5 years

4b. Measures:

Nessel Farm Park will be open to the public in keeping with commitments outlined within existing Conservation Easements documents for both the subject parcel and Nessel Farm. Success will be ensured by development of a robust partnership with the Nessel Foundation.

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5a. Other Departments/Agencies:

No other departments impacted. Purchase will result in renewed discussions with the Department of Natural Resources related to existing Trail and Road Easements through DNR property for trail access from the subject parcel through DNR lands.

5b. Name the person in charge of implementation and what they are responsible for:

N/A

6. Funding Source:

Conservation Futures