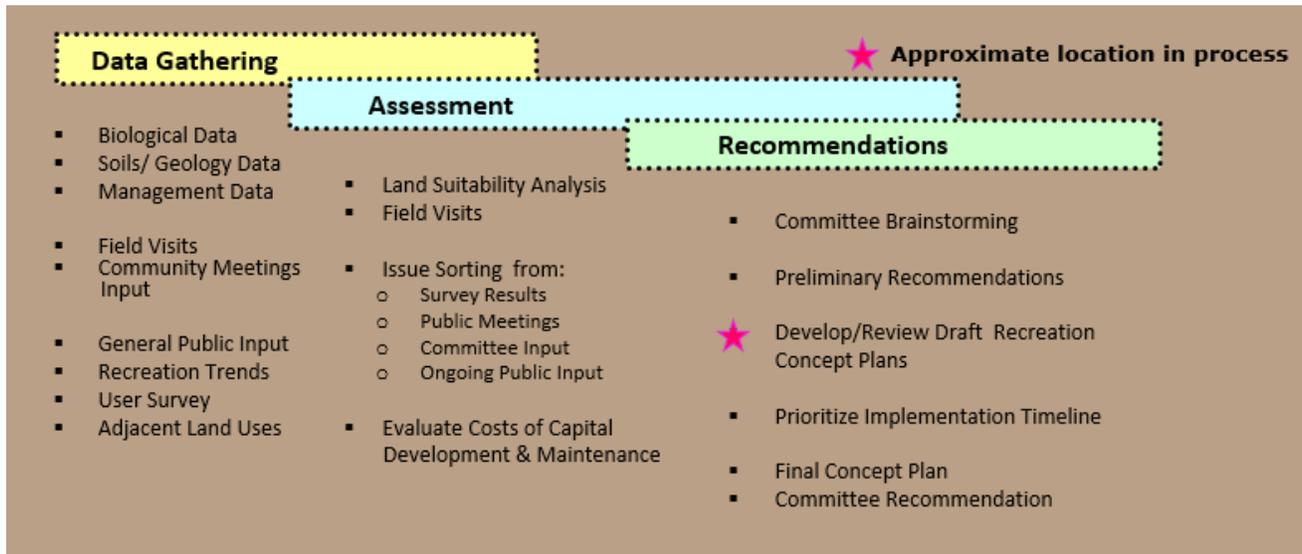


Baker to Bellingham Recreation Planning

Frequently Asked Questions

- What is a state trust land?
 - The Washington State Department of Natural Resources manages working forest trust lands that help to support public services, including public school construction, universities and emergency services. In addition to providing access to recreation, they also help protect against development, support clean air and water and maintain the highest environmental standards available. In these landscapes, you may encounter temporary trail and site closures for public safety during timber harvest activities.
- If your primary mission is to generate revenue for trust beneficiaries, how can you introduce recreation on these lands?
 - From generating trust revenue, to providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, DNR manages land for the public's benefit. In 1971 the state legislature passed the Multiple Use Act (RCW 79.10), which directs and allows DNR to provide recreation opportunities on trust lands when compatible with the financial obligations of trust management. With over 1,100 miles of trails on trust lands, we have shown consistently that managing timber and providing access for outdoor recreation can coexist. Take, for example, our Capitol State Forest, one of our highest timber producing forests with over 90 miles of trail. Here, and in other DNR working forests statewide, timber production maintains forest roads, allowing visitors to access their favorite trailheads, campgrounds and picnic areas. The harvest management fee DNR receives covers costs associated with harvest and replanting but is not used to fund recreation.
- Why are you creating a Recreation Plan for DNR-managed trust lands in Whatcom County?
 - Following guiding principles of resource protection, compatibility with trust mandates, safety and user experience, DNR actively plans recreation opportunities the public can enjoy for generations to come. With over 86,000 acres of forestland in Whatcom County, DNR has seen growing demand for public access and authorized recreation of all types. We have simultaneously seen an increase in damage resulting from unauthorized activities. Through our planning process, which we have carried out successfully in other DNR recreation landscapes, we address many of these topics. The adopted recreation plan will include strategies, objectives and priorities to guide recreation development and management on DNR-managed lands for the next 10 to 15 years. This process includes extensive involvement of local recreation groups, the public and DNR volunteers, and follows an integrated approach to planning for the best management of quality recreational opportunities on DNR lands.

- Where have you done recreation planning for DNR land previously and how can I find those plans?
 - DNR has completed seven recreation plans for trust landscapes from 30,000 acres to 229,000 acres. Recreation plans for Whatcom County (Baker to Bellingham) and Teanaway Community Forest are currently in process. More information, including completed plans, can be found at <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/recreation/recreation-planning>.
- Have you already completed the Baker to Bellingham Recreation Plan? If not, where are you at in the process?
 - The Baker to Bellingham Recreation Plan is not complete and no decisions on what types of recreation to include or where recreation should be located have been made. We anticipate this part of the planning process will continue through at least May as we work to refine existing ideas and explore how to address objectives and strategies for implementation. An overview of the planning process is below:



- What has your outreach for this process looked like?
 - In early January of 2016 DNR announced the launch of this recreation planning process through a news release to statewide media, social media messages and paid advertising, blog posts, recreation email newsletter (distribution 10,000+), flyers posted at locations within the planning area, and a meeting with the Whatcom County Council. On January 19 and 20 of that year, DNR held two public meetings to kick off the planning process and gather public input. These meetings, in Bellingham and Lynden, had an estimated combined attendance of 450. DNR also created a web page <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/BakertoBellingham> to serve as a central source of information for plan documents and meeting schedules. In the summer and fall of 2016, over 1,300 people responded to a Baker to Bellingham recreation planning survey, intended to

capture information about current recreation activities and desired future opportunities. DNR coordinated a second public meeting in November 2016, with more recently scheduled meetings planned for Feb 20 and 21, 2018, in Maple Falls and Bellingham. Throughout this process, DNR has provided status updates via the planning web page, email news, social media posts and at regular committee meetings in the Deming area.

- How did you select the Advisory Committee members?
 - At public meetings, via email notices and in local media, the department requested applications from individuals interested in volunteering for an advisory committee that would provide input to the department and help guide long-term recreation opportunities. DNR received 51 applications and ultimately selected 17 committee members, representing a broad range of backgrounds, recreation and environmental interests and knowledge of the area.
- What lands are you including in the Baker to Bellingham Recreation Planning process?
 - The planning effort is looking at approximately 86,000 acres of DNR-managed trust lands in Whatcom County. Because this evaluation considers a range of criteria, from environmental factors to local geology, the acreage the agency identifies for potential recreation development in a final concept will be significantly less than this.
- What types of recreation are you considering through this process?
 - DNR is considering many recreation activities from trail-based uses to water access and soaring sports as well as pleasure driving on forest roads, wildlife viewing and more. The range of trail-based recreation includes hiking, trail running, mountain biking, horseback riding, motorcycling, ATVing, and 4x4 driving.
- Why are you considering ORV recreation in this planning effort?
 - Based on information from the 2018-2022 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, it is estimated that 11 percent of the statewide population participates in ORV riding or driving. This is a higher percentage than, for example, downhill skiing, horseback riding, or saltwater fishing. With over 2 million acres of forested trust lands, DNR is the largest provider of ORV recreation opportunities on state lands. Initial public meetings and an online survey DNR facilitated at the start of the planning process indicated that while not the top ranked recreation activity there was nevertheless significant public interest in providing official ORV trails in Whatcom County.
- Why did you submit a suggested zoning ordinance amendment to the Whatcom County Council?
 - Current county zoning prohibits the development of trails for motorized recreation on Commercial Forestry zoned lands, which encompasses all DNR trust lands in the county. This will prevent DNR from providing sanctioned and well-managed opportunities for these recreationists in Whatcom County, including county residents. However, the Whatcom County 2016 Comprehensive Plan, section 9F, reads in part: Coordinate with

DNR to Provide ORV Opportunities - Recognizing that there will continue to be demand for ORV riding, the County should continue to assess its role in the ORV program.

Accordingly, DNR has suggested changes to county zoning codes that would be consistent with the comprehensive plan and create the opportunity for well-designed and constructed ORV trails.

- Are you proposing to build an ORV park?
 - No, DNR is considering possible networks of carefully designed and constructed trails, single and double track, that would be compatible with a working forest. Elements typically thought of as part of an ORV Park, including motocross tracks, spectator stands, and facilities for commercial competitive events, will not be in the recreation plan.
- What are the multiple concept maps, how did you create them, and how can I understand them?
 - The concept maps are graphical representations of potential recreation zones on DNR lands in the 86,000-acre recreation planning area. Each concept incorporates suitability evaluation, provides alternative combinations of color-coded areas where motorized or non-motorized trails could be constructed, and serves as the basis for evaluating the benefits and challenges of different approaches. At each step DNR staff take internal knowledge, committee input, and public comment to refine previous concepts, generating new drafts until a final concept is adopted.
- How do you intend to approach factors associated with providing recreation including: noise, safety, fire risk, wildlife, water quality, enforcement, and traffic?
 - Careful consideration of environmental factors, such as impact to neighboring landowners and the natural landscape, is an essential part of the recreation planning process. One important tool, suitability analysis, creates graphical guidelines to assist in potential placement of recreation. DNR achieves this by using best available data to map and rank elements, including slope angle and stability, riparian and wetland buffers, threatened or endangered species, flood plains, rock pits and lease sites, and adjacent property mapping. Following this plan's adoption, development projects that may arise will include a more specific analysis of potential impacts and mitigation strategies as well as an environmental review process and an opportunity for the public to review and comment.
- How can I find committee materials and stay informed as the planning process continues?
 - Materials are available here (<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/BakertoBellingham>) and you can sign up for the Baker to Bellingham email newsletter here (<http://dnr.us8.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=686976a400749d61e09522350&id=c8cf71d34a>).
- What are the next steps for the recreation planning process and how do I comment?

- DNR is continuing to refine the possible types and locations of recreation within the recreation planning area, as well as developing objectives and strategies for implementation. We invite the public to review draft concept maps and share input at community meetings we'll host on February 20 and 21 in Maple Falls and Bellingham respectively. The public is also welcome to join us for working Advisory Committee meetings, generally scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month through May 2018. While these are working meetings focused on committee discussion and tasks, each meeting has a period for public comment. The public can also email comments to BakertoBellingham@dnr.wa.gov. In fall of 2018, DNR expects to submit a draft recreation plan through a state environmental review process, which will provide another opportunity for public comment. DNR estimates the agency will adopt a final plan by year-end.
- After you adopt a Baker to Bellingham Recreation Plan, how will you proceed with implementation and development?
 - The completed recreation plan will include recommended priorities for the agency to follow as it implements tasks and projects. For projects not otherwise prohibited by Whatcom County codes, DNR will attempt to secure grant or capital funding to begin project planning, design and permitting. Subsequent trail or facility construction is also contingent on the agency's success in securing funding through either recreation grants or capital allocations.