

Robert Thomas

I attended the public meeting on April 11, 2018, and I wish to elaborate on some of the comments I made then.

Of particular concern to me is the inclusion in the plan of possibly decommissioning some trails, as well as what are referred to as redundant trail spurs. Looking at the color-coded map provided on page 5 of Ecology's handout at the meeting, none of the trails identified are redundant; nor do any of the trails that are marked meet any of the usual definitions of a trail spur (e.g., leads to a dead end, does not loop or connect to another trail, leads one way to an overlook, etc.).

Please keep in mind that all of the existing trails have a purpose and are not redundant in the sense of being unnecessary, superfluous or duplicative. They could only be redundant if the sole purpose of the trails were to get as directly and quickly from one point to another. But that is not their current purpose for many users. By having the warren of existing trails, the users (hikers, horse riders, mountain bikers, strollers) can take what otherwise might be a 10 minute walk, and extend it to an hour walk by meandering along the many trails, never backtracking, and even rarely crossing a path previously taken. This is a remarkable feature and benefit of the current trail system. Decommissioning trails, especially some of the ones currently identified for possible closure, would significantly diminish the enjoyment of the forest for many current users.

Some of the trail segments identified on page 5 of Ecology's handout do not appear to have taken into account the aesthetics of the various parts of the trail system. In particular, the most westerly segment identified happens to be one of the most picturesque parts of the entire forest, passing by some pastures with horses and deer, and some amazing ant mounds. This trail segment should be highest on any list for trail preservation.

In addition to the point above that the trails currently identified are not redundant, please consider that any reduction of trails through some kind of closure would mean that the current traffic of trail users, plus new users, would be restricted to fewer trail options. This certainly would increase congestion. Already, bikes, horses and dogs are sometimes not a good combination. Forcing congestion is not a good idea.

One other thing I ask to be considered is the notion that closing trails would even work. The experience with the recently built mountain bike terrain trails in Dockton Forest shows that people will cut new trails when they find it convenient – in spite of prohibitions against doing so, and in spite of efforts to close off the shortcuts. Part of the problem in that particular case is that the new terrain trails were built too close to existing trails, pretty much inviting people to make shortcuts.

My point here is that closing trails that have a present, definite purpose probably will not work in the long run, and would likely have the unintended consequence of people creating unsightly detours around barriers, and exposing more of the contaminated soil – just like what is currently happening near the new terrain trails.

Thank you for your attention to these comments. If it were an either/or situation, I would prefer leaving the existing trails intact, as is, with some warning/informational signs, rather than decommissioning any of the existing trails. One reasonable alternative would be to provide the mitigation on only a few of the most widely used, direct route trails, but leaving the others as is, except for the notice signs about precautions to take to avoid contamination (cleaning off boots,

rinsing pets' feet, etc.).

Comments on the MAURY ISLAND OPEN SPACE CLEANUP SITE plan

Submitted by:

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