


WHATCOM COUNTY
Parks & Recreation
3373 Mount Baker Highway
Bellingham, WA 98226-7500



Bennett, Knox, Director
Christ Thomsen, Parks Operations Manger

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Council and Executive Sidhu
FROM: Bennett Knox, Director 
DATE: December 20, 2023
RE: 2024 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

This memorandum is to provide background to the January 9th introduction of the 2024 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (CPROS).

The CPROS is a requirement of the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) a state agency which acts as a clearing house for various sources of grant funding. The RCO requires counties, cities and districts to do comprehensive planning for parks, recreation and open space in order to qualify for certain grant programs. Once certified by RCO, plans are valid for a period of six years at which time they must be revised or rewritten. The plans must contain six specific elements; a) goals and objectives, b) facility inventory, c) public involvement, d) demand and need analysis, e) capital improvement program, and f) an adoption strategy. Grants are applied for in even numbered years, and a valid plan must be on file with RCO by March 1st of that year to be eligible. The 2024 CPROS is an update of the 2016 plan.

The CPROS is not required by the Growth Management Act. Schedules are different for the CPROS plan (every 6 years) versus the County's Comprehensive Plan (every 8 years). The CPROS plan can be adopted as a stand-alone document or if a County or municipality chooses, be adopted as part of its comprehensive plan. This is entirely a local decision. The 2016 CPROS was not adopted as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan but as a departmental planning document to be used to inform the Comprehensive Plan. The 2024 plan is also being proposed to be adopted the same as the 2016 plan. The current action being requested is not an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan, although this should be a consideration during the process currently underway to update the existing Comprehensive Plan. The resolution adopting the CPROS Plan will meet the requirements of the RCO and allow the County to qualify for grant funding through 2029.

The update to the CPROS was delayed from an original targeted completion of 2022 in part because of complications and meeting restrictions the Parks Department experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff shortages during the scheduled update also caused delays. Despite delays, the updated version of the plan had substantial community engagement including online surveys, input from recreational user groups, stakeholders, the Parks Commission, and the Planning Commission. The document contains a complete inventory of existing park and trail facilities and an assessment of current conditions, and will serve the Parks department well as we plan and implement recommendations contained in the plan over the next six-year planning timeline.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide any additional information. As always, feel free to contact me at 360.778.5855