



Secret Harbor Project Update

5-17-2012

Greetings,

The Department (DNR) is seeking public input on design concepts for development of public access and environmental education opportunities in and around Secret Harbor, on Cypress Island. In collaboration with DNR, following preliminary feasibility assessment, Herrera Environmental Consultants and J.A. Brennan Associates (DNR's consultants on the project) prepared four conceptual design alternatives for presentation at the meeting. The four alternatives, shown below, are intended to get people thinking about the types of public uses they might like to see in the Secret Harbor vicinity, and what form the facilities developed for such uses might take. From these alternatives, a final configuration of public access facilities will be chosen, and additional site-specific feasibility assessment will be performed to ensure facilities can be developed in a manner consistent with the management goals and objectives in the Cypress Island Comprehensive Management Plan. These goals and objectives provide the framework that guides decision making on Cypress Island, and are also included below for your reference.

Please review the alternatives, in the context of the Cypress Management Goals and Objectives. As you review the alternatives, keep in mind they are not intended to represent discreet "packages" of facilities that must be considered in whole. It's OK to mix/match elements and move things around; the final configuration is likely to be a hybrid of the alternatives you see below. Once you review the alternatives, if you have comments and/or ideas you would like us to consider in developing a final configuration of facilities in/around Secret Harbor, we invite your input. Comments will be accepted through May 31, 2012, and may be submitted by mail or email, as shown below.

Thanks for your interest in Cypress Island, and for participating in this exciting project.

To provide comments by mail:

Washington State Department of Natural Resources
ATTN Paul McFarland
919 North Township Street
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

Or email:

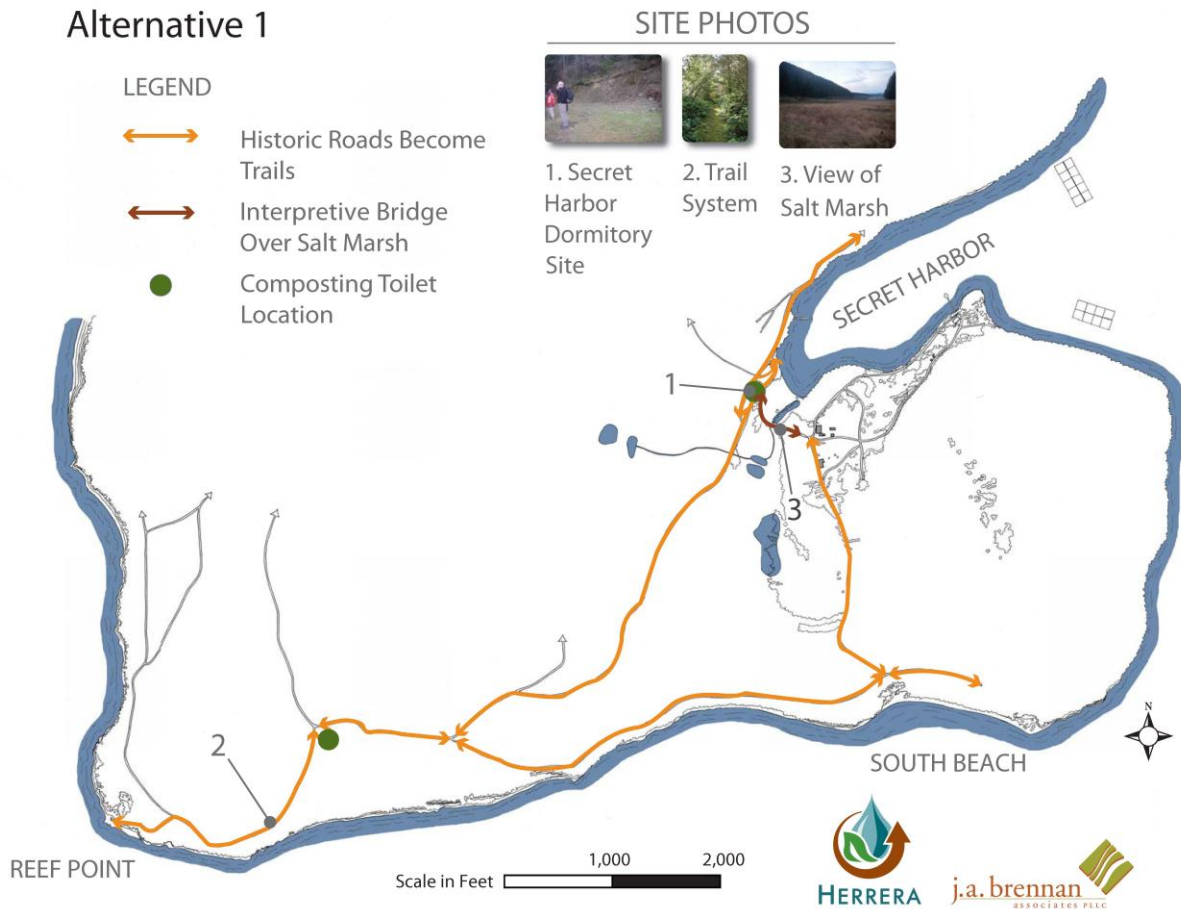
nwnaturalareas@dnr.wa.gov

with subject line "Secret Harbor Public Meeting"

To see the Cypress Island Comprehensive Management Plan in its entirety:

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/aqr_rsve_cyp_comp_pln_fn.pdf

Alternative 1



Alternative 1 includes renovation of existing historic roads to make them more suitable/enjoyable as trails, installation of two composting toilets, and installation of an interpretive bridge spanning to-be-restored saltwater marsh. This alternative exemplifies a lower level of development that would allow for public access/use of this part of Cypress Island, primarily by way of overland travel from other places on the island (e.g. Eagle Harbor). The Cypress Management Plan directs DNR to consider additional public use opportunities in the Secret Harbor vicinity in order to relieve use-related pressures elsewhere on the island, and this alternative represents a minimal level of development consistent with that direction. Questions you might consider for this alternative include:

- What is a minimum acceptable level of development in this area?
- Are there public use facilities missing in this alternative?
- Other ideas?

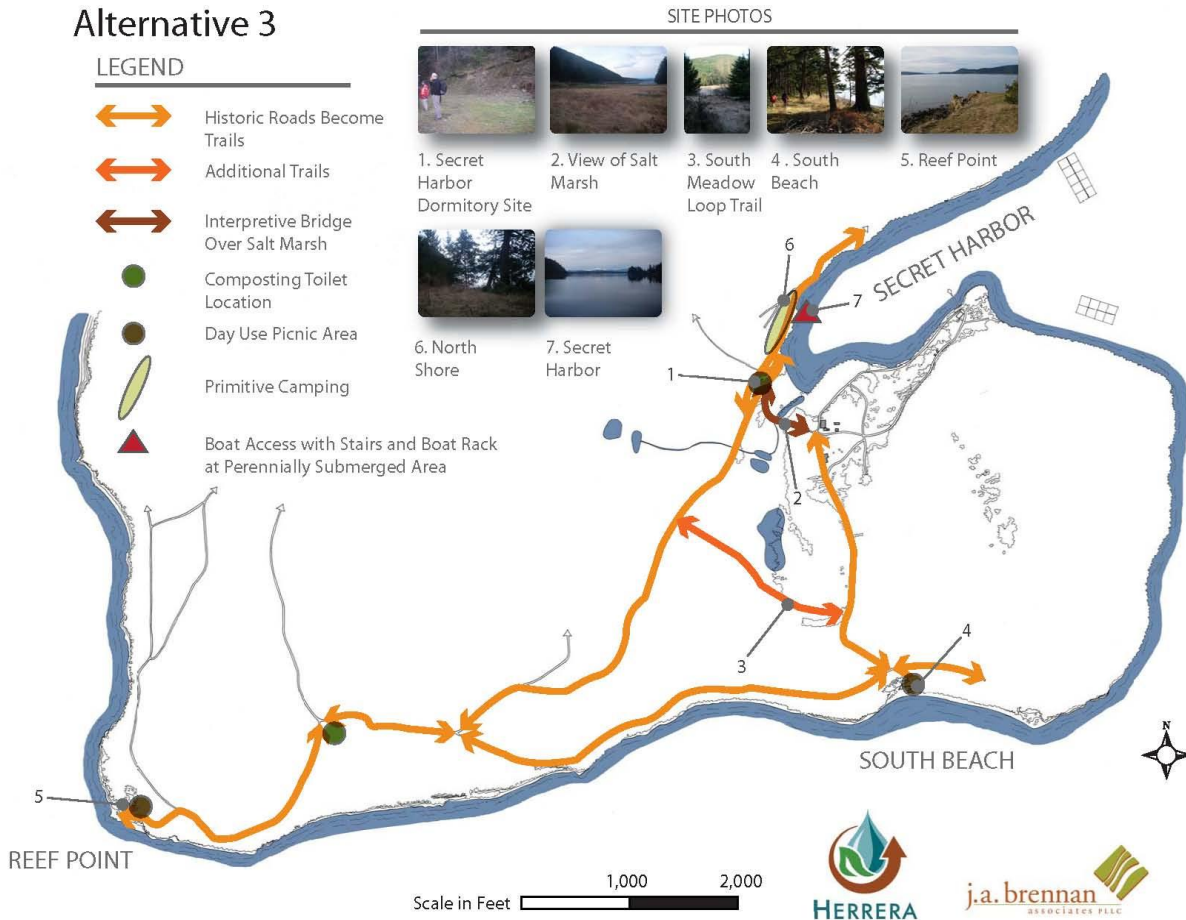
Alternative 2



Alternative 2 includes the same elements as Alternative 1, with the addition of picnic areas at South Beach and/or Reef Point, and an additional trail connection to create a shorter loop trail around Secret Harbor. This alternative is intended to show a higher level of development than is shown in Alternative 1. Questions you might consider for this alternative include:

- Would you prefer to see picnic areas in the Secret Harbor vicinity?
- If a picnic area (or areas) is developed, what amenities would you prefer it include?
- Would it include picnic table(s), a shelter, and/or other features?
- Or would a more “primitive” design be better (e.g. rocks or logs for sitting, no table(s), no shelter)?
- Would a loop trail be a good addition in this area?
- How might you mix elements from other alternatives with this one?
- Other ideas?

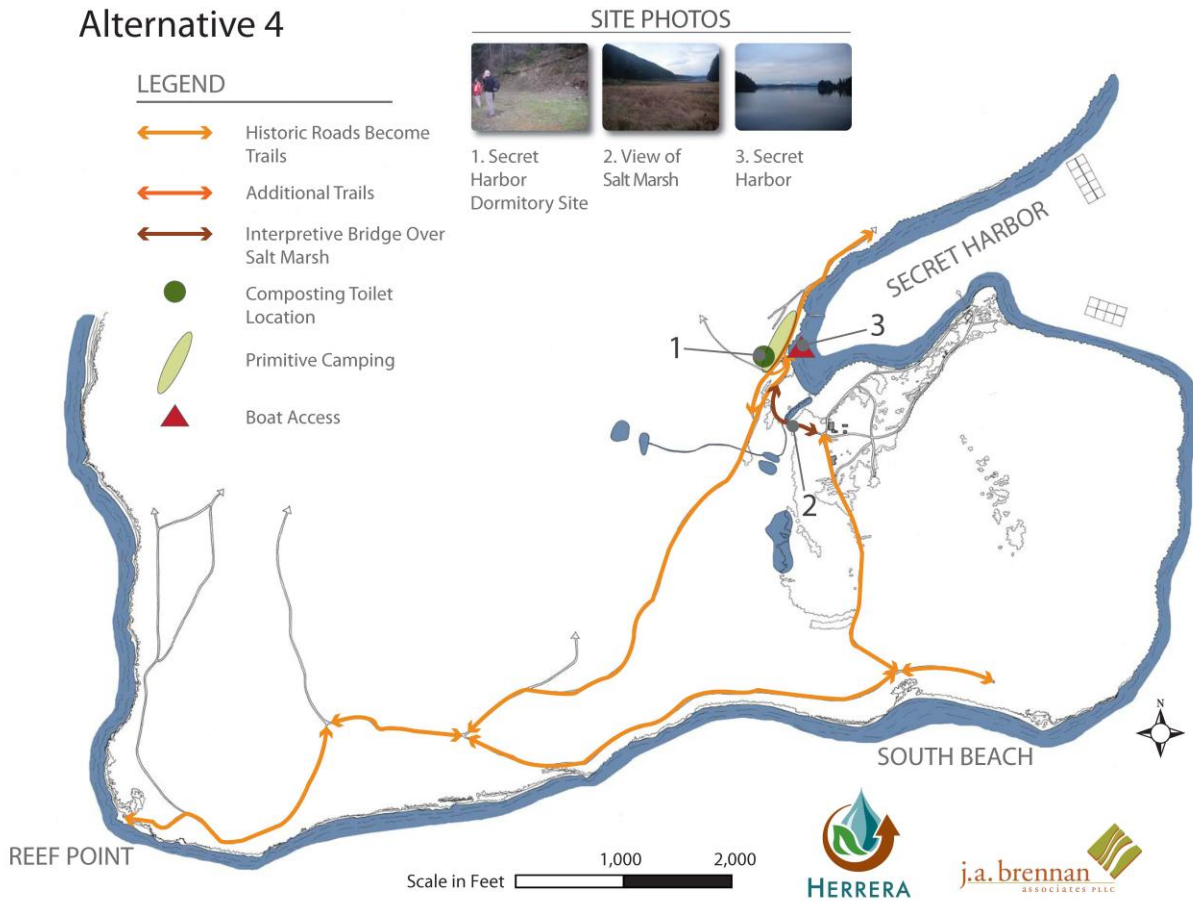
Alternative 3



Alternative 3 includes all elements shown in Alternatives 1 and 2, with the addition of boat access and camping in Secret Harbor. This alternative is intended to add public access elements to those shown in Alternatives 1 and 2. Bear in mind that Secret Harbor is shallow and includes significant area of exposed mud flats at low tides. Due to physical limitations, and other uses in the area, DNR does not contemplate installing mooring buoys in Secret Harbor. As such, boat access would likely be limited to kayaks or other small beach-able vessels. Questions you might consider for this alternative include:

- Would you prefer to see boat access in Secret Harbor?
- If boat access is developed in Secret Harbor, must it be in a location that is accessible at all (or nearly all) tides?
- Would you prefer to see camping in Secret Harbor?
- If camping is developed in Secret Harbor, must it be accompanied by boat access?
- If camping is developed in Secret Harbor, should campsites be more primitive in nature (e.g. tent pad and fire ring only), or more highly developed (e.g. include picnic table and/or other features)?
- If camping is developed in Secret Harbor, should it include individual camp site(s), group camp site(s), both types?
- How might you mix elements from other alternatives with this one?
- Other ideas?

Alternative 4



Alternative 4 includes some of the elements shown in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, with a few changes. In this case, boat access in Secret Harbor is located in an area not accessible at low tides, and camping in Secret Harbor is shown in a slightly different location than that shown in Alternative 3. This alternative shows one configuration of lower-level of development, but also includes camping and boat access. Questions you might consider for this alternative include:

- What level of development would you prefer in the Secret Harbor vicinity?
- Is one composting toilet sufficient to serve user needs in this area (the nearest toilet is approximately a half-day hike from Secret Harbor)?
- Do you prefer an opportunity for camping in the Secret Harbor vicinity, even with a generally lower level of development in this area?
- How might you mix elements from other alternatives with this one?
- Other ideas?



Management Goals and Objectives

The primary aim in managing Cypress Island is to preserve, restore and enhance ecological systems, scenic landscapes and habitat for Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered species.

To achieve this aim, the following goals have been adopted. Goals one through five are taken from the NRCA Act (RCW 79.71) and goal six from the Archaeological Sites and Resources Act (RCW 27.53). Goals one through six and their associated objectives are consistent with the goals of the Aquatic Reserves Program and applicable to the aquatic reserve. Goal seven and eight meet the specific goals of the Aquatic Reserves Program and the management of the Cypress Island Aquatic Reserve. These two goals are formulated to emphasize the conservation of critical habitats and associated species identified in Appendix D.

Objectives are a product of the research, analysis, advisory committee meetings, and public input of the Cypress Island management planning process. These objectives are unique to the management of Cypress Island and are referenced in the management plan.

Goal 1: Maintain, enhance, and restore ecological systems

Objectives

- 1.1 Protect natural processes that promote region-wide biological diversity in the island's marine and terrestrial environments.
- 1.2 Rely upon, and avoid interference with, those natural processes that result in the restoration and maintenance of natural conditions, native habitats, and native species diversity.
- 1.3 Restore or enhance those disturbed areas that are degraded.
- 1.4 Designate areas containing outstanding examples of native biological communities as Highly Sensitive areas under this plan.
- 1.5 Closely monitor public use and DNR activities for effects on natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Where impacts are inconsistent with program goals, change or restrict use/activity. Enhance or restore sites where necessary.
- 1.6 Place administrative and public use facilities in a manner that minimizes habitat fragmentation and interference with natural processes.

- 1.7 Continue to acquire private property for conservation purposes from willing sellers within and adjacent to the NRCA boundary.

Goal 2: Maintain exceptional scenic landscapes

Objectives

- 2.1 Design public use sites and facilities to retain the natural appearance of the site.
- 2.2 Plan management activities and site development to minimize visual impacts as viewed from surrounding islands, aerial and water locations, and the mainland.

Goal 3: Maintain habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species

Objectives

- 3.1 Give high priority to inventory, enhancement, and protection of sensitive, threatened and endangered species' habitat, as dictated by federal law, state legislative mandates, and DNR policy goals.
- 3.2 Designate known and potential habitat for Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive species as Highly Sensitive areas under this plan
- 3.3 Routinely survey Cypress Island for sensitive, threatened and endangered and associated habitat and following any new listings.
- 3.4 Invite other agencies, tribes, and organizations with appropriate expertise to work cooperatively in the inventory, monitoring, and management of native species.
- 3.5 Use site restoration and enhancement to encourage re-establishment of plants and animals native to Cypress Island and surrounding tidelands and bedlands.

Goal 4: Provide opportunities for low-impact public use

Objectives

- 4.1 Provide the public with reasonable access to a sample of the outstanding vistas and natural areas within the NRCA.
- 4.2 Develop public use facilities to avoid degradation or impacts to identified sensitive resources, rare habitats, and contiguous forest. Concentrate public use (sites, trails, signs) in Minimally Sensitive Areas.
- 4.3 Develop and maintain public use sites and trails in a manner that protects neighboring private property, the NAP, and the natural and scenic values of the NRCA.

- 4.4 Establish and enforce public use at a level that does not detract from natural, scenic, and sensitive resource protection goals.
- 4.5 Discourage inappropriate public uses and use-levels at Cypress Island.
- 4.6 Foster cooperative relationships with Washington State Parks, Skagit County, and non-profit recreation organizations to educate the public about low impact uses on Cypress, Strawberry and Cone Islands.

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for outdoor environmental education

Objectives

- 5.1 Place interpretive signing at main entry points and in high-use areas in the NRCA.
- 5.2 Use education facilities to inform the public of outstanding ecological, geologic, cultural, and historic components of the island. Consult with local Tribes in developing interpretive materials that address culturally sensitive resources/topics.
- 5.3 Use interpretive information to convey a conservation ethic and enhance respect for the island's resources and the purpose of protecting them.
- 5.4 Present use restrictions and regulations within the context of environmental education.

Goal 6: Identify and protect cultural resources in the NRCA

Objectives

- 6.1 Survey the NRCA for archeological deposits and cultural resources (completed, 1991). Consult with a professional archaeologist on any new discoveries.
- 6.2 Manage registered cultural sites in consultation with local Tribes to emphasize on-site protection using excavation as a last resort.
- 6.3 Work closely with local Tribes and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to identify and protect as yet unknown sites.

Goal 7: Identify aquatic habitats and associated plant and wildlife species, with special emphasis on rocky reef habitat, pocket beaches, kelp, and eelgrass beds

Objectives

- 7.1 Develop an initial baseline inventory through a "rapid shoreline inventory" of aquatic habitat and species that utilize the area of the reserve.

- 7.2 Develop ongoing monitoring plans to evaluate the condition of aquatic resources identified for conservation.
- 7.3 Survey sites that appear to have suitable habitat for surf smelt or sand lance spawning and verify if spawning activity occurs at these sites.
- 7.4 Develop appropriate management actions to protect identified spawning areas.

Goal 8: Preserve, restore, and enhance the functions and natural processes of nearshore and subtidal ecosystems of the aquatic reserve

Objectives

- 8.1 Maintain the existing low levels of alteration to Cypress Island's aquatic areas.
- 8.2 Maintain management actions that support the Cypress Island Marine Biological Reserve (RCW 28B.20.320).
- 8.3 Inventory and remove derelict creosote piles, other derelict structures, and debris from Cypress Island's beaches, in consultation with Natural Areas Program Westside ecologist and region natural areas and aquatics managers.
- 8.4 Establish a management plan for private and public mooring buoys on state-owned aquatic lands that minimizes impacts to aquatic habitat, particularly eelgrass.