

# NISQUALLY-MASHEL STATE PARK SITE

## VOLUME 1

### PARK SUMMARY & MASTER PLAN

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission



November 2009



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## NISQUALLY-MASHEL STATE PARK SITE MASTER PLAN

### Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

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# Nisqually-Mashel State Park Site

Experiences from which memories  
and learning are born.

**Master Plan**  
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

*We thirst once more to know our story, and to tell it...  
This new story is not the story of my people alone.  
It is the story of all who are now called Americans.  
It will be a story that honors the spirit of all of the people,  
and all of nature. It will be a story of new prosperity.  
It will be a story of hope and of peace  
to last another ten thousand years.*

— Jack McCloud, Nisqually Elder  
Chair, The Nisqually Tribe State Park Committee



## Washington State





*For centuries, the Nisqually River and its tributaries have been both a vital source of food and an important transportation route. Nearby forests provided enormous cedar trees for dugout canoes and other essential items.*



University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UA1225



*The site for the proposed park is strategically located between the Nisqually River's source on Mt. Rainier (Tacobet in the native Lushootseed language) and its delta at Puget Sound (Whulge).*

-  Nisqually Indian Reservation
-  Nisqually Watershed Boundary

# A promising new future for healing and renewal

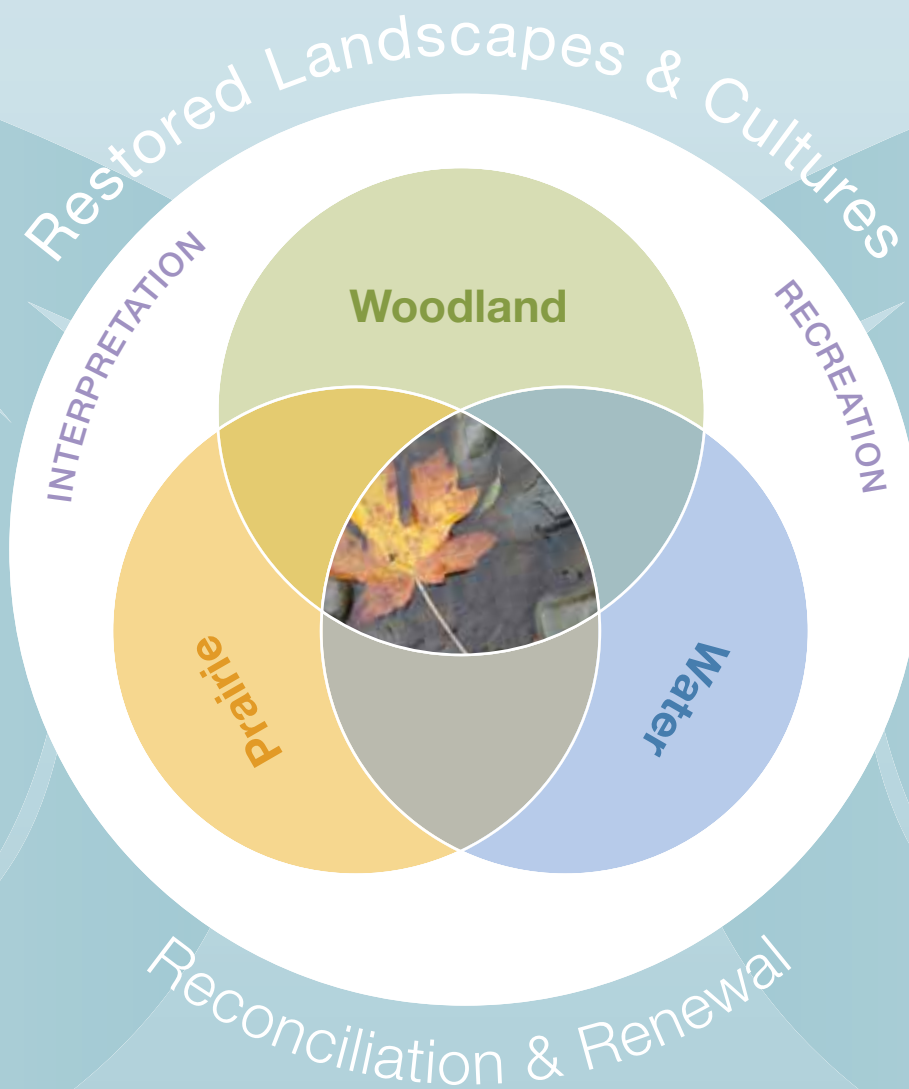
Although it is usually deceptively serene in appearance, the land halfway between the Nisqually River's headwaters on Mt. Rainier and the delta where the river flows into Puget Sound has long been a place of convergence and upheaval. Geologic evidence, recorded history, and the stories of those who have lived here tell of eons of change – often peaceful but sometimes violent – that have dramatically altered both landscape and people.

The setting today features the Mashel River and Ohop Creek as well as the Nisqually, punctuated by the confluences of the waterways, high bluffs and an upland plateau. It is a place much altered from the environment historically occupied by early Nisqually people, who were a part of the Southern Coast Salish culture. Beginning in the mid-1800s, non-native settlers and entrepreneurs cleared forests to create farmland, extracted timber and minerals, and diminished the salmon runs.

But change continues. Renewal efforts are producing a growing array of individuals and groups committed to working together to restore the environment cherished by all people. It is a new era of reconciliation and renewal.

This remarkable site, with its compelling stories and lessons, is proposed to become Washington's newest state park: a place with a broad range of recreational options for visitors, as well as appealing opportunities to acquire historical, cultural and environmental knowledge. The amenities and the natural setting will encourage visitors to linger and to learn. And they will be changed by the experience, just as others have been changed by this place for thousands of years.

# Nisqually-Mashel State Park Site



**B**ecause of its complex natural and human history, the park site offers unique potential for conveying powerful stories of conflict, reconciliation and renewal. Its features and interpretive elements will enhance visitors' experience of this place where things come together: meadows and woodlands, rivers and streams, canyons and plateaus, people and landscape. The cumulative impact of these encounters has been profound, and it provides the basis for vivid lessons that can lead to new understanding and respect for what has been, and for what the future might be.

# Telling the stories of people and place

Thanks in part to the wealth of resources in their homeland, the Nisqually people had a sophisticated and prosperous society for thousands of years, and the engaging details of their lifestyle and culture are prominent among the park's interpretive themes. Their assets could not, however, protect them from changes brought by increasing numbers of militarily-superior settlers. The most infamous episode of the tribe's history occurred at the Nisqually-Mashel State Park site, and its story will be told there: how, during the Puget Sound Indian War in 1856, members of the volunteer territorial militia killed native families at the confluence of the rivers, resulting in the tragedy known as the Mashel Massacre.

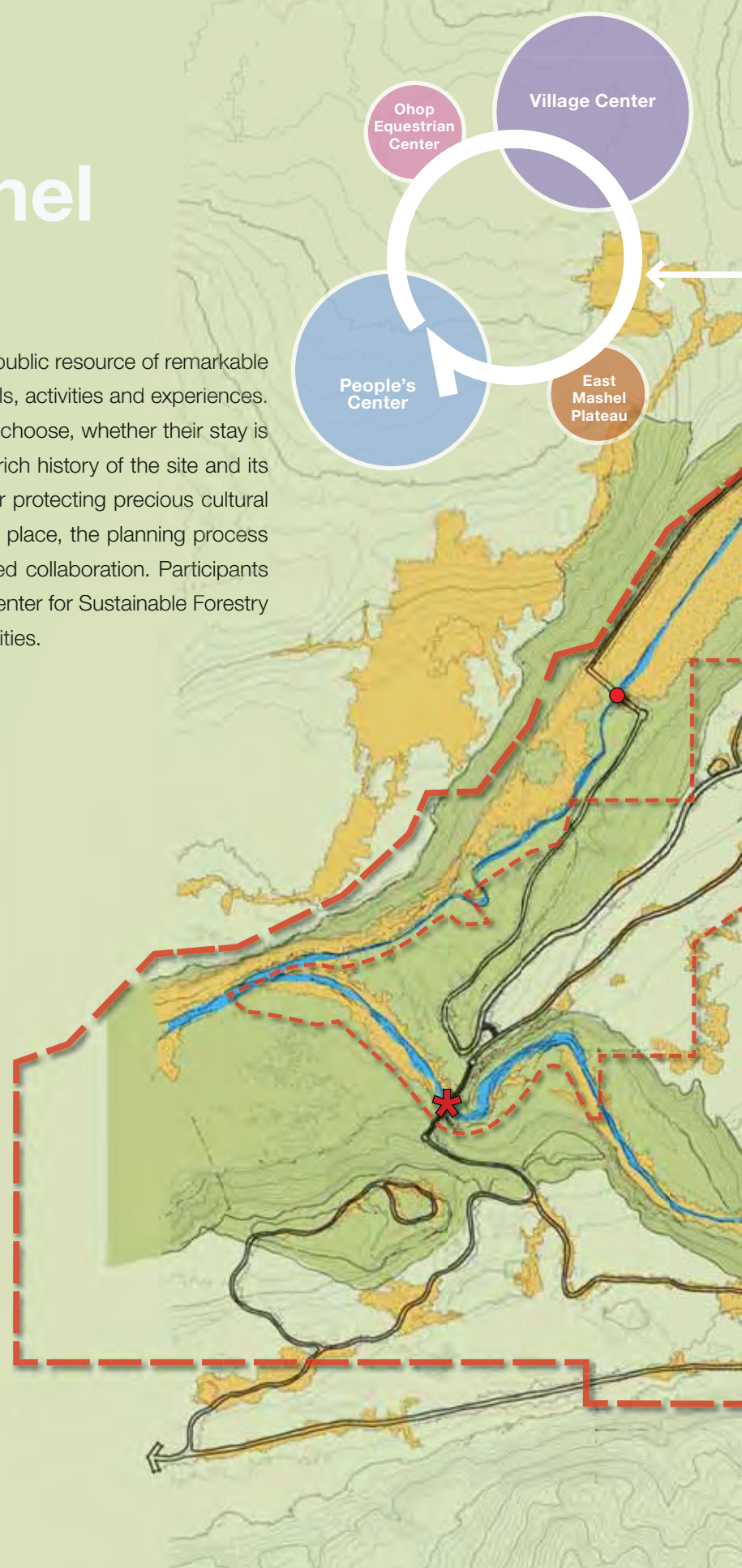
Park visitors will learn about changes in the Nisqually people's lives since that cataclysmic event, and about their contemporary work to restore the waterways and fish habitat, regenerate forests, and sustain their culture. The confluence of the tribe's stories with those of the natural resources of its homeland will provide powerful evidence for the imperative of reconciliation and renewal. And that, ultimately, is the most important message of the new park.

*The Native Americans who made their homes in the Nisqually watershed were known as the Squalli-Absch: the people of the river and of the grass. The new park's icons – the mountain, the majestic cedar trees, and salmon – were central to their lives.*



# Planning the Nisqually-Mashel State Park site

The Master Plan for the proposed park describes a public resource of remarkable scale and breadth – in scenery, interpretive materials, activities and experiences. Park visitors will have many options from which to choose, whether their stay is for three days or only three hours. The plan respects the rich history of the site and its environmental fragility, and its details specify strategies for protecting precious cultural and ecological resources. In keeping with the spirit of the place, the planning process has involved an extraordinary amount of community-based collaboration. Participants include the Nisqually Tribe, the University of Washington Center for Sustainable Forestry at Pack Forest, and federal, state and local government entities.



## Village Center

- ① Day Use & Group Picnic Areas
- ② Day Use Parking
- ③ Gatherings & Events
- ④ Amphitheater
- ⑤ Village Center
- ⑥ Camping (RV, Tent & Cabins)
- ⑦ Maintenance & Substations

## People's Center

- ⑧ People's Center
- ⑨ Day Use
- ⑩ Parking
- ⑪ Observatory

## Ohop Equestrian Center

- ⑫ Activities & Equestrian Center

## East Mashel Plateau

- ⑬ Mt. Bike Back Country & Challenge Course
- ⑭ Camping (Group RV & Tent)
- ⑮ Back Country Horse Camp

- Mature Forest Valley
- Meadows & Open Areas
- - - State Boundary 2008
- - - Long-Term Park Boundary
- ✱ High Bridges
- Low Bridges



A loop trail links the four main features of the park site.



# Features of the Park

## The Village Center

The Village Center will welcome visitors and set the stage for programs and activities. Amenities in the area will include an amphitheater and an event meadow, a day use and group picnic area, and cabins and camping space for both tents and recreational vehicles. The village will be oriented to dramatic views of Mt. Rainier, while the areas for overnight stays will be oriented to the dramatic bluff above the Mashel River. Appealing trails and signage will encourage visitors to continue into the heart of the park.



## The People's Center and Observatory

Located near the summit of the park's central ridge, the People's Center with its interpretive materials and activities will bring to life the history of the area, with a focus on the millennia of habitation by Native Americans. Their culture – past and present – will be explored in eye-catching exhibits. An accessible trail will lead from the Center to the Observatory at the summit of the ridge, which offers stunning views of Mt. Rainier (*Tacobet*) to the east, the Olympic Mountains to the west, Puget Sound (*Whulge*) to the north, and the Mashel Prairie in the foreground below. Tribal interpreters will be available at the Observatory to explain the significance of the site to the Nisqually people, and to tell stories of peaceful times, such as the annual gathering of camas root on the prairie, as well as somber times of conflict and war.

## Ohop Equestrian Center

The striking Milk Barn on a terrace above the Ohop Valley will house an equestrian concessionaire and events center, with the center serving as the starting point for trail rides. Because this part of the park site is oriented toward Ohop Creek, visitors on horseback will be able to observe agricultural development and other features on the creek's floodplain. The milk barn, about a century old, provides a symbol for the era of agriculture.



## East Mashel Plateau

The plateau will have its own welcome center, primarily for visitors arriving to make use of the backcountry horse camp, a group campground for tents and RVs, and a trail network and challenge course for bicyclists. The 60-acre bicycle-focused area will enable the growing number of mountain bikers to hone their skills and enjoy a woodland experience.



## Connections: trails, bridges, and overlooks

Because the park will be large and diverse, connections enabling people to move easily from one geographic area to another will be key to successful visitor experiences. An expansive trail system will accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians appropriately, with overlooks and other enjoyable attractions along their routes. A total of eight bridges – three of them high and five low – will cross the rivers and creek, and interpretive displays and seating will be incorporated into the bridge approaches to encourage people to linger and to appreciate the setting.

These connections will help visitors to make their *own* connections: to the history of this site and the people who have lived in it, to the environment around them, and to the relaxation and awareness that comes with spending time in a remarkable place.

Partnership

Sustainability

Experience

The Nisqually-Mashel State Park will be an unprecedented project in several respects:

- It will represent the first time Washington State Parks has partnered with a Native American tribe to create a new park. A strategic agreement under consideration with the Nisqually Tribe will enable support for land acquisition, development, operation and maintenance. The tribe's input in the planning process has resulted in a proposal that adds a number of features to the park: one of the long-term tribal goals is to secure use of land for a replica of Chief Leschi's Village on the Mashel Prairie, and to preserve and utilize historic areas such as the Indian Henry Cemetery. Additional tribes in the area have been invited to participate, as well.

## A park of great potential

- This will be one of the first Washington State Parks to incorporate an enterprise recreation model and goals into the plan for sustaining its development and operation. Though environmental and financial sustainability, considerations are also built into the plan.
- The park will be complemented by other nearby parks and recreational sites, and will also indirectly support them. The result will be an appealing array of opportunities for memorable outdoor adventures, with the Nisqually-Mashel campgrounds easing the shortage of camping options in the area. Visitors will be able to enjoy the full length of the Nisqually River, from its origin in Mt. Rainier National Park all the way to the National Wildlife Refuge where the river meets Puget Sound.

As the first park of Washington State Parks' second century, a Nisqually-Mashel State Park will serve as a proud example of a new era in public facilities.

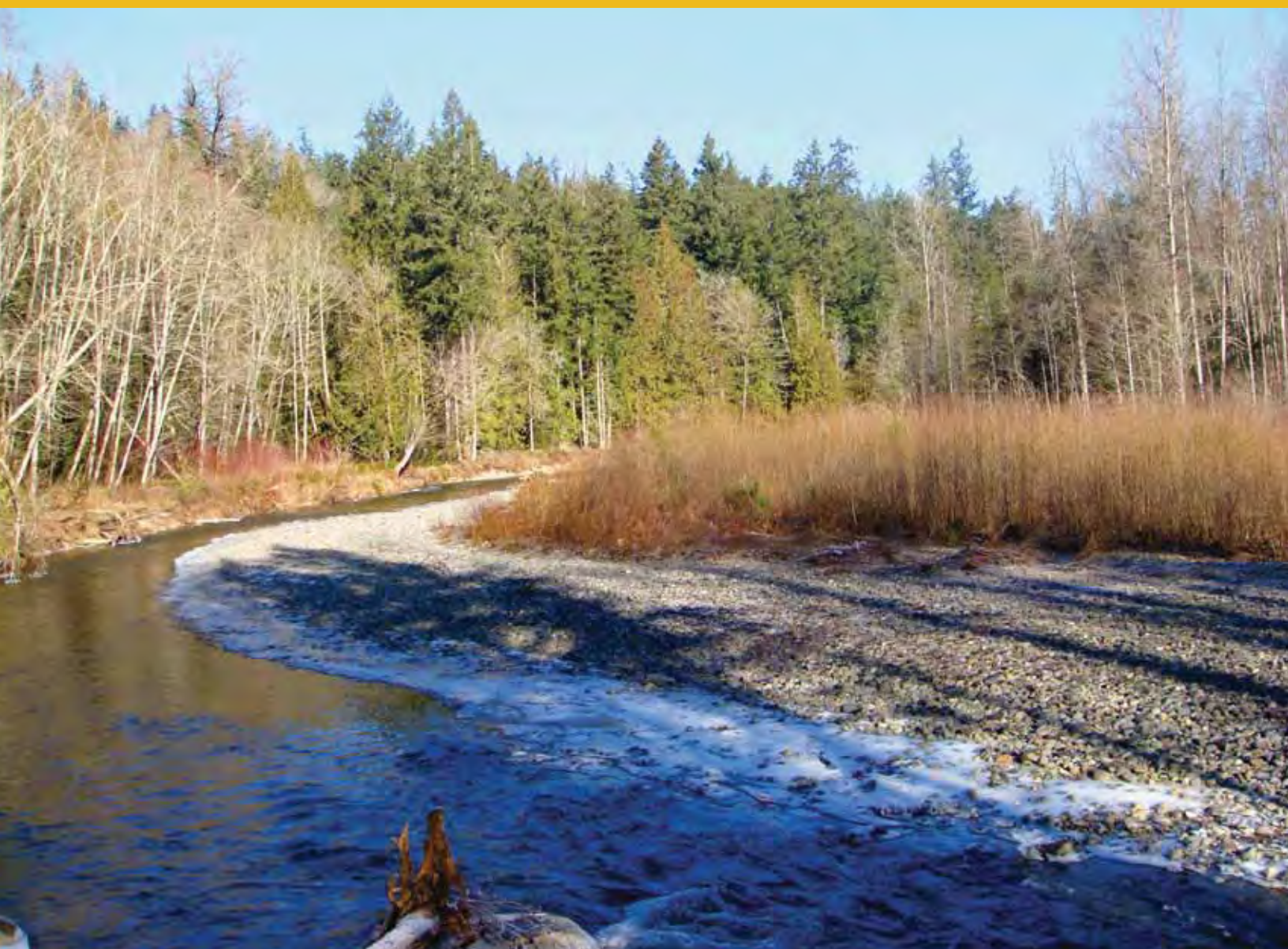


# Seizing a unique opportunity

The possibility of creating a park at the Nisqually-Mashel site has generated commitment and resources from people and organizations that are ready to act to preserve the area's historical, cultural and environmental value. They share a conviction that this place is imbued with strong messages of reconciliation and restoration of things cherished, and that these stories deserve to be told.

The park, and its stories, will have the power to change people: to provide them a new perspective on conflict and the opportunities to resolve differences in more productive ways; to enhance their appreciation for natural resources and the imperative to protect and restore them; and to show them the healing potential of a woodland experience.

If you are inspired to participate in the creation of Washington's newest state park, please contact Nikki Fields, Region Park Planner, at (360) 902-8658



## **Master Plan**

Washington State Parks  
and Recreation Commission

### **This study was made possible through the efforts of the following groups:**

Washington State Parks Master Planning Team  
Nisqually Indian Tribe  
State Park Community Exploratory Committee

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The Portico Group  
Herrera Environmental Consultants, Inc.  
Bluewater Project Management Services, LLC  
NLM  
Alice Burgess  
Tilghman Group

