



EMBRACE YOUR
NATURE

Preliminary Recommendations



South Whidbey State Park Possession Point State Park Property Useless Bay

January 2017
www.parks.state.wa.us

Preliminary Recommendations Report

South Whidbey State Park
Possession Point State Park Property
Useless Bay

Randy Kline, Parks Planner and Project Lead

randy.kline@parks.wa.gov

360-902-8632

Documents related to and more information about these Preliminary Recommendations can be found at: <http://bit.ly/sowhidbeyparkplan>

CAMP Planning Team

Steve Brand, Planning and Partnership Manager

Jon Crimmins, Whidbey Area Manager

Andrew Fielding, NW Region Steward

Jamie Van de Vanter, NW Region Planner

Eric Watilo, Region Manager

Washington State Parks Commissioners

Mark O. Brown

Ken Bounds

Patricia Lantz

Steve Milner

Douglas D. Peters

Roger Schmitt

Lucinda Whaley

Don Hoch, Director, Washington State Parks

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

1111 Israel Rd. SW | PO Box 42650 | Olympia, WA 98504-2650 | <http://parks.state.wa.us>

To request this document in an alternative format, call (360) 902-8844 or the Washington Telecommunications Relay Service at (800) 833-6388.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Land Classifications	3
Long-Term Boundaries	5
Preliminary Management Issues and Approaches	7
• South Whidbey State Park	7
• Possession Point State Park Property	10
• Useless Bay	12
Appendix: Maps	
South Whidbey planning areas (overview).....	15
Preliminary Land Classification and Long-Term Boundary Recommendations	
South Whidbey State Park	16
Possession Point State Park Property	17
Useless Bay	18

This page intentionally left blank.

Executive Summary

This report provides a compilation of State Parks' preliminary recommendations based on feedback from a park tour, three public meetings and written comments received between September 2015 and December 2016. The report includes proposed land classifications, long-term boundaries and management approaches for Possession Point State Park Property, South Whidbey State Park and Useless Bay. These approaches will guide park use and development.

These preliminary recommendations will be the subject of a public workshop scheduled from 6:00 to 8:00 pm on Wednesday February 8th at the Freeland Hall located at 1515 Shoreview Drive, Freeland. Written comments should be submitted by March 8, 2017. Comments may be submitted to Randy Kline, Parks Planner and Project Lead, at randy.kline@parks.wa.gov.

The planning process

State Parks prepares land use plans through an agency-wide planning system called Classification and Management Planning (CAMP). CAMP is a multi-staged, public participation-based planning process for individual parks that culminates with adoption of park land classifications, a long-term park boundary and a park management plan. South Whidbey is in the third stage of this four-stage planning process. These four stages are shown below:

1. Identify issues and concerns of park stakeholders.
2. Explore alternative approaches to address identified issues.
3. Prepare preliminary recommendations to address issues or suggest a realistic compromise.
4. Propose final recommendations for official agency and commission adoption.

Management Issues

Several recurring management issues arose through public meetings and written comments. Preliminary management approaches to these issues as identified by the public and staff include the following:

- **South Whidbey campground** – In May 2015, the campground was temporarily closed due to elevated risk associated with diseased trees. The campground has been closed since this initial closure but is open to day use. This planning process considered keeping a portion of the overnight campground open, in particular the group camp. However, the extent of tree pathogens would require substantial tree removal to do so. The planning process also considered alternative campground locations within and outside the park boundaries. No alternative locations were identified in the park, but a 40-acre parcel on the southeast corner of the park has been included in the long-term boundary to allow for potential future camping opportunities.

Preliminary recommendation: Continue the current campground closure and begin to transition to day use with a focus on interpretation and event programming. Include

property within the long-term boundary for a potential future campground. Support the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District in its effort to establish a new campground.

- **South Whidbey beach access** – In January 2016, a storm event caused the existing staircase to slide onto the beach, eliminating the primary mode of access. A past engineering report indicates that the bank within the park is unstable and will continue to erode making establishing new beach access in this area a challenge.

Preliminary recommendation: Work to re-establish beach access within the park, acknowledging this will be difficult. Future technologies may provide the potential for beach access, but for the immediate future, the public will be encouraged to gain access through other state and local parks.

- **Possession Point Property** – State Parks originally acquired Possession Point to provide a water-accessed camping opportunity along the Cascadia Marine Trail. The forested upland portion of the property was acquired along with the shoreline and has existing hiking trails.

Preliminary recommendation: Maintain the park boundary with no recommendation for transferring ownership of any portion of the park property unless an appropriate public entity is willing to take over operation consistent with existing recreational deed restrictions and State Parks' natural resource and recreation policies.

- **Possession Point recreational use** – Currently, camping is not permitted on this property, except for the camping at the water-accessed Cascadia Marine Trail camping area. The developed day-use area on the shoreline includes a residence that was on-site when purchased and a bulkhead installed by State Parks in 2011.

Preliminary recommendation: Continue to operate Possession Point as a day-use park that only allows water-accessed Cascadia Marine Trail camping. State Parks will consider future removal of the existing residence and additional shoreline restoration.

- **Useless Bay Land Classification and Long-Term Boundary** – State Parks' ownership in Useless Bay is unique in that it comprises marine bedlands with no State Park-owned upland public access. Recreation on these bedlands is primarily water-accessed and includes uses such as kayaking and kite-boarding.

Preliminary recommendation: Continue to manage this property for water-accessed recreation and conservation with no pursuit of upland access. Consider allowing an appropriate public agency to take over management consistent with State Parks' natural resource and recreation policies.

Land Classifications

A central part of CAMP involves zoning, or classification, of park lands. State Parks has developed a system of six land classifications:

- Recreation Areas
- Resource Recreation Areas
- Natural Areas
- Heritage Areas
- Natural Forest Areas
- Natural Area Preserves

When assigned to a specific area within a park, each classification sets an appropriate intensity for recreational activity and development of facilities. Classifications align along a spectrum, ranging from low- to high-intensity land uses. By classifying park lands the agency is able to achieve a balance between protecting park resources and providing a variety of recreational opportunities for park visitors.

State Parks' land classifications are defined in Chapter 352-16 in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) which reads in part:

State park areas are of state-wide natural, cultural, and/or recreational significance and/or outstanding scenic beauty. They provide varied facilities serving low-intensity, medium intensity, and high intensity outdoor recreation activities, areas reserved for preservation, scientific research, education, public assembly, and/or environmental interpretation, and support facilities.

They may be classified in whole or part as follows:

- (1) **Recreational areas** are suited and/or developed for high-intensity outdoor recreational use, conference, cultural and/or educational centers, or other uses serving large numbers of people.*
- (2) **Resource recreation** areas are suited and/or developed for natural and/or cultural resource-based medium-intensity and low-intensity outdoor recreational use.*
- (3) **Natural areas** are designated for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of natural processes and/or features of significant ecological, geological or paleontological value while providing for low-intensity outdoor recreation activities as subordinate uses.*
- (4) **Heritage areas** are designated for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of unique or unusual archaeological, historical, scientific, and/or cultural features, and traditional cultural properties, which are of state-wide or national significance.*
- (5) **Natural forest areas** are designated for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of natural forest processes while providing for low-intensity outdoor recreation activities as subordinate uses, and which contain:*

- (a) *Old-growth forest communities that have developed for one hundred fifty years or longer and have the following structural characteristics: Large old-growth trees, large snags, large logs on land, and large logs in streams; or*
- (b) *Mature forest communities that have developed for ninety years or longer; or*
- (c) *Unusual forest communities and/or interrelated vegetative communities of significant ecological value.*
- (6) **Natural area preserves** are designated for preservation of rare or vanishing flora, fauna, geological, natural historical or similar features of scientific or educational value and which are registered and committed as a natural area preserve through a cooperative agreement with an appropriate natural resource agency pursuant to chapter 79.70 RCW and chapter 332-60 WAC.

To view WAC 352-16 online, visit: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=352-16-020>

For each land classification, the agency Director has developed detailed management guidelines and a recreational land use matrix. These guidelines identify specific activities and facilities permitted in each designation. The complete land classification matrix and management guidelines can be found at <http://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/5826>.

South Whidbey State Park

A combination of three land classifications are proposed for South Whidbey State Park. These classifications are shown on the map included in the Appendix.

- **Recreation** applies to:
 - The existing day-use areas to allow for continued high-intensity use, including the upper and lower parking areas, maintenance buildings near the park entrance, the trailer dump station, the amphitheater and the Calyx School building
 - In the former campground, the comfort stations and CXT portable toilet that served individual campsites and the immediate area surrounding the comfort stations to allow for any necessary maintenance and repair.
 - The former group camp to support day-use of the group picnic shelter and accompanying comfort station.
- **Resource Recreation** applies to:
 - The park roads within the current camping area.
- **Natural/Natural Forest Area** applies to:
 - The forested and undeveloped area on the east side of Smugglers Cove Road.
 - All portions of the park on the west side of Smugglers Cove Road that are not classified as Recreation or Resource Recreation to allow for continued conservation.

Possession Point State Park Property

One land classification is proposed for Possession Point. This classification is shown on the map included in the Appendix.

- **Resource Recreation** applies to:
 - The entire property including the existing developed area that encompasses the current residence, the water trail campsites, the upper parking lot and the road leading down to the residence. This also includes the upland forested portion of the park outside of the developed area to allow for hiking trails and to recognize the fragile nature of the shoreline bluff.

Useless Bay

Useless Bay is unique in that it comprises marine bedlands with no upland State Park-owned public access. One classification is proposed for the Useless Bay property. This classification is shown on the map included in the Appendix.

- **Resource Recreation** applies to:
 - The entire property which includes a portion of Deer Lagoon. This classification allows currently occurring water-based recreational activities such as kayaking and kite-boarding to continue while providing for ongoing resource protection.

An aerial map showing the preliminary land classifications for each of the properties is in the Appendix section.

Long-Term Boundaries

Long-term park boundaries are a frequently misunderstood aspect of park planning. One of the purposes of delineating a long-term boundary is to take a big picture look at lands surrounding the park that, independent of ownership, may advance the conservation and recreation mission of a park. Additionally, the long-term park boundary is used to identify surrounding lands with which State Parks would like to advance shared management goals. The long-term park boundary also considers whether agency-owned property should be retained or be considered inconsistent with park needs.

Including privately owned property in a long-term boundary gives Commission direction to staff to work with nearby landowners on cooperative management or potential land transactions. Transactions may range from simple agreements, to recreation and conservation easements, and sometimes even to agency purchase of property.

Since land frequently changes ownership, the agency delineates a long-term boundary to set its long-term property planning goals. Including private land within a long-term boundary can sometimes alarm property owners. The planning team makes every effort to contact affected landowners and explain the implications of this process. Property owners should be assured that long-term boundary and land classification decisions are for Commission policy direction only.

For properties included within a long-term boundary, any of a number of possibilities may apply. State Parks may:

- Seek to formalize an agreement with an adjacent property owner to advance a shared property management goal such as trail connectivity.
- Solicit a conservation easement from an adjacent property owner to protect certain natural or cultural features.
- Readily accept a donation of all or part of a private property.
- Consider exchanging agency-owned property for a private property.
- If there is a willing seller, consider purchase of a private property in fee.

South Whidbey State Park

Seven parcels totaling approximately 100 acres are proposed for inclusion in the long-term boundary with the goal of providing a potential future campground location and promoting a trail connection between Trillium Community Forest and the park. The long-term boundary is located on the east side of Smugglers Cove Road and connects with the southeast corner of the park.

Possession Point State Park Property

The preliminary recommendation is to maintain the entire park boundary in its current state with no recommendation for transferring ownership of any portion of the park property unless an appropriate public entity is willing to take over operation consistent with existing recreational deed restrictions and State Parks' natural resource and recreation policies. No parcels outside the current park are proposed for inclusion in the long-term boundary.

Useless Bay

The preliminary recommendation is to continue to manage this property for water-accessed recreation and conservation with no pursuit of upland access at this time. State Parks' will consider allowing an appropriate public agency to take over management consistent with State Parks' natural resource and recreation policies.

Issues and Management Approaches: South Whidbey, Possession Point and Useless Bay

Management approaches provide direction to staff and the public for addressing issues identified during the planning process. These management approaches were developed through feedback received at public meetings and through written public comment and will be incorporated into a plan for approval by the Washington State Parks Director.

South Whidbey State Park: Issues and Preliminary Approaches

Natural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting natural plant and animal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage park resources consistent with Natural Resources Management Policy 73-04-1 <i>Protecting Washington State Parks Natural Resources</i>. • Protect environmentally sensitive areas including the old growth habitat that occurs in the park. • Before development, conduct plant inventories to verify the absence of sensitive and rare plant species in areas planned for development. • Remove invasive species as part of development projects.
Forest Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with agency forestry specialists to develop a forest health plan that includes regular tree assessment and considers removal of hazard trees in areas where the public congregates, including day use and parking areas. • In the Natural/Natural Forest Area land class, prioritize retention of old growth trees and support of natural forest processes.
Protecting rare plant species and rare plant associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with local plant experts to develop a rare plant protection plan to identify, monitor, and establish protective prescriptions.
Invasive plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with weed boards, the local native plant society, and volunteers to develop and implement an invasive plant species management plan.

Cultural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting cultural and historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a cultural resources management plan to determine appropriate treatments for all cultural features.
Protecting cultural and archaeological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete site-specific cultural resource surveys for areas that will be disturbed due to development. • In all development actions, comply with direction from the Commission's Cultural Resources Policy 12-98-1 and Governor's Executive Order 05-05 regarding consultation with tribal entities.

Recreational Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the risk associated with tree pathogens and subsequent potential for tree failure, transition the existing campground to a day-use area with public access for trails and day use related facilities. • Work to ensure South Whidbey park users are aware of the camping opportunities provided at Fort Casey and Fort Ebey state parks. • Explore opportunities to provide additional camping at other Whidbey Island state parks, such as Fort Casey, to minimize the loss of camping opportunities at South Whidbey. • Explore opportunities to provide hiker/biker oriented camping. • Continue to support the work of the South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District to create a camping opportunity in South Whidbey. • Include property in the long-term boundary for a potential future campground location. • As necessary, maintain the campground dump station to provide a safe and sustainable sewage disposal option for those recreating in South Whidbey Island.

Recreational Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Day use area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the risk associated with tree pathogens and tree failure, transition the existing campground to a day-use area with public access for trail use and a range of other day use activities. • Redefine the former campground as a day use area.
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to permit pedestrian trail use year-round in the park. • Continue to permit geocaching consistent with agency directive 06-01 <i>Geocaching, Letterboxing and Related Activities in State Park Areas</i>. • Seek to link with regional trails and adjacent public land ownership including the Trillium Community Forest. • Consider upgrading the Wilbert Trail including boardwalk improvements in wet areas. • Work to complete a trail conditions assessment to prioritize trail repairs, trail needs and on-going maintenance. • Explore opportunities for interpretive programming and improved wayfinding signs on park trails.
Developing Interpretive Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with staff, partners and interested tribes to develop an interpretive plan for South Whidbey (including Possession Point State Park) to facilitate development of guided and self-guided interpretive opportunities. • Continue working with partners to expand existing environmental education programs and special events. • Consider opportunities to use interpretation as a tool to communicate forest health and stewardship messages
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to establish ADA access to the amphitheater. • Improve ADA access for the Harry Wilbert Trail with an emphasis on providing access to the Ancient Cedar.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with and support partners including the Calyx School, Friends Groups and Service Education and Adventure (SEA).
Amphitheater and promotion of special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to improve coordination for marketing the park for weddings and other special events. • Explore partnership opportunities with the Whidbey Children's Theater to provide additional amphitheater programming.
Volunteer Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to coordinate with local groups to assist with trail construction and maintenance. • Continue to coordinate with local groups such as the Sound Water Stewards to provide trail and beach guided walk and talks. • Promote volunteer events that assist with invasive plant species removal and weed control.

Signs and Park Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to provide regular event information updates on the park website. • Work to include maps and information at trailheads and on the State Parks website.
Beach and water access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to re-establish trail access to the beach recognizing that this may be challenging given the high-bank shoreline conditions and past history of slope failure. • Work with the Washington Water Trails Association (WWTA) to explore expanded kayak use on the beach.

Possession Point State Park Property: Issues and Preliminary Approaches

Natural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting natural plant and animal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage park resources consistent with Natural Resources Management Policy 73-04-1 <i>Protecting Washington State Parks Natural Resources</i>. • Before development, conduct plant inventories to verify the absence of sensitive and rare plant species in areas planned for development and to inventory for invasive species. • Remove invasive species as part of development projects.
Forest health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with agency forestry specialists to develop a forest health plan that includes regular tree assessment and considers removal of hazard trees in areas where the public congregates, including water trail camping areas, trailheads and parking areas. • Minimize development of the forested uplands to protect and preserve the bluff.
Protecting rare plant species and rare plant associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with local plant experts to develop a rare plant protection plan to identify, monitor and establish protective prescriptions for rare plants in the park.
Invasive plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with weed boards, the local native plant society and volunteers to develop and implement an integrated pest management plan. Continue to draw on local experts to monitor progress.

Cultural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a cultural resources management plan to determine appropriate treatments for all cultural features.
Protecting cultural and archaeological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete site-specific cultural resource surveys for areas that will be disturbed due to development. • In all future development actions, comply with direction from the Commission’s Cultural Resources Policy 12-98-1 and Governor’s Executive Order 05-05 regarding tribal consultation.

Recreational Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit camping to water-accessed camping only as part of the Cascadia Marine Trail system. • In consultation with the Washington Water Trails Association, review the current location of the water trails site and consider moving it to a location on the south side of the park away from adjacent residential cabins.
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to permit pedestrian trail use in the park. • Work with volunteers to maintain existing trails. • Seek to link with regional trails and adjacent public land ownerships. • Work to complete a trail conditions assessment to prioritize trail repairs, trail needs and on-going maintenance. • Explore opportunities for interpretive programming and signs along park trails. • Continue to permit geocaching and letterboxing, consistent with agency directive 06-01 <i>Geocaching, Letterboxing and Related Activities in State Park Areas</i>.
Developing interpretive opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with staff, partners and interested tribes to develop an interpretive plan for the Possession Point State Park Property, encouraging development of guided and self-guided interpretive opportunities. • Consider opportunities to use interpretation as a tool to communicate forest health and stewardship messages.
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the degree possible, work to ensure that existing and new facilities accommodate ADA access.
Volunteer groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to coordinate with local groups to assist with trail maintenance. • Continue to coordinate with local groups to provide trail and beach guided walk and talks. • Promote volunteer events that assist with invasive plant species removal and weed control.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with the Washington Water Trails Association regarding water trail campsite location and use.
Signs and park information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to provide improved maps at trailheads and trail directional signs that are consistent with accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas. Include maps and information at trailheads and on the State Parks website. Work to notify water trail and day-use park users of proximity to private property, especially the residential cabins located on the north end of the park.
Park access and parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider allowing parking below the existing road and parking area, especially to provide ADA access. Subject to the requirement for a special activity permit, continue to allow vehicular access to the shoreline for recreational groups.
Recreational diving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide shore- and water-based access for recreational diving.

Useless Bay: Issues and Preliminary Approaches

Natural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting natural plant and animal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage park resources consistent with Natural Resources Management Policy 73-04-1 <i>Protecting Washington State Parks Natural Resources</i>.

Cultural Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Protecting cultural historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a cultural resources management plan to determine appropriate treatments for any cultural features.
Protecting cultural and archaeological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In all future actions, comply with direction from the Commission's Cultural Resources Policy 12-98-1 and Governor's Executive Order 05-05 regarding tribal consultation.

Recreational Resource Issues	
Issue	Preliminary Approaches
Recreational use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to manage this property for water-accessed recreation and conservation with no pursuit of upland access at this time. Consider allowing an appropriate public agency to take over management consistent with State Parks' natural resource and recreation policies.
Water-based recreational use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to allow and support water-based uses such as kayaking and kite-boarding.

Appendix: Maps—Preliminary Land Classification Recommendations

South Whidbey planning areas (overview)

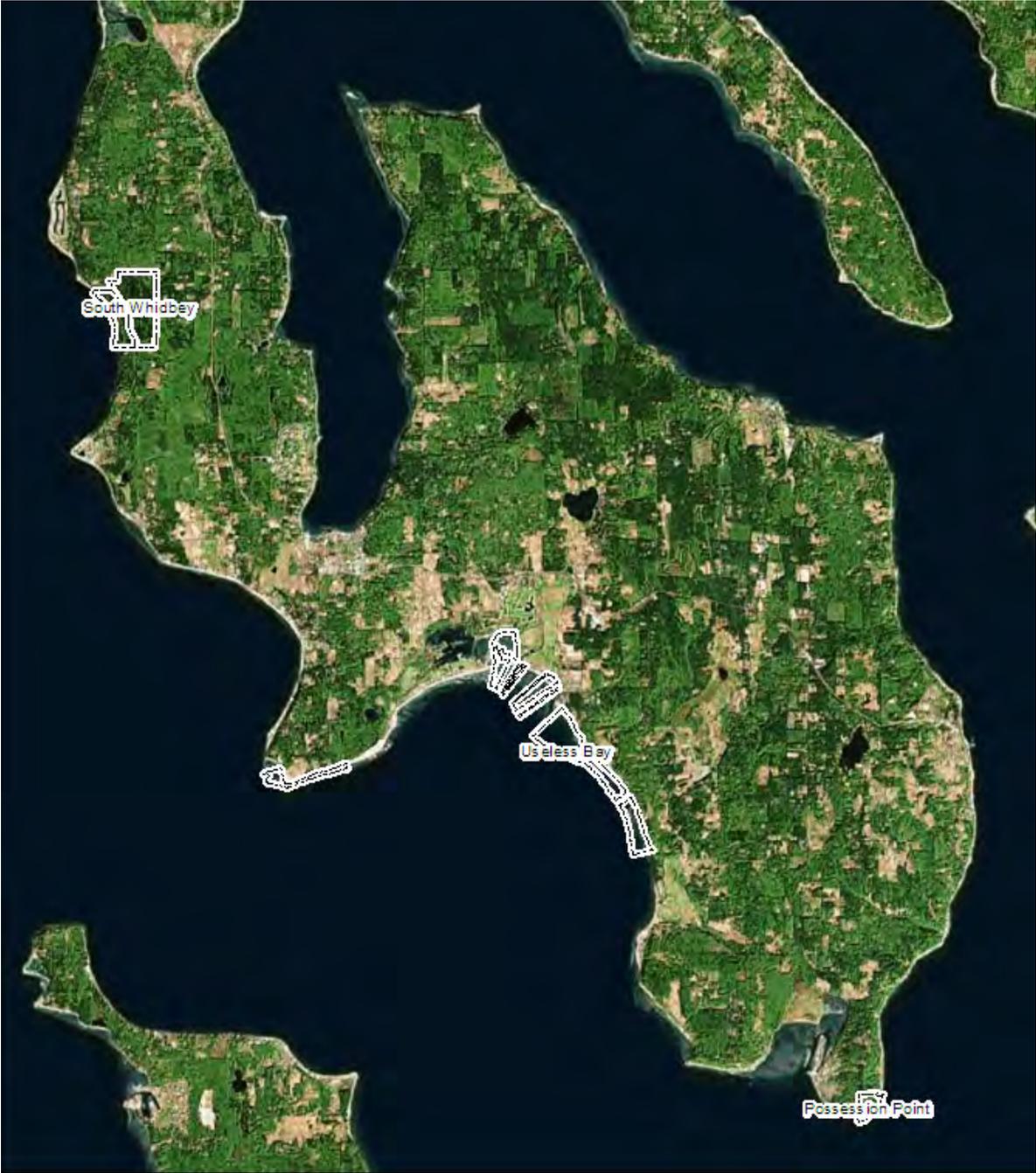
Preliminary Land Classification Recommendations

South Whidbey State Park

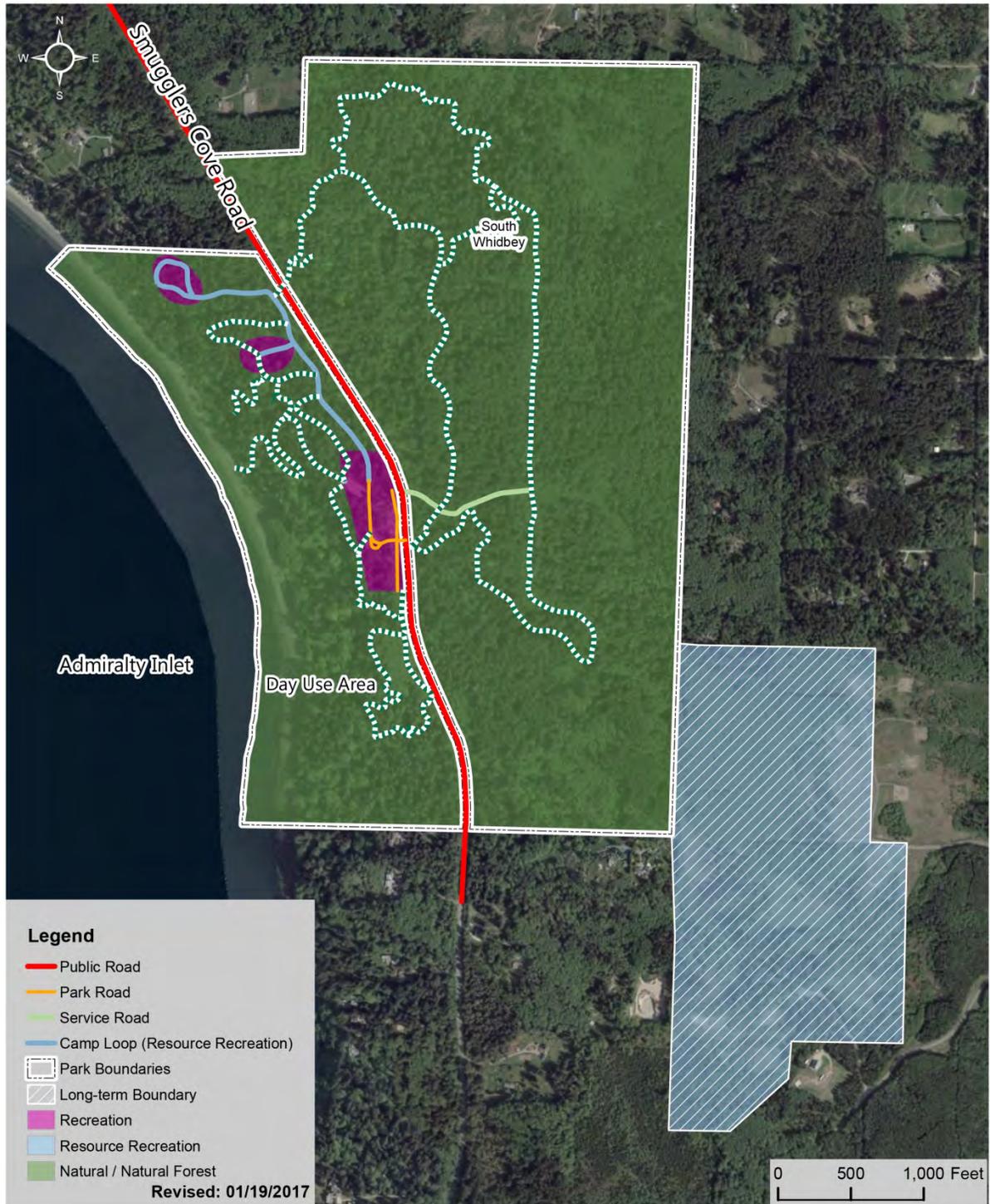
Possession Point State Park Property

Useless Bay

South Whidbey planning areas



South Whidbey State Park Preliminary Land Classification Recommendation



Possession Point State Park Property Preliminary Land Classification Recommendation



Useless Bay Preliminary Land Classification Recommendation

