



# New South Vashon Levy Trailhead Project and Trail System Improvements Questions from the Community

Updated March 2026

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## Introduction

### Project Background

This document addresses comments and questions submitted by the public during the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public comment period and other public outreach efforts for the South Vashon Trailhead and Trail System Improvements project. In 2023, King County Parks and Recreation acquired approximately 50 acres of property on Vashon Island (Parcels 0121029003, 0121029137, 0121029002, 0121029121, 0121029122, 0121029123 and 0121029055). The property is mostly forested and has not been developed other than non-motorized trails. The purpose of the acquisition was to allow public access to the 50 acres that will become a new park.

The proposed project includes two components: development of a trailhead with parking facilities and trail system improvements. Each are described below.

The project area is located on property owned by King County and managed by King County Parks. The site contains an existing network of trails that were originally developed by previous landowners as informal hiking routes and later as part of a planned recreational component associated with a camp proposed by the former property owner. These trails were not formally designed or managed as part of a public park system.

The proposed project would formalize and manage public access by establishing a designated trailhead and improving the existing trail system as part of a broader site activation effort. The trailhead and trail

system improvements are planned to be implemented concurrently and may be completed by one or more contractors and/or King County Parks crews.

### Trailhead

The trailhead component of the project will provide a new vehicular access driveway from 131st Avenue SW, parking for six passenger vehicles and one Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible vehicle, relocation of an existing potable waterline, and a new enhanced pedestrian route to an existing trail system. The new access driveway will include an access gate and upgrades to an existing roadside drainage culvert. The project will occur in an upland area, outside of all stream and wetland buffers. The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and accessible trailhead parking lot.

### Trails

The trail system component of the project will improve the existing trail network within the property to provide sustainable, non-motorized recreation opportunities, enhance user experience, and reduce maintenance needs. The project will decommission approximately 4,458 linear feet of existing trails that are eroding or poorly aligned and construct approximately 1,281 linear feet of new trail built to King County Parks' standards for sustainability and accessibility. Decommissioned trail segments will be restored to natural conditions. This work represents a 71% reduction in total trail length, emphasizing quality, safety and resource protection over density.

Trail work will include tread surface and drainage improvements, vegetation management, and installation of minor trail structures where necessary to reduce erosion. The trails will accommodate hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding, although no horse-trailer parking is included as part of this project. There may be opportunities to improve user experience and reduce potential trail conflicts between users by designating specific trails and/or trail segments for single-use types versus open to all-uses.

Project documents including a rendering of the trailhead are available on the King County Parks website: [Public Notices](#).

The project is anticipated to be completed in 2026.

## **Comment Summary**

From February 3 to February 17, 2026, King County Parks solicited public comments on the project as part of the project's environmental review under SEPA. Eight comments were received during the comment period. Responses to these comments and other questions and feedback received from the public outside of the SEPA comment period are provided below.

### **Project Location**

#### **How was the parking area location determined?**

The proposed parking area is located at the only existing driveway onto King County's 50-acre property. Constructing the small parking area at the existing driveway from 131<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW will minimize environmental impacts associated with the project. Because of site conditions, constructing a small

parking area at any other location on the property would require construction of a roadway, to public road standards, through a densely forested area, requiring removal of many trees.

**Will critical area buffers be impacted?**

No critical area buffers are expected to be impacted by the project.

**Was the wetland on the west side of 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW properly rated?**

A wetland delineation and rating was performed by a Professional Wetland Scientist with over 30 years of experience in the industry, and the work was performed according to all professional standards. A desktop peer review of the wetland rating performed by Parks' Wetland Lead determined the rating was sound. Even with a more generous interpretation of some questions, the overall rating did not change.

**Should the wetland buffer extend to the east side of 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW to protect the hydrology of the wetland?**

King County Code (KCC) 21A.24.325(C)(4) allows for the buffer to be truncated at the edge of a legally established roadway if it is determined that the area on the opposite side of the road does not provide additional protection or significant biological, geological, or hydrological buffer functions relating to the other portion of the buffer. While it could be considered correct to state that “wetland subsurface connectivity from upland areas is a critical, often hidden mechanism for water, nutrient, and pollutant transport, often dominating the hydrology of ‘isolated’ or depressional wetlands,” specific site conditions suggest that construction of a parking area on the opposite side of the road would not significantly alter groundwater dynamics at this location.

The topography in the area slopes to the west/southwest, with the east side (project side) of 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW elevated above the existing roadway which itself is elevated above the wetland to the west. It is assumed that groundwater generally follows the surface topography, flowing east to west/southwest at this location. Under existing conditions, the compacted material associated with 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW would serve as an impediment to groundwater flow from the eastern (upslope) side of the road to the western (downslope) side of the road, and any significant movement of groundwater from east to west/southwest would occur at an elevation below the existing compacted road prism. Given that the proposed parking lot on the east side of the road would be at or above the elevation of 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW, any compaction associated with the parking lot is not expected to result in additional restriction of groundwater movement beyond that caused by the existing road prism for 131<sup>st</sup> Ave SW.

**Neighborhood Considerations**

**Will the new park encourage nuisance behaviors on neighboring properties?**

Comments reference existing nuisance behaviors including trespassing and criminal activity and concerns that the presence of a public park and trailhead may exacerbate these activities. Typically activating an underutilized site, such as the proposed park, decreases the frequency of nuisance behaviors such as break-ins, squatting, and trespassing. Once a site is activated, Parks staff regularly visit the site to perform routine tasks and maintenance activities, such as opening/closing gates, emptying trash cans, updating kiosk information, and inspecting for vandalism and illegal use. This

regular presence of Park staff, combined with regular presence of members of the public, typically reduces nuisance behaviors.

**Will the parking area be visible from neighboring properties and contribute to noise from the local animal shelter?**

The new parking area is not expected to substantially impact any of the neighboring properties. The proposed parking area is located more than 700 feet away from the animal shelter on the neighboring property.

A visual screen of vegetation will be considered as an option to minimize visual impacts on adjacent properties and may provide additional noise attenuation.

**How is the SEPA mailing list determined?**

The mailing list includes the property and taxpayer addresses listed in King County Public Records for each property within 500 feet of the project site.

**Construction Phase Impacts**

**Will an inadvertent discovery plan be in place for ground-disturbing activities?**

Parks implements an inadvertent discovery plan for all ground-disturbing impacts and requires tribal notification of any archaeological work or monitoring. Tribes will be given the opportunity to be present during any archaeological investigations or any other ground-disturbing activities.

**Will trees on the site be impacted?**

The new parking area has been sited to minimize impacts to the existing trees. No healthy trees are expected to be removed by the project. There are no known culturally modified trees on the site.

**Will soil at the property be sampled for lead and arsenic?**

The entirety of Vashon and Maury Islands are within the Tacoma Smelter Plume that deposited lead and arsenic onto the ground surface. Soil sampling will be conducted and analyzed during construction for arsenic and lead following the Tacoma Smelter Plume Model Remedies Guidance for material disturbed during grading that will not be capped by the parking area or that will be hauled for disposal offsite.

**Will lead and arsenic contaminated soils on the site be removed or remediated similar to what was required at the Maury Island Natural Area?**

The entirety of Vashon and Maury Islands are within the Tacoma Smelter Plume that deposited lead and arsenic onto the ground surface. Cleanup at Maury Island Natural Area was required by Washington State Department of Ecology because funding for that property purchase was provided through the state's Model Toxic Control Act program (see our website for additional information). No work proposed on the current site triggers a regulatory requirement for mandatory clean up of the lead or arsenic.

Health and safety of park users is King County's utmost priority. Signage consistent with that used in areas contaminated by the Tacoma Smelter Plume throughout the region will be provided to warn park visitors of the lead and arsenic contamination and recommend appropriate precautions that should be taken such as washing hands and cleaning pets after spending time outdoors. See [the King County Public](#)

[Health Dirt Alert website](#) for more precautions. Appropriate precautions will be taken during construction to protect workers and the public from any lead or arsenic exposure.

## Site Improvements

### **What kind of vegetation will be used in any landscaping?**

Landscaping will be minimal, and restricted to areas impacted by construction. Only native vegetation will be used for landscaping.

### **Will any lighting be Dark Sky compliant?**

No lighting is proposed for the project.

### **Will all existing structures at the site be retained?**

Existing structures on the site will be retained so long as they do not pose a safety risk to the public.

### **Will the existing trail along the eastern edge of the property be maintained?**

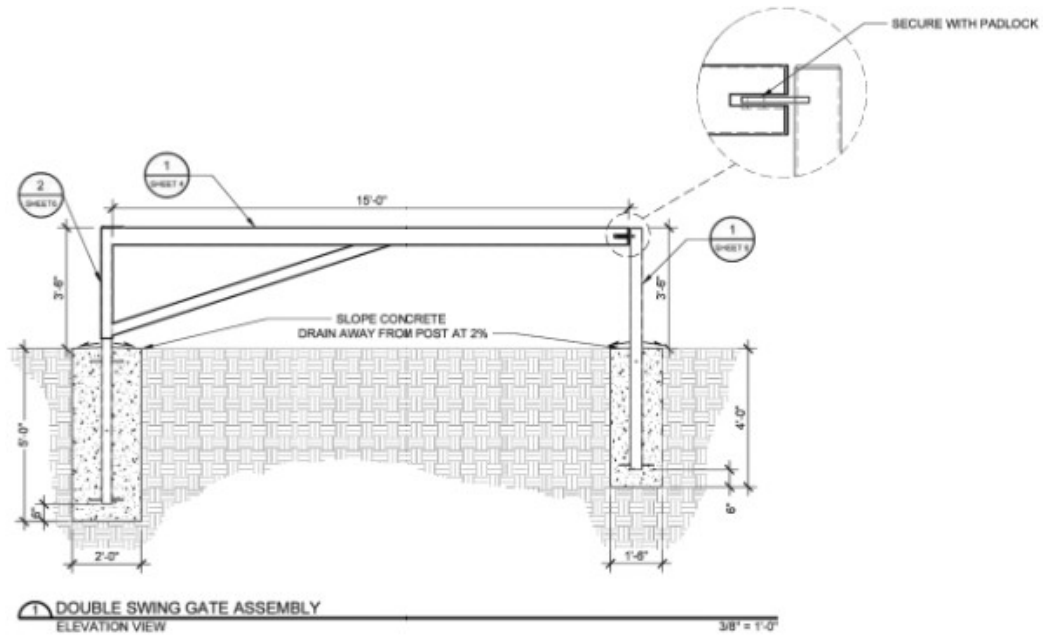
The trails along the eastern edge of the property are planned to be retained.

### **Will additional property be acquired to extend the new park to the shore?**

There currently are no plans to acquire additional property adjacent to the new park or to provide access to the shore.

### **What entry gates and signage will be provided?**

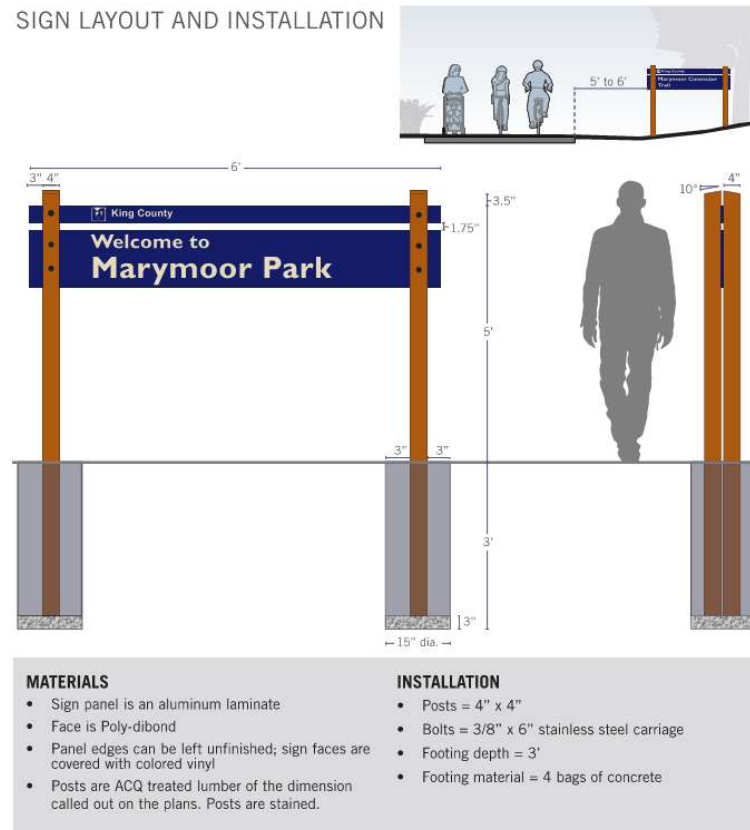
All King County Parks use the standard entry gate and sign standard so that they may be consistently maintained and provide consistent visual cues for King County Parks properties across the county. The gate is powder-coated steel. Wood materials are generally not used in these applications due to the cost and difficulty of maintenance in our wet climate. The proposed gate is shown on the detail below.



**What entry sign will be provided?**

All King County Parks use the same entry sign standard so that they may be consistently maintained. As shown on the detail below, the sign is approximately 3.5 feet tall and is intended to provide consistent visual cues for King County Parks properties across the county while being minimally intrusive in the surrounding natural habitat.

## SIGN LAYOUT AND INSTALLATION



## Next Steps

### Project Site Meeting

We will meet at the site on Friday April 10th, 2026 at 10:30 am to walk the project and discuss the scope. The gate will be open for those with higher clearance vehicles to park at the site. Some parking is possible along 131<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW. Although there is no official address, the approximate address is 29170 131st Ave SW, Vashon.

### For more project information

More Information about the New South Vashon Trailhead and Trails project is here:

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/nature-recreation/parks-recreation/king-county-parks/parks/public-notices>