

PEAR Team Meeting 21 – Meeting Notes – March 12, 2025, 12-2 pm

Facilitators Present:

Janette Chien, she/her, Parks DEI Director

PEAR Team Present:

Alyssa Smith, she/her, Boating Education

Mary Brown, she/her, Seattle Guide Manager

Stacey Coltrain, she/her, Ranger Sequim Bay State Park

Lynn Makowsky, she/her Community Member

Amber Forest, Whatcom Bays Area Manager

Cha Cha Sawyer, she/her, Community Member

Reco Bembry, he/him, President Big Tent Coalition

Suzanne Kagen, she/her, Program Specialist 2

Jeff Vassallo, he/him, Tahoma Gateway Area Manager, NW Region

Denise Rochelle, she/her, Founder of The Bronze Chapter

Nick Miron, he/him, Community Member

Nikki Williams, she/her, HRC4 Talent Acquisition Park Ranger Recruitment

Valeria Veasley, she/her, Management Analyst

Observers Present

Chris Carlson, he/they, Parks Construction Project Coordinator

Heather Carrington, she/her, Central Lakes Area Administrative Assistant

Tonna Jensen Sigler, she/her Administrative Assistant Legislative Relations

Makaela Kroin, Program Specialist 5 Folk and Traditional Arts Program

Kuen Kuen Spichiger, Program Specialist 2 Folk and Traditional Arts Program

Wendy Vandell, HRC4 Recruitment

Clair Werch, UW Student

Diana MacDonald, Program Specialist

Maddy Laoprasert, Community Member

Chris Liu, Community Member

Agenda

Janette welcomed the team at 12:03, she reviewed our community norms and the agenda.

Agenda:

- Check in
- (EIR) Folk & Traditional Arts Program Continued
- Intro to Free Days & Free Ways Project
- BREAK
- 1pm – Join Zoom Link

Updates

- Re-organization follow ups
 - Thank you from Diana

- Additional info about Amber Erdahl, Director Workforce, Technology & Equity
- Hiring an AA5
- NCLI Interviews
- PEAR Committees

Janetted shared that in our last meeting we discussed the re-organization of Diana's direct reports. Janette extended Diana's thanks for the time she shared with the PEAR team. Diana would like to attend PEAR meetings in the future, maybe quarterly. If people have ideas or questions on how we engage our director, please email Janette.

NCLI interviews were last week. We had a record-breaking number of applications this year. There is a very high funding need for youth recreation opportunities.

We are still working on the structure of the PEAR Committees we introduced in January. You can expect us to send out a form to determine availability.

Check-in prompt: drop an emoji in the chat that captures how you are feeling today.

[EIR Folk & Traditional Arts Program \(FTAP\) Continued](#)

Janette welcomed back the FTAP team. Makaela shared that the last time we met they shared their presentation. This is a summary of some of the challenges they shared last month to provide context for our discussion today.

- Limited staff capacity and funding make it hard to sustain our work
- Heavy reliance on partnerships with community organizers
- Heavy reliance on field staff to support events
- "A welcoming park system"
 - Different understandings of "safety"
 - Parks staff training

Makaela shared the reason our program was originally founded was to acknowledge that not all communities feel welcome at parks. With the expanding demographics of Washington, a Folk and Traditional Arts Program (FTAP) was determined as one way to make communities feel welcome.

Janette shared that the budget issues are impacting the agency, and we are navigating what that looks like. We heavily rely on community partnerships. A welcoming park system is one of our PEAR Committees and this (FTAP) is very relevant to what this committee will do. A welcoming park system will have a different meaning for people, especially marginalized groups. We all have a different understanding of safety and how we move through the world. Some marginalized groups, for example, don't feel safe in the presence of law enforcement.

Kuen Kuen shared that there is a lot of stress coming down on the program. They are looking at how we will continue this work if we are down a position or experience reduced funding. The FTAP is under a lot of pressure right now and it's very challenging. Makaela shared that since we don't know what our staffing will look like in

the next biennium, we are navigating how we will sustain community partnerships that have taken decades to develop.

Janette asked the PEAR team to consider:

- What are models for sustainable community partnerships?
- What would you want your park staff to know if you're doing something at the park? What does it look like for your park staff to be culturally competent?
- What kinds of experiences have made you feel welcome at parks?
- How can state parks maintain trust with community partners (PEAR team members, Folk & Traditional Arts Program partners, others) during lean times?
- Do you have questions for us or for the agency leadership about how budget decisions are affecting community engagement work?

Breakout Rooms

Janette shared that the group will spend 20 minutes in breakout rooms to discuss the prompts. Janette asked that one person from each room share out for one minute on highlights for their discussions.

Room 1: What experiences make us feel welcome in the park? WA State Parks staff could have a challenge to try and connect with 10 people that day or ask people how they are feeling in the park. At the front gate have a QR code to link visitors to cultural activities happening within the park.

COOP Organizational Structure - Partnering with relevant arts organizations to morph the program into a partnership domain.

Grants, Corporate, and Donor Supports! We must fight NOW

Advocacy

Support letters, we must fight for justice, we cannot be victims - arts and culture is essential to "RESPECT" to lift DEI Pressure internally and externally

Participatory governance is a **power-sharing** model that moves beyond traditional top-down decision-making. Instead of a single leader making all the key choices, **decision-making is distributed among members, partners, and the community.** It is based on:

Collective Leadership – Every stakeholder has a meaningful voice in governance.

Decentralized Decision-Making – No single entity holds unchecked power; multiple leaders collaborate on key decisions.

Community Ownership – The people most affected by policies or programs help shape them.

Transparency & Accountability – Open communication ensures all members understand financials, strategies, and decisions.

Power Redistribution – Moves beyond tokenized input to **real co-creation and shared responsibility**.

Funding outside of legislative groups

Room 2: Looking at funding from sources outside of the legislature. A co-op structure is a shared partner structure where outside agencies that really value this work could partner with Parks. It would be easy to fold a position into this effort. The money is there, Washington State Parks just need to partner with external folks to write grants, corporate sponsorships, and partner with capacity-building initiatives! People really want power. We must stop acting like victims if things aren't happening the way we want them too we must fight. Right now, we are in the fight of our lives. Once the system attacks positions that don't directly impact you, the next steps will directly impact you, will Janette's position be next? Wendy's? Heather's?

Models for Sustainable Community Partners:

- Funding outside of legislative groups (not subject to 2-year budget cycles)
- Maintain strong relationships, touching base with community partners several times throughout the year. Networking as well!

What would you want staff to know?

- Advance notice for staff, invitation to participate (if appropriate), information about the event and groups
- Maybe a QR Code at the gate that has cultural events going on?
- Write letters to the leaderships

What does it look like to have park staff be culturally competent?

- More training with community partners / community groups / inclusion for different communities. Lunch & Learn opportunities. Space to build closer relationships with community groups.
- A day of (paid) service for staff to volunteer at different cultural events!

What type of experience makes us feel welcome?

- Diversity represented at the parks.
- Welcoming / positive interactions with park staff
- Staff challenge? Connect with 10 guests today! Make an effort to greet individuals. Ask how people are enjoying the park.
- Acknowledging things that might not make you feel welcome. Come to us if issues / providing support

Partner on Grants with External Organizations

For the sake of time Janette asked rooms 3, 4 and the main room please type a highlight in the chat

Room 3: With agency provided census track info and appropriate translated materials in addition to doing meaningful info research to find out who goes where and why, and then a plan to fill those gaps. Maintaining trust with community partners. Approach area managers for insight and support.

Room 4: Park staff need to know their community and what their needs are. Also, lots of trust building.

Models for sustainable community partnerships

- Coordinate through the DEI/Partnership team
- Using the same structure regularly with improvement as necessary - i.e. Emerging Leaders Program
- Clear decision makers on both ends, reciprocal relationships
- Building trust, solid connections
- Accountability
- Ensure you have the right stakeholders

What would you want your park staff to know? What does it look like for your park staff to be culturally competent?

- Understanding who is coming to the park and what barriers there might be, not your audience
- Creating welcoming space; removing barriers
- Park staff understanding their own bias and adjusting appropriately
- Apply the platinum rule - treat others how they want to be treated.
- Cultural competence - lower bar, how can we shift to culturally sustaining, influenced by leadership and decision making that incorporate cultural competence
- Decision makers must listen to and adapt decisions to fit input from BIPOC community

What kinds of experiences have made you feel welcome at parks?

- Visible staff, with smiles and other welcoming behavior
- See staff and other visitors that look like me

Main room:

What are models for sustainable community partnerships?

KCPC - is a coalition - a type of model

- An umbrella house that contains individuals and groups
- Collective action model around aligned mission or goal
- Bigger circle and as you go inside the circle, there are more circles
- There are so many layers, the deeper you get the more distinctive it gets

It can be challenging when we are talking about a partnership between a land manager and a community group.

It's been a little harder for KCPC to connect at the state level with state parks - it's more county focused and we know more clearly what we can share

A little harder to partner at the state level

- For example, there are transportation options (trailhead direct) - where you can take a van to a trailhead
- Surprised by lack of collaboration with DNR -we have shared transportation goals

What would you want your park staff to know if you're doing something at the park?

Denice: That a group is there, what the purpose is, and if there's a need/desire to have check-ins due to negative interactions. If there's non-dominant culture events, park staff should be ready, willing, and able to intervene re: dominant culture pushback.

It is important for staff to understand that they need to engage in community outreach as well.

Services are not always obvious to members of the public - it is unreasonable to expect community groups to reach out to parks staff - staff should take it upon themselves

- Adding to position description, make it a more stated part of their role

What does it look like for your park staff to be culturally competent?

Denice: Awareness of various cultures and how people of different cultures may connect with / interpret public outdoor spaces.

What kinds of experiences have made you feel welcome at parks?

Denice: Ranger acknowledgement. Ranger interaction. Ranger help with guest problems. Posted expectations about behavior of guest relations, use of space, safety on water / land.

How can State Parks maintain trust with community partners (PEAR team members, Folk & Traditional Arts Program partners, others) during lean times?

Denice: Remain transparent. Willingness to think outside of the box. Willingness to take a visible stand and not bend/acquiesce to fear mongering tactics. Is there commitment, or not. What level / degree is the commitment?

We hear a verbal commitment but need more tangible demonstration of commitment

- E.g. integrating into position descriptions (if we can't create new positions)

[Intro to Free Days & Free Ways](#)

Janette shared that State Parks connected with SNAP-Ed after we did outreach for Everyone Outdoors. SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education) is a program that supports the health and food security of people who are qualified to receive SNAP food benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

- State Parks connected with SNAP-Ed
- Presented to SNAP-Ed providers across WA

- Discover Pass Free Days (12 per year)
- Discount Passes (Disabled Vet, Foster Family, Senior Limited Income)
- Everyone Outdoors
- **We can use public transit to access state parks without paying a Discover pass fee**
- Which state parks are reachable by public transit?
- Let's create a public-facing resource that shows state parks reachable by public transit! "Free Days and Free Ways"
- Clair Werch– A UW Masters of Public Health student completing practicum with State Parks and SNAP-Ed

Janette welcomed Clair (she/her), a second-year Master of Public Health (MPH) student at the University of Washington-Seattle. She is passionate about food systems and health equity, especially within rural and LGBTQIA+ populations. Her work in rural Alaska and rural Wisconsin has deepened these passions, along with her degree in Nutrition and Food Systems from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Currently, Clair is working on her thesis about consumer and producer trust in animal agriculture. When she is not working, Clair enjoys baking, sewing, and getting outside however she can.

Janette asked the group to jump to the zoom link and watch the presentation on zoom. We will not be rejoining on teams after the presentation ends.

Break

Janette asked the group to take a quick break and then navigate to the zoom link and watch the presentation on zoom. We will not be rejoining on teams after the presentation ends.

Free Days & Free Ways presentation

Eileen Grigsby welcomed Clair, Master of Public Health (MPH) student at the University of Washington-Seattle interning with Washington State Parks.

Free Days and Free ways to reach WA State Parks. Clair shared the agenda.

- Icebreaker
- How this project started
- Why Free Days and Free Ways?
- What did we do?
- Challenges & Recommendations
- Potential Benefits
- Discussion Prompts

Clair asked the group to type in the chat, what is the last Washington State Park (WSP) that you visited?

How this project started:

- To park at a WSP you need a discover pass.
 - Allows you to park at lands managed by WA State Parks, Dept. Fish and Wildlife and Dept. of Natural Resources
- Some Free Days: 12 each year
- Some Free Ways
 - Bike or walk
 - Exempt vehicles, Volunteering
 - Everyone Outdoors program (groups can apply for free passes)
- SNAP-ed recommends going to your local park, but how?

Why Free Days and Free Ways?

Clair shared that outdoor access is vital for the health and wellbeing of all members of the community. Outdoor access has impacts on physical and mental health. Physical activity mitigates cardiovascular disease and type two diabetes, that cause mortality. Green space makes it possible for those with asthma to recreate. The recommendations are 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity. Outdoor space provides community building and strengthens ties.

There are disparities in greenspace access by a variety of sociodemographic factors including race, ethnicity, income, and disability. There are equity issues around environmental exposure to hazards. There are also equity concerns for those who use public transit not having the same Park experience as those that access Parks by private vehicles.

As part of State Parks' mission, they have a commitment to serving all people in the state of Washington. State Parks has stated that DEI is a priority of the commission. A new ADA coordinator, the DEI team, Tribal Relations team, and the PEAR team were all developed in the last three years. State Parks has also made commitments to reducing their carbon footprint through electric vehicles, building modifications, efforts to assess impacts of recreation on the environment. A climate team was established in the last five years.

Clair asked the group to put an emoji in the chat depending on how often you take public transit a month. Heart emoji for 20 times or more, thumbs up emoji for 5-10 times, clap emoji less than 5, thumbs down emoji for never.

Clair shared that she is a State Parks lover and that she is a full-time public transit user. She grew up going to Wisconsin state parks. Clair shared a few photos from her adventures in WA State Parks.

What did we do?

This project included an audit of all State Parks that were within half a mile to a bus stop. The results concluded that 36 parks were within half a mile of a bus stop, 116 parks were not. 33 Parks were categorized as maybe meaning they may be next to a bus route but not a stop, or the stop was more than two miles away. There are four counties that have State parks accessible by transit. Grays Harbor, Clallam, Jefferson, King and Island Counties.

Clair also took a personal trip to St. Edwards State Park to create social media and blog post to highlight accessing parks by public transit and to gain anecdotal data. Clair shared that she had to take two buses to get to the park and that it took about an hour. The easiest way for her to get into the park was by trail but she had to cross a busy road with no crosswalk or sidewalk. To enter on the main park entrance road, it was over a mile from the bus stop.

Clair met with a variety of Parks' teams including the Planning Team, Communications team, Website team, and sustainability team. She also conducted informational interviews with the Washington State Department of Transportation and SNAP-Ed.

Part of this project included creating a trifold brochure for SNAP-Ed that is a resource for customers and Snap recipients. There is also a Parks' webpage coming soon. For this flyer we decided to stick with King County. Clair is a King County Transit user and there are many King County transit users.

Challenges

Approximately 65% of Parks' revenue comes from sales revenue including the Discover Pass. This incentivizes the Parks Commission to focus on promoting car visitation. Currently parks are not developed with buses in mind. There are many physical structure limitations. Often intentionally, locations of parks are far from population centers. There are also long-term camping concerns.

Community members that can attend and participate in planning meetings are not the same community members we are trying to reach. Some community members don't want the parks to be any busier than they already are. There is also a concern about the recreational impacts of increased visitation.

We don't currently have any monitoring to track how many users are accessing parks by public transit. There is also no data on how many people currently access Parks through public transit.

Recommendations

Build stronger relationships with the Department of Transportation (DOT). Advocate for diverting bus routes closer to parks, several bus routes come within a quarter mile or half mile to a park. Requires bringing in local transportation authorities in the planning process.

We need a survey of user experiences, as well as a tracking mechanism to understand how many people are using the park by public transit. In a Park survey from 2017-2019 only 0.39% of visitors used public transit. 93% of users access by private vehicles. We now have anonymous cellphone ping Earth Economics data that can help us review data near bus stops.

Clair recommends re-examining how funding streams interact with State Parks priorities. Reliance on Discover Pass sales can encourage a focus on private vehicle users – which is not always in support of DEI and sustainability. Changing funding focuses allows the expansion of public transit options. Examples could include a focus on merch in park stores or food vendors in Parks accessible by public transit.

Clair recommends prioritizing public transit access in future planning of parks. When infrastructure is being created or modified, the ability for buses/mass transit options to access the infrastructure allows for future growth in this area. For new development, making bus access a contingency for building codifies access for all.

Potential benefits of these recommendations include improved health outcomes; improved ability to access recreation; improved equity; more equal access to all Washington residents; decreased carbon emissions from visitors; more people riding buses; and bikes equals fewer cars emitting carbon. These recommendations also support increased profit and customer satisfaction, easing parking issues, increased access to vendors and park sales and increased traffic and website traffic.

Clair thanked everyone at Parks, SNAP Ed and DOT for their partnership and mentorship throughout this project.

Discussion prompts:

What organizations would be valuable partners for Free Days and Free Ways?

Perhaps there could be good outreach at summer meal programs for families with school-aged kids.

Girls and Boy Scouts

Squak Mt., Mt. Si, Issaquah Alps Trails Club (IATC)

Alyssa: King County Metro – Trail Head Direct, Foot Ferry access to Blake Island which is a state park you can only access by private boat.

Denice: I've been trying to take people to Blake Island, too, for Wilderness First Aid training and camping training.

Stacy: Maybe local schools. Sequim Bay has a bus stop at the park entrance. I have paid for our local schools to come here for field trips through an NCLI grant and it was hundreds of dollars, and the school is 5 min away.

Clair shared that the transit folks were incredibly excited about this project. The logistics of that partnership are quite challenging as you know.

ORCA card folks attend community events where they help people sign up for the free ORCA card. I wonder if there is a way for them to provide that information to try and reach the niche audience that are public transit users.

Reco: Washington State Parks Foundation has a Transportation Justice Grant - due date for invited proposals Demonstration project (Schools) was March 12th. I'm working on a Front and Centered (HEAL) grant - Transportation Justice Grant (great resource for this initiative!

Valeria: I think partnering with retirement homes would be good because they do provide a shuttle bus for their residents. Ski clubs at schools and sports organizations.

Suzanne: Friends of Lake Sammamish State Park (FLSSP) Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Outdoors for All – provides adaptive bikes and an All-Terrain electric wheelchair.

In what ways does this project support equity? In what ways might it highlight systemic barriers and inequities?

Janette shared that one of the things that she and Clair observed was that they weren't sure how to access the users that use public transit.

Makaela: I'm curious if you heard or found historical examples of buses that went to state parks and were discontinued?

Clair: There are a lot of passion projects and when someone leaves a role the continuity of access is difficult. We did find that routes that once accessed parks have been removed, Millersylvania for example.

Reco: Transportation justice is essential for economic mobility, health equity, and environmental sustainability. By centering racial and social equity in transportation planning, communities can achieve fairer, healthier, and more connected cities.

Barrier: Many low-income and BIPOC neighborhoods lack reliable public transit, forcing dependence on costly car ownership.

Solution: Expanded Transit Services – Increasing bus routes, late-night services, and micro-mobility options (e.g., bike-sharing, on-demand shuttles) to bridge transit gaps.
Good work Claire!

Nick: Organizations are really good at saying they are for something but don't put something meaningful behind that. Parks and DOT need to come together to integrate this into their structures, so it maintains longevity and isn't dependent on one person. One of the ways Parks can show they value DEI is making parks more accessible by transit.

Alyssa: Part of the design/infrastructure review for each property at acquisition and/or major overhaul is improving access. Making a heat map of where we have deficits and

trying to reduce those in a systematic way

Janette: It feels like fake equity to identify areas you can reach by transit, but it may not be a place you want to go or provide a safe experience. I think of this systemically that it will require so much work and will likely take years.

Reco:

Community-Centered Planning

- Involving local residents in decision-making processes to ensure projects meet their needs rather than causing displacement or gentrification.

Equitable Public Investment

- Prioritizing transit funding in **historically underserved communities to reduce disparities in mobility access.**

Unsafe & Incomplete Streets

- **Barrier:** Poorly maintained sidewalks, lack of crosswalks, and limited bike lanes disproportionately endanger BIPOC pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Solution: Safe Streets for All** – Investing in complete streets with better lighting, bike lanes, pedestrian safety measures, and traffic-calming strategies.

Suzanne: How can state parks work with infrastructure that can't change to bridge the gap between getting people from the bus stop to the most popular destinations within the park.

Makaela: If you aren't doing community engagement work, we at Parks aren't learning why people aren't attending parks.

Nick: In my experience as a bus driver there are few places that buses cannot go. Sometimes it's just a matter of getting the right size bus. There are always ways around that issue without changing major infrastructure.

Cha Cha: This is a great resource, and I totally support it. One of the issues that our community members have is understanding why this is beneficial for their community. How do we encourage people to go and not just hand them a resource expecting them to use it on their own. There could be purposeful days where Parks can market using the bus and provide community groups the opportunity to travel to the park together by bus. This could be a great partnership with local transit authorities.

The closest park to Clair, St Eds was an hour the next closest park would have been 2 hours to Lake Sammamish with three transfers. Time inequity is a difficult one to overcome even with the best of intentions. This trip would have been more challenging with kids or strollers or mobility issues.

How can we further support and encourage people using public transport to visit state parks?

Janette: This is multiple questions in one.

- How do we support current transit users?
- How do we support people that don't use public transit but want to?
- How do we support the intersection?

Decorated buses in the theme of the end destination could help users to feel that they are on an adventure together based on the end destination. Marketing between state parks and the bus could advertise that a route goes to a park.

If carbon reduction and more parking, etc are a goal, it makes sense to try and make transit to parks for a much wider group than those already using transit.

Suzanne: Maybe a concessionaire could help provide transit.

Valeria: State Parks could have golf carts to transport folks to the park. Maybe a vendor could assist with the EV rentals.

Alyssa:

Lived in SEA, traveled nearly exclusively by bike/transit. To do so, you need to have the luxury of time off to add the travel time to your schedule. Park could have loaner electric trikes!

Nick: If carbon reduction and more parking, etc. are a goal, it makes sense to try and make transit to parks for a much wider group than those already using transit

PEAR Follow-up

We are convening the first meeting of "A Welcoming Park System" PEAR committee! – Please take a moment to select the [meeting time](#) that works best for your schedule. There are five options between March 27th and April 3rd.



PEAR Team Meeting 21

March 12, 2025

Folk & Traditional Arts Cont.
Public Transit & State Parks



Community Norms	Practices
GOAL ORIENTED & STRUCTURED MEETINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators provide agenda, meeting notes, and organization • Time checks – limit tangents to keep us on track • PEAR Team meetings recorded during presentation portions
THOUGHTFUL PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center PEAR goals to empower discussions • Raise your virtual hand • Balance speaking and active listening • Open-minded observations and feedback, lean into curiosity, ask questions before assuming, seek to understand • Use accessible language (explain acronyms, terms, etc.) • Practice compassion, patience, and understanding • Trust the process; be open to feedback • Trust that we are stronger together than alone
RECOGNIZE EACH PERSON HAS UNIQUE EXPERIENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak your truth • Appreciate everyone's differences and commonalities • Awareness of diversity within BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community • Awareness of privilege (white, able-bodied, education, etc.) • Notice and re-consider blanket statements
SUPPORT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgment-free zone • Recognize this is an intergenerational space • Consider the role(s) of silence and its impact in our space • Take care of yourself • Acknowledge intent, assess impact • Honor confidentiality for the group's contributions



Agenda

- Check in
- (EIR) Folk & Traditional Arts Program Continued
- Intro to Free Days & Free Ways Project

BREAK

- 1pm – Join Zoom Link



Updates

- Re-organization follow ups
 - Thank you from Diana
 - Additional info about Amber Erdahl, Director Workforce, Technology & Equity
 - Admin Support for DEI
- NCLI Interviews
- PEAR Committees



Check in

Drop an emoji in the chat that captures how you are feeling today!



Welcome Back Folk & Traditional Arts Team!





Folk and Traditional Arts Program

PEAR Team Presentation

Makaela Kroin, Program Coordinator
Kuen Kuen Spichiger, Program Specialist



Robam Tep Apsara (Celestial Dance) Cambodian Cultural Festival, Saltwater

Context for our discussion:

- Limited staff capacity and funding makes it hard to sustain our work
- Heavy reliance on partnerships with community organizers
- Heavy reliance on field staff to support events
- "A welcoming park system"
 - Different understandings of "safety"
 - Parks staff training



Consider:

What are models for sustainable community partnerships?

What would you want your park staff to know if you're doing something at the park? What does it look like for your park staff to be culturally competent?

What kinds of experiences have made you feel welcome at parks?

How can State Parks maintain trust with community partners (PEAR team members, Folk & Traditional Arts Program partners, others) during lean times?

Do you have questions for us or for agency leadership about how budget decisions are affecting community engagement work?

Breakout Rooms



Shareout





Skandia Midsommarfest, St Edward

Folk and Traditional Arts Program

Makaela Kroin, Program Coordinator
Makaela.Kroin@parks.wa.gov
360-701-7923

Kuen Kuen Spichiger, Program Specialist
KuenKuen.Spichiger@parks.wa.gov
360-791-8948



Intro to Free Days & Free Ways

- State Parks connected with SNAP-Ed
- Presented to SNAP-Ed providers across WA
 - Discover Pass Free Days (12 per year)
 - Discount Passes (Disabled Vet, Foster Family, Senior Limtd Income)
 - Everyone Outdoors
- **We can use public transit to access state parks without paying a Discover pass fee**



Intro to Free Days & Free Ways

- Which state parks are reachable by public transit?
- Let's create a public-facing resource that shows state parks reachable by public transit! "Free Days and Free Ways"
- Clair Werch– A UW Masters of Public Health student completing practicum with State Parks and SNAP-Ed



Welcome Clair!



Clair (she/her) is a second-year Master of Public Health (MPH) student at the University of Washington-Seattle. She is passionate about food systems and health equity, especially within rural and LGBTQIA+ populations. Her work in rural Alaska and rural Wisconsin has deepened these passions, along with her degree in Nutrition and Food Systems from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Currently, Clair is working on her thesis about consumer and producer trust in animal agriculture.

When she is not working, Clair enjoys baking, sewing, and getting outside however she can.



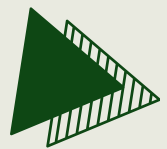
BREAK

Log onto zoom link at 1pm



Free Days and Free Ways

To Reach Washington State Parks



Clair Werch

Intern at Washington State Parks

Masters of Public Health student at the University of
Washington-Seattle

AGENDA

- Icebreaker
- How this project started
- Why Free Days and Free Ways?
- What did we do?
- Challenges & Recommendations
- Potential Benefits
- Discussion Prompts



ICEBREAKER

**What is the last Washington State Park that
you visited?**

HOW THIS PROJECT STARTED:

- To park at a Washington State Park, you need a Discover Pass
 - Allows you to park at lands managed by WA State Parks, Dept. Fish and Wildlife, and Dept. of Natural Resources
- Some Free Days: 12 each year
- Some Free Ways:
 - Bike or walk
 - Exempt vehicles, Volunteering
 - Everyone Outdoors program (groups can apply for free passes)
- SNAP-ed: recommends going to your local park, but how?

WHY FREE DAYS AND FREE WAYS?

Health

- Outdoor access is vital for the health and well being of all members of the community
 - Mental health impacts 1.
 - Physical Health impacts 1.
 - Physical activity mitigates CVD, T2D, all cause mortality 2.,3.
 - Green space makes it possible for those with asthma to recreate 4.
 - Recommendations are 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity 5.
- Outdoor spaces provide community building and strengthen ties 6.

WHY FREE DAYS AND FREE WAYS?

Equity

- There are disparities in greenspace access by a variety of socio demographic factors
 - Race, ethnicity, income, disability, etc 7.
 - Public transit use
- Environmental exposure to hazards 8.
- Equity: who uses public transit 9.
 - People who do not have private vehicles
 - Racial and sociodemographic factors

Limitations: not talking about city parks or green areas

WHY FREE DAYS AND FREE WAYS?

State Parks Mission

- State parks has commitments to serve all people in the state of Washington
 - Unique resource
 - The Parks have stated that DEI is a priority for the Commission
 - Growing efforts to support accessibility and inclusion in the Parks System
 - new ADA coordinator
 - DEI team
 - Tribal relations team
 - PEAR team
- State Parks have made commitments to reducing the carbon footprint of the Commission
 - Electric vehicles
 - Building modifications
 - Efforts to assess impacts of recreation on the environment
 - Climate team

How many times a month do you take public transit?



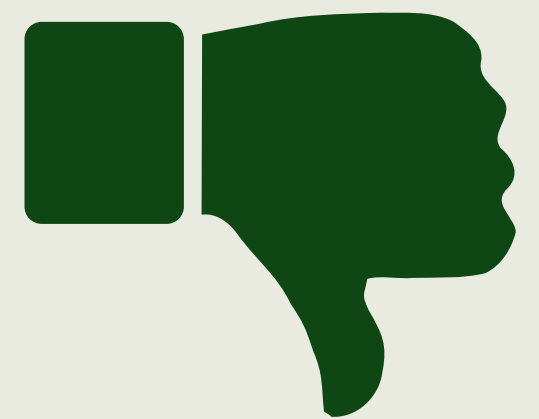
20 times or
more



5-10 times



less than 5
times



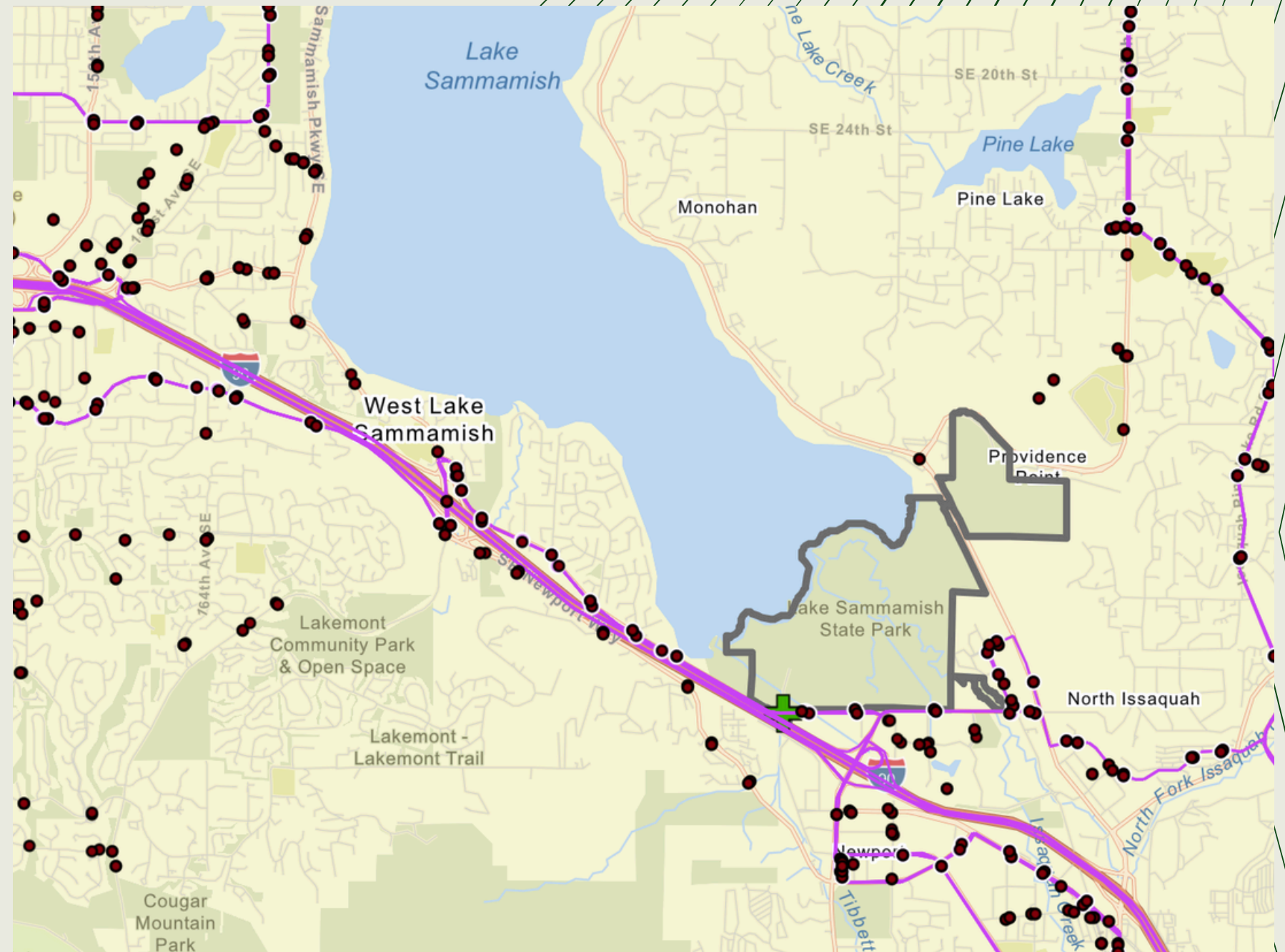
Never



Personal experience:
State Parks lover and
full time public transit
user

WHAT DID WE DO?

Audit of all state parks
location in relation to bus
stops



WHAT DID WE DO?

Personal trip/blog



WHAT DID WE DO?

Meetings/informational
interviews with DOT, Parks,
SNAP-ed



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**



SNAP-Ed PROVIDERS

WHAT DID WE DO?

Create a resource
for customers and
participants

Webpage coming
soon!

Why Visit State Parks?

Not sure where to start? At Washington State parks you can:

- hike
- bike
- fish
- picnic
- bird watch
- visit historical sites
- attend cultural events

Washington State Parks believes that the outdoors is for everyone. We believe that State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and that everyone should have access to memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.

Questions?

Call the State Parks Information Center for help on navigating to the park, what to do when you get there, and more!


(360) 902-8844


<https://parks.wa.gov>

Free Days and Free Ways

to reach Washington State Parks

State Parks are for everyone! Visit Parks by bus or by car to enjoy all the parks have to offer



Washington State Parks 1913



By Public Transit

 **Walk or bike from a bus stop**

Washington State Parks are free for day use if you arrive by foot or bike.

Find parks reachable by public transit at the QR code below.



If you live in Chelan, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Pacific, Pierce, Skagit, Spokane, Thurston, or Whatcom county then your county has a state park within a half mile of a public transit stop!

Discover

Library may have a copy to check out free of charge. Ask your local library!

Discounted Programs

Foster family, a foster parent, or are a foster parent on a limited basis may be eligible for a discounted or free pass.

More?

Scan the QR code below to get more information.



Day

- Oct. 10 — World Mental Health Day
- Nov. 11 — Veteran's Day

Reachable by public transit:



King County



Heading to a State Park by bus? No entry free and no parking hassle!

Dash Point State Park

Miles of forested hiking trails

Route 187: Stop 61422, Hoyt Road SW & SW 323rd Street



Access miles of trail system on route 187 of King County Metro transit

Connect to route 187 from Federal Way Transit Center.

Bust Stop 61422: Hoyt Road SW & SW 323rd Street. Enter via Hoyt Road trail.



Lake Sammamish State Park

Wetland wildlife and recreation for everyone

Route 269: Stop , NW Sammamish Rd & 11th Ave NW
Route 271: Stop 64583, NW Sammamish Rd & 15th Pl NW



Play volleyball, softball, or soccer, swim, or walk around beautiful paved trails

Served by King County Metro transit

- Route 269
- Route 271



CHALLENGES

Funding

- Approx. 65% of Parks funding comes from sales revenue, including Discover passes sales, which incentivises the Parks Commission to focus on promoting car visitation

Infrastructure

- Current parks are often not developed with bus access in mind
- Often, intentionally, locations of parks are far from population centers
- Long term camping concerns

Community Input

- The community members who are able/willing to attend planning meetings are often not the community members who we are trying to reach
- Concern about recreation impacts to wildlife and plant species
- Some community members don't want the parks to be any busier

Monitoring

- No current way to monitor current or future park use by public transit
- No data on how many people currently access the park this way, or how many would

RECOMMENDATIONS

Relationships

- Form stronger relationships with DOT
 - Advocate for diverting bus routes closer to parks, several bus routes come within a quarter mile or a half mile of a park
 - Requires bringing in local transportation authorities in planning processes

Monitoring and evaluation

- In-park survey (2019) showed 0.39% of park visitors used public transit (bus) to visit state parks. 93.2% used a private vehicle.
 - We are able to view anonymized cell phone ping data within state park boundaries to see visitor movement.
 - Need to better understand how people are currently using transit to access parks
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding

- Analyze how funding streams interact with state parks' priorities
 - State Parks relies on 65% revenue (primarily Discover Pass and camping) and 35% General Fund.
 - Reliance on Discover Pass sales can encourage a focus on private vehicle users - which is not always in support of DEI and sustainability goals
 - Changing focuses allows an expansion of public transit options
 - I.e. merch/stores in parks with transit access, food vendors in parks with transit access

Future Planning

- Prioritize public transit access in future planning of parks
 - When infrastructure is being created or modified, the ability for buses/mass transit options to access the infrastructure allows for future growth in this area
 - For new development, making bus access a contingency for building codifies access for all
-

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Improved health outcomes

- Improved ability to access recreation

Improved equity

- More equal access to all Washington residents

Decreased carbon emissions from visitors

- More people riding buses and bikes = fewer cars emitting carbon

Increased profit and customer satisfaction

- Easing parking issues
- Increased accessing of vendors and park sales
 - Increased traffic and website traffic



“...the outdoors is for everyone. We believe that State parks connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage and that everyone should have access to memorable recreational and educational experiences that enhance their lives.”

-Washington Parks DEI Position Statement

Thank you.

Discussion Prompts:

What organizations would be valuable partners for Free Days and Free Ways?

In what ways does this project (Free Ways and Free Days at State Parks) support equity? In what ways might it highlight systemic barriers and inequities?

How can we further support and encourage people using public transport to visit state parks?

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