Detailed Explanation of November 2021 Iteration of Preferred Plan

This information was presented at the public meeting on 11/16/21

Lord Hill Regional Park:

Lord Hill Regional Park is a 1,480-acre park located in central Snohomish County between the cities of Snohomish and Monroe. Set in former timberland, the park offers users 32 miles of trails where park visitors can traverse uphill and downhill through the forest passing wetlands and ponds scattered within the park. The park is popular with hikers, runners, equestrians, mountain bikers, bird watchers, orienteering groups and native plant enthusiasts.

The hill was named after Mitchell Lord, who purchased eighty acres on the hill in 1879 and homesteaded in 1884. Beginning in 1985, Snohomish County Parks secured the majority of the property from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington State Parks through reconveyance action.

As one of the largest parks in our county parks system at nearly 1,500 acres, Lord Hill Regional Park is an important regional park for not only the county, but the region. LHRP serves recreational needs for all of Snohomish County’s 800,000 residents and the many visitors who enjoy Snohomish County’s beautiful recreation areas. Regional parks and trails contain features that draw users from across the county and are highly valued by Snohomish County residents. The service area for regional parks and trails such as LHRP is county-wide. The park serves a wide range of user groups including wildlife watchers, hikers, equestrian riders, mountain bikers, nature enthusiasts, educators and more. We know that with increasing use we need to adapt our trail system to create a safe and enjoyable experience for all users, whether you prefer to walk or ride.
Preferred Plan Process:

Lord Hill Regional Park is a gem within the Snohomish County Parks system, one that we are looking ahead to preserve in light of our changing climate and growing population within the county and the region. As a regional park, Lord Hill is shared between many different recreational uses and we recognize there are opportunities to optimize the trail system of the park to improve user experience and safety. Lord Hill Regional Park is also mostly a natural area, and the Parks Division is committed to preserving critical areas and habitat throughout the park.

Officially opened to the public in 1995 with 10 miles of trail, Lord Hill Regional Park has seen many changes over the past few decades. Much of the trail system evolved from social trails built over the years, including some of our most popular hiking trails. The Lord Hill 2 parcel, acquired RCO funding, was also later added to the south edge of the park. As a result of the trail system developing over time, the trail system is rather undefined. The park also lacks accurate signage and wayfinding, and visitors can become easily lost. Also the organic nature of the trail system, a clear designation of trails, poorly-designed intersections between trails, as well as the previously mentioned lack of signage, have led to an increase in safety concerns from users in the park.

Building from the Master Plan originally published in 1988 and updated in 1996, the Parks & Recreation Division is looking to update our Preferred Plan for the park which includes an official trail plan, wayfinding signs and posts, detailed maps and expanded parking solutions.

This process has entailed collecting an immense amount of feedback from the public, spanning 2016-present. This includes:

- Public meetings, study groups and addressing public concerns 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021
- Pilchuck Audubon Bird Blitz 2017
- Washington Native Plant Society Plant Survey August + October 2017
- Public input from the 2021 Parks & Recreation Visioning Survey. While this was a survey asking about broad recreation interests, 800 comments were made specific to Lord Hill Regional Park. We have included that public input in this process
- Stakeholder meeting November 2021
- Public Meeting planned for November 16, 2021 via Zoom

We have consulted with community stakeholders representing diverse user groups including:

- Executive Horse Council of Snohomish County
- Backcountry Horsemen of America
- Washington Trails Association
- Friends of Lord Hill Regional Park
- Lord Hill Advocates
- Lord Hill Homeowners Association
- Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
- Local mountain bike teams
- Pilchuck Audubon Society
- Washington Native Plant Society
- Snohomish County Parks Advisory Board
- Everett Mountaineers
- Lord Hill Hikers
- 4-H Horses of Snohomish County
- Hannus Horse Group
- BuDu Racing
- Snohomish Student Cycling League
- Pilchuck Mountain Bike Club
- Cascade Orienteering
- Snohomish County Search and Rescue
- Snohomish and Monroe School Districts
- Trail Running groups
- Fishing enthusiasts
- Paddle craft enthusiasts
- Local community members

In 2021 a consultant team was hired to provide technical support for the Preferred Plan process. They will

- Review and propose potential trail alignments
- Perform critical area studies and reconnaissance along new proposed trail alignments and at new trail crossings
- Document trail standards as part of Preferred Plan narrative
- Evaluate feasibility of expanding parking at 150th St SE parking lot
- Geotechnical investigation for paving improvements and potential parking lot expansion at 150th St SE parking lot
- Support Parks in developing Preferred Plan graphics and narrative
Current Stage:
We are working towards finalizing the Preferred Plan by June 2022, when the deadline to use our grant funding expires.

We have finished a proposed round of revisions to the trail system map based on stakeholder and community comments, although the overall concept and approach remain the same. Input at this time will inform the Critical Area studies and reconnaissance to be performed this winter as we work towards finalizing the plan.

We are hoping to get community feedback on how well the updated trail system map meets our goals (listed below). We also understand that trail design alone cannot solve all of the concerns for Lord Hill Park. Part of the Preferred Plan will also be a wayfinding and signage plan. We also welcome other thoughts on how we can come together as a community to improve safety and ensure that all visitors can enjoy Lord Hill Park.

Preferred Plan Process Goals: (image of park)

Parks has four overarching goals that guide the preferred plan process and inform our decisions. These come directly from community feedback on priorities for Lord Hill Park.

- Improve safety throughout the park through trail design and improved wayfinding for park users and emergency services
- Support a positive, shared recreational experience among multiple user groups
- Preserve the natural areas and character of the park
- Update the park to accommodate its capacity and role as a regional park while preserving the environment

Next Steps:

Public Meeting November 16, 2021

An online survey will be released at the same time, with the same information as the presentation and found here. This will be another way for Parks to gather the community’s feedback if they cannot attend the public meeting or prefer another way to communicate their thoughts.

After the November meeting:

Parks and the consultant team will then review the input received and will begin critical area studies and reconnaissance within the park, all of which will inform the next revision of the Preferred Plan.

Another round of stakeholder and public input will be solicited early Spring 2022.

The intention is to finalize the Preferred Plan by June 2022, when grant funding acquired to support this process expires.
**Approach: (zone map)**

The proposed mountain bike and equestrian designated trails will give users a more enjoyable experience, make the trail system safer for all users, and significantly reduce Emergency Agency responses by establishing a trail use system with waypoints and signage. This may make the park more attractive to additional users, but the available parking options will dictate the carrying capacity of the park, and a designated trail system will expand options for all users while reducing contact between types of use.

As use of Lord Hill Park has grown, Parks has heard many concerns about safely sharing the trails between user groups, especially between the equestrian and mountain bike communities. To address these concerns and anticipating use of Lord Hill Park will only continue to grow into the future, zones focusing on one type of recreation will be implemented. This updated trail system map follows these same principles already established.

By creating areas of trail focused on one type of recreation, there are multiple benefits

- Reduce potential conflict between users by creating dedicated trails for different groups. This concentrates types of recreation use in areas of the park, and reduces the number of trails where multiple user groups may come into conflict.
- Optimize trails within a recreation zone for safety and enjoyment by user group. For example, creating a wider path cleared down to mineral soil for equestrian use, which is not the approach for hiking-only use.
- Can better control for interactions between user groups by signing intersections of dedicated trails with multi-use trails.

Multi-use trails are still the largest category of trail throughout the park, and connect users to these zones and to points of interest. They need to be able to accommodate all types of users and handle the most traffic.

The east zone (purple), is focused on equestrian trails, which the equestrian community has expressed they are interested in sharing with hikers. The east area of the park is one of the quietest in the park, providing a more peaceful trail experience.

The southern zone (blue), is the area closest to the Snohomish River, and as such, all trails will be evaluated for critical areas and impact to be sensitive to the environment and habitat. Most trails are planned to be hiker-only, but some trails that connect to the river are planned as multi-use, as access to the river has been a priority for the community and all user groups.

The northwest zone (pink), is focused on mountain bike trails. Some trails will be for mountain bikes only, and some will be shared mountain bike/hiker trails. The terrain in this zone is the best suited for the loops of trails mountain bikers prefer.

Hiker-only trails extend throughout the park, but are mainly focused in the central and southern areas. There have historically been a number of hiker-only trails, especially near critical habitat where only narrow trails are feasible.
Updated Overview Map: (graphic next page)

This trail system map continues from the past five years of process and discussion, evaluating how user groups move through the site for both safety and enjoyment. It seeks to balance the desire for access among all user groups with safety and preserving the experience of Lord Hill park as an island of nature within the urban fabric of Snohomish County.

It has been updated based on comments from the community, stakeholders, County staff, and insight from the consultant team.

Consider this map as a subway-style map with the width of the trails exaggerated so they are visible. If the trails were as wide as shown on this map they would all be 50 feet wide (about the width of a 4-lane road)! In reality, our widest trails are many of our former logging roads and no wider than 12 feet.

Less than 75% of the park is currently developed, and this new plan preserves that. The target is to keep the mileage of trail in the park around 32 miles of total trail. The current update has the following mileage based on type of trail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Type</th>
<th>Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiker Only</td>
<td>8.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equestrian/Hiker Only</td>
<td>6.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikes Only</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikes/Hiker Only</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility/Neighborhood Access</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decommission</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decommissioned trails are not counted as part of the total trail mileage.

Utility/Neighborhood Access trails are not counted as part of the total trail mileage, as the majority of this category is the entrance roads and parking lots, which do not function as trail.
**Wayfinding & Signage Plan:**

Modifying the trail system map to reduce conflict will help address the safety and use concerns at Lord Hill Park, but cannot solve every problem. Another aspect of the Preferred Plan that will improve safety and user experience at Lord Hill Park will be a Wayfinding and Signage Plan.

A new trail system map that reflects the outcome of the Preferred Plan process will be posted at the park, posted on our website, and circulated online. The updated map will show which trails are designated for each user group, helping visitors navigate the park and understand which trails are open to them.

Sign posts at trail intersections will indicate trail name, which users are allowed on the trail, and distance to relevant points of interest, such as the nearest parking lot. If you’ve been to Paradise Valley Conservation Area, these may look familiar!

Yield signs throughout the park, and other educational signage at the trailheads, will alert users to how to share the trails safely with multiple user groups.

Signage along trails and at intersections will alert users of upcoming intersections, trail crossings, trail merging, and other safety considerations.

Updated signage throughout the park will also help emergency services more quickly navigate Lord Hill Park to reach those who need assistance.
Trail Design Standards

- Designing trail intersections for safety
  o Reverse grade, physical barriers
  o Signage

Trail Intersection Design

- Designing trail intersections for safety
  o Reverse grade, physical barriers
  o Signage
Multi-use:

The multi-use trails throughout the park function as the main circulation system between the parking lots, designated trails, and points of interest. These are often our most-heavily used trails, and many were former logging or skid roads. They are some of our most intensive trails to develop and maintain due to their level of use and accommodating all types of recreation.

Since they can be used by all visitors to the park, they have the most mileage of any trail category. These trails are also a critical part of every user’s experience, connecting them to designated trails.

There are 11.43 miles of multi-use trails shown in this update.
Hiker:

The majority of visitors to Lord Hill Park are hikers, and as such, have the access to the most trail mileage of the user groups.

Hiking-only trails already weave throughout the park, offering a quieter, more immersive experience in the nature of Lord Hill. The hiking trails are our lightest-impact trails to develop and maintain as they can be narrow and do not need to hold up to the weight and use requirements from mountain biking and equestrians.

Hiking-only trails are present in all areas of the park but are concentrated in the central area and in the southern area.

Proposed new hiking trails are shown on the map as a dashed dark and bright green line. The green indicates that critical area reconnaissance will be done along these alignments to ensure that new trails are avoiding critical areas or impacting them as little as possible when a trail cannot avoid impacts. Any impacts will be mitigated, as determined by the critical area studies.

Hikers would have 8.05 miles of dedicated hiker-only trail, and access to 29.44 miles of trail throughout the park between multi-use trail, hiker-only trail, shared equestrian/hiker trail and shared bike/hiker trail.
**Equestrian:**

As noted on the zone plan, equestrian trails are concentrated along the east side of Lord Hill Park. This area is currently one of the corners of the park with the fewest trails, offering a quieter park experience farther from the main trails with the most traffic.

The quieter experience fit well with desires expressed by the equestrian community, and many miles of new trail are planned to create multiple longer loops to explore and access around and views of some of the ponds within the park. Proposed new equestrian trails are shown on the map as a dashed yellow and green line. The green indicates that critical area reconnaissance will be done along these alignments to ensure that new trails are avoiding critical areas or impacting them as little as possible when a trail cannot avoid impacts. Any impacts will be mitigated, as determined by the critical area studies.

During the process, the equestrian community has indicated they are interested in sharing access to the equestrian trails with hikers, as those recreation uses are both slower-moving and hikers less often startle horses. Many equestrians are also hikers within the park, and preferred access to these trails while on foot or riding.

Equestrians would have 6.34 miles of dedicated equestrian/hiker trail, and access to 17.77 miles of trail throughout the park between multi-use trail and shared equestrian/hiker trail.
Mountain Biking:

As noted on the zone plan, mountain bike trails are concentrated in the northwest area of Lord Hill Park. Some trails will be for mountain bikes only (orange trails), and some will be shared mountain bike/hiker trails (brown trails). The terrain in this zone is the best suited for the shorter loops with more grade change that mountain bikers prefer. While there is elevation change throughout the park, Lord Hill is suited to a cross-country trail style of mountain biking.

The relatively greater density of already developed trails in the northwest corner offers shorter loops and interconnectivity between trails that tend to appeal to mountain bikers. Currently, no new mountain bike trails are shown on this update. However, as part of the changes, there is some potential for around 0.4 miles of new bike trail to be proposed. The potential area is shown on the map by an orange dashed line and with black arrows. For any new trails critical area reconnaissance will be done along the alignments to ensure that new trails are avoiding critical areas or impacting them as little as possible when a trail cannot avoid impacts. Any impacts will be mitigated, as determined by the critical area studies.

During the process, the mountain biking community has indicated they interested in sharing some trails with hikers (brown), but would prefer to have some single-track bike-only trails (orange) as well.

Mountain bikers would have 2.26 miles of dedicated bike-only trail, 3.62 miles of dedicated bike/hiker trail, and access to 17.31 miles of trail throughout the park between multi-use trail, bike-only trail and shared bike/hiker trail.
Detail Area Maps, focused on change from previous alternative:

1. Multi-use Access to Cell Towers and from west neighborhood:
   a. Keep Start-up as Hiker Only
      i. Start-up has been shown as decommissioned in previous plans. An existing hiking trail, it previously connected to mountain bike-only trails and so was decommissioned for safety reasons. However, in this new scheme, Start-up would stay open as a hiker-only trail connecting visitors from the Main Trail over towards the Cell Towers.
   b. Change western portion of Springboard into bike/hiker trail
      i. Previously, all of Springboard was mountain bike-only. However, to provide connectivity for multiple users, the western segment of Springboard will be shared bike/hiker. Start-up will connect to this trail where it is flatter, and therefore bikes will have better visibility.
   c. Multi-use Access from Neighborhood to Cell Towers
      i. A segment of the neighborhood access road has been shown as multi-use to help clarify the multi-use route from the western edge of the site to the Cell Towers and connecting into the trail system
   d. White Ox changing to Multi-Use
      i. To ensure everyone can access the park when entering from the neighborhood and that everyone can reach the Cell Towers, it is proposed to change White Ox from a mountain bike-only trail into a multi-use trail.
      ii. Alternatively, White Ox could stay a mountain bike only trail and a new equestrian/hiker trail could be developed connecting the West View North Loop to the Cell Towers. However, in the interest of keeping within the 32 mile trail limit, that new trail mileage would have to be taken out somewhere else

2. Keep West View West Loop Open
   i. Previously shown as decommissioned. Request for review from the community prompted keeping this trail open

3. Ridgeside – Corrected to match existing Hiker-Only
   a. Ridgeside is currently a narrow hiker-only trail that was shown as multi-use on the previous draft. Upon review of the trail, it would need to be widened and re-aligned in sections to make it suitable for multi-use traffic and that is not necessary for circulation or desirable for the environmental impact. It is shown as hiker-only in this updated plan.
   b. Lower Meet Cutter – keep as bike/hiker trail
      i. With Ridgeside being kept as hiker-only, the lower section of the Meet-Cutter trail has been changed back to its current use of bike/hiker.

4. Temple Pond Access – keep open
   a. Shown as decommissioned on the previous draft due to concerns about rare native plant presence. After hearing from the community that access to Temple Pond is a recreation priority for all user groups and that the rare native plant community is likely in a different location after all, Parks will review the feasibility of keeping this
segment of trail open with critical area reconnaissance and in consultation with the Washington Native Plant Society.

5. South Pipeline Trail reconfigured
   a. Nettle/Pedal – omitted
      i. This will simplify the recreation zones by removing a mountain bike-only trail from outside the NW zone
      ii. In consultation with the mountain-biking community and other stakeholders, Tuck’s Trail does not have a prevalence of user conflict concerns and can remain a multi-use trail
   b. South Pipeline Trail map updated to reflect on-the-ground conditions
      i. The map has been updated to accurately reflect the gap in the Pipeline trail where the grade is too steep to navigate for most users

6. Multi-Use River Access
   a. Reflects exiting multi-use access to the river, which was a major community priority
   b. River Trail & River Trail Cutoff changed back to multi-use from designation as hiker-only in previous plan
      i. Will need CA recon
   c. Riverview Access
      i. Updated to reflect on-the-ground conditions
         1. Culvert blown out, trail connects from Quarry Trail

7. Accessible Trail from main 150th St SE lot
   a. Would provide ability for Parks to continue to improve trail accessibility in the future
   b. Only 1 accessible stall in Equestrian lot
   c. Improve safety & more enjoyable experience - More gentle route from main lot into trail system will encourage bikers to not ride through E lot
   d. Concerns about screening, off-leash dogs so fencing
   e. Studying where trail would tie into Main Trail
      i. Not too close to other trail intersections
   f. New trail would have 5% or less grade
      i. The current boardwalk entrance contains 17%-20% grade hills
Critical Areas Studies & Reconnaissance (CA graphic)

1. Critical Area studies where proposed trail crosses streams
2. Critical area reconnaissance along new trails, trails of concern
Parking Lot Expansion & Paving Improvements

1. Currently drainage is being wrecked by cars parking improperly
2. Expanding parking to deal with that/fix drainage
3. Geotech studies