

Old Fort Townsend Public Meeting

January 8, 2009

Fort Worden Commons

State Parks staff received the following input from the public in response the question: What are the key natural and cultural resource values and public recreation functions comments provided by Old Fort Townsend State Park? This input will help the agency develop conditions for transfer of the park to a local government or non-profit conservation partner if budget reductions continue to require it. This information will also form the basis of the land use planning process currently underway for the park.

Natural Resource Values

- ~ 900 Contiguous acres of natural forest habitat w/park CE on PTPM and JLT's Bulis Preserve.
- Old Ft Townsend contributes to protection of Puget Sound. Especially the recently added lands.
- I fear this decision by the State Park system will ultimately lead to the development of the area to housing. This would be a terrible loss of a mature old growth forest. My children see so little forest compared to what I saw and played in when I was their age. What is the ultimate outcome of all this?
- Habitat of species, once lost cannot be replaced. What are you thinking?
- Beautiful forest a "natural forest area", waterfront, too. Wonderful natural ranger talk amphitheater.
- All though I have no prospect or desires, I want to be the first wedding in the new barn, especially when the fireplace is in. That's a thought of an 86 year old park user since childhood. We can not deny anyone the right to learn the true heritage of this state as exemplified by Old Fort in one singular sitting all natural.
- New acquisitions since 2004: Conservation land, 30 acres purchased, new house for ranger, new kitchen shelter, building large enough for educational purposes, weddings, etc.
- 1993 WA Nat Heritage Program Old Growth Forest, 7 Parasitic Plants, Epicenter for Calypso orc, plus 4 other orchid sps. Regional area for mosses, mushrooms. New flora discovered since 2000.
- There is a huge state effort to clean up Puget Sound led by the Puget Sound Partnerships. It's far easier to protect a pristine environment then to cleanup degraded toxic conditions. Preservation by state parks of Old Fort Townsend insures that we will maintain and preserve this pristine short line and water shed.
- Outstanding natural area. A complete ecosystem, with rare plants, old growth forest, mushrooms, etc. Long shoreline, nearly a mile on Pt Bay. Protection of habitat, the uplands drain down to the Bay. Salmon habitat.
- A walk at Old Fort Townsend is a spiritual experience.
- Most parks feel "tiny", Old Fort feels "big".

- Old Fort Townsend State Park contains a unique plant community not found in other parks. It was designated as a Natural Forest Area in 1993. This park should not be closed for these reasons alone. I feel that unique natural areas should have the highest priority for keeping it under State Park management.

Cultural Resource Values

- Sense of historical forest/view of sound. IRREPLACABLE. What is the culture of the PNW? Nature, forest and sea, this is beyond "mere recreation" this is the original CREATION.
- Valuable property that must remain in the public trust to preserve the unique natural environment and be available for recreation. Historic significance. A unique ecosystem that should be maintained and preserved.
- Historic site, fort, bunker, UXB sites oldest mu-planted trees in state. Beginning of regular annual visits from grape ???, etc. Will increase revenue if allowed to grow.
- Significant historical value of OFT, could be developed with funding to an interpretive center using the (wonderfully kept secret!) Torpedo Tower! Isn't the Torpedo Tower as an historical structure unique!? Amphitheater is wonderful for learning!
- Pristine areas are rare and are ????? and less costly to maintain than to restore.
- Future possibilities? Rent existing buildings as a way to have oversight/caretaker. Limited day use, as with Anderson Lake SP or Miller SP. Institute an annual fee permit that provides entry to all state parks. Collaborate effort where WSP retains ownership (as one possibility) and one or more local gov't and/or no-gov't groups collaborate with the operation and maintenance. Sort of like Dungeness R./Railroad bridge park in Sequim.

Public/Recreation Values

- This is a unique and pristine place which cannot be replaced. Old growth forest, the oldest in the state.
- Old Fort Townsend State Park. In addition to unique flora, the park provides essential camp sites for summer festivals at Pt Townsend. Community is already hurting from loss of State Ferries and & floating bridge closures. Don't further damage our fragile economy.
- Better interpretation of Old Fort. Reconstruct Old Fort guardhouse for interpretive center for Old Ft and Forest displays.
- Key values: Great walking trails, Ramp into the water, Historical plaques, knowledge, right of way or potential bike trails, Camp sites (though fairgrounds could take this on)
- The park is a sanctuary for people and animals. Very educational park, lost of history there.

- What about day use? New beach area and access, trails, great picnic area.
- Overflow for Fort Worden State Park in summer season.
- Potential Cascadia water trails site. Waterfront, beach; mooring buoys; wonderful trails; camp sites, especially when it is increasingly difficult to find campsites in peak season. You will not be able to find this again if you let it go now. We will need it in the future.
- Old Ft. Townsend State Park is the best park for tent camping in NE Olympia Peninsula area. Fort Worden and Ft. Flagler are better for RV camping but are too open for good tent camping. The state park system seems progressively more biased toward RV campers. RV use lots of gasoline and produce copious emissions (green house gases). Surely, the future is more towards tent camping.
- Beautiful campsites that would be removed from the state's total campsite holdings if the park were closed. Beautiful trails, miles and miles! Group camping sites is an amazing setting!
- Old growth forest in close proximity to a population center. A destination for campers who came into town for services.
- I walk here 5 days a week, consider it a major part of my spiritual program. The old growth trees are my cathedral.
- Trails and flora unique to the peninsula. Beach area. This park presents a unique resource to the immediate area of the state at large because of its stand of mature trees and undisturbed natural areas, most parks are overdeveloped and deny the user of an opportunity to stop into the tranquilly and beauty of a "natural area" the woods, beach make a special combination.
- Community concerns, Kala Point Residence 600 plus: safety, fire, shared border, used as emergency access/egress.
- Great hiking trails in a beautiful peaceful setting, especially accessible to older people. Accessible to local people w/o having to drive a great distance.
- Add campsites. Port Townsend area has few campsites for the visiting public 86 at Ft Worden and maybe 30 at county parks. I do not acknowledge the fairgrounds. Additional revenue producing campsites should be added to Old Ft Townsend.
- Money was recently spent to upgrade kitchen facilities. Historic park as well as natural park. Strategic location on Puget Sound.
- Active Friends of Old fort Townsend group, significant volunteer effort 1300 hrs in 2008, volunteers maintain trails. Group includes botanists and geological expert who have created brochures, native plants and geological attributes. Beautiful new barn available for weddings and groups, increased revenue.
- Keep the view open, the original plans for the trailer sites (open sites) called for and directed that no trees be in it to keep the vista open.
- Compare Anderson Lake toxic, bare, (increased) liability to fresh, growing O.F.T., close and sell Anderson, keep O.F.T.

- Resources of Old Fort Townsend – Close proximity of trails and open space to P.T. Opportunities for contact w/old growth forest. Recreation – Picnicking, hiking, group activities, kayaking, beach combing, historical appreciation.

Other/Ideas to Consider

- Cooperative management of Old Fort Townsend
- Bogachiel SP only state park on west Oly peninsula. Closure will hurt Forks and area commerce.
- Plans based on status and situation in 2004 are out of date because: 1) At Old Fort Townsend things have changed, except for the existence of the oldest stand of old growth forest in the state & 2) The structure of the economy and gov has shifted dramatically w/I the last year. Any decision triggered by the budget squeeze and without consideration of both 1 & 2 above are liable to gross error. This entire process needs to be reviewed for to fit the times. Also with particular regard to Old Fort Townsend, the current stance needs to be reviewed to include the several outstanding features of the park recognized before and since 2004.
- What if no public entity/nonprofit can afford to take Old Ft Townsend?? Condos??!! This is not stewardship of state parks. There is land you are holding for possible future state parks, that would be a more appropriate sacrifice than an existing state park that has the largest old growth trees in the state.
- Close parks in less populated areas, or that are not as accessible.
- The more parks the better. If you have to close some, perhaps one should look at some parks east of Cascades provided they are not unique wildlife areas.
- Public/Private collaboration. Close Anderson Lake instead.
- How much will closing Old Fort Townsend save? Can't we keep it open (at least the least til economy (improves)
- If you were considering closing Old Fort Townsend why did you buy some land recently from the mill and also get an easement from the Land Trust? Don't understand logic. Where are we going to get park land from in the future?
- Don't judge the park by the 2004 snapshot, a lot of progress has been made.

Rothschild House Issues to Include in Planning (Natural, Cultural, Recreation)

- Needs interpretation during it off-season. So people who walk by will know or be a bit educated about RH
- Fix irrigation
- Should be released 1st OFT.