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## PRO PARKS LEVY

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# ORCHARD STREET RAVINE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT UPDATE April 2006

### ***WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED***

Seattle Parks & Recreation (Parks) staff are working on a plan to develop trail access to Orchard Street Ravine and guide management of the park into the future. Two public meetings sponsored by Parks over this last winter where ideas and options for the open space were discussed. Two neighborhood sponsored meetings were also held. Participants included long time and new neighborhood residents, representatives from the Morgan Community Association (MoCA), Friends of Orchard Street Ravine (FOStR), and the newly formed Orchard Ravine Community Association (ORCA).

Community input and discussion at these meetings included the following areas: identifying habitat restoration as a primary goal for the site; phasing restoration to minimize impacts to wildlife and to achieve the best results over time; interest in developing ongoing volunteer stewardship of the site, consideration for the role of the site in the "Green Crescent" concept; providing access into and through the site; concern for safety for visitors within and approaching the site. Park staff also received significant written comments. Based on analysis of the site's challenging topography and soil conditions, slide history, degraded vegetation, seeking a balance of wildlife and human activity at this site, as well as considering long-term maintenance costs, Park staff made a recommendation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> public meeting to focus the Levy project on restoration work and construct a low slope loop trail accessed from the 38<sup>th</sup> Ave SW cul-de-sac. Because of the public involvement, the focus on habitat restoration was clear, and Parks staff were able to extend the funding schedule as appropriate for best effect of the restoration work. Community input has encouraged a subsequent engineering study to evaluate connection options through the ravine site. **Thank you for your time and energy helping to improve this wonderful community resource!**

On February 23, the Board of Park Commissioners voted unanimously to recommend "approval of the staff recommendation of a flat loop trail system at the lower south end of Orchard Street Ravine as well as extensive vegetation management to restore and preserve a native habitat." They also recommended that Supt. Bounds "seek negotiations with Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Department of Transportation to control drainage on the 38th Avenue street end and to seek funding for a safe through trail to be built there in the future."

Subsequent to their action, on March 10, Supt. Bounds met with representatives from MoCA, FOStR, and ORCA. He decided to take the following steps:

- 1) Create a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP);
- 2) Contract with an outside consulting firm to determine how best - whether 36<sup>th</sup> or 38<sup>th</sup> Ave SW - to make a connection from up above through the ravine, while minimizing disruption to the slope and habitat. This will not be paid for with Pro Parks Levy funds.
- 3) Implement the VMP as soon as practical. Although we want to carry out the restoration as soon as possible, we will do the work as recommended in the VMP, regardless of the levy timeline. We hope to use the first few community projects as a way to create broader participation and build a broader volunteer group.

We have concluded the planning phase of this project. Our next steps will include a public workshop series to develop the VMP, at which Parks staff will also provide updates on the trail options study and lower loop trail construction status. We will begin the VMP workshop process by early May and plan to complete that by mid-summer. A hired consultant will evaluate the trail options, which is planned to be complete by the end of June. Initial lower loop trail construction and restoration work is planned begin in late-summer and fall.

If you have additional questions or comments, please contact Karen Galt, Seattle Parks Landscape Architect and Project Manager at 206-684-7104 or e-mail to [karen.galt@seattle.gov](mailto:karen.galt@seattle.gov).