

**Green Seattle Partnership  
Urban Forestry Commission Briefing  
April 13, 2011**

This briefing will introduce the Commission to the Green Seattle Partnership, an joint effort by the City of Seattle (Parks, OSE, and SPU) and the Cascade Land Conservancy. The GSP is a volunteer effort to restore the 2,500 acres of Department of Parks and Recreation's (Parks) forested areas to sustainable native forests. The Partnership is in its 6<sup>th</sup> year.

**Project or Policy Description and Background**

In 2004 the City of Seattle embarked on an innovative 20 year effort to restore over urban forested parkland restoration efforts that have become one of the largest and most successful programs of its kind in the country. This effort would not be possible without inspiring levels of volunteerism, a dedication to appropriate ecosystem science and high levels of executive and managerial support across the City and within our community. The Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) has become one of the largest efforts of its kind in the state, if not the country, primarily because of the tireless investment of citizens, community leaders, agencies, non-profits, companies and the City.

Our forest are failing as existing trees reach the end of their natural life and invasive plants have choked out the next generation of trees. Over 40% of the forest is heavily infested with English ivy, Himalayan blackberry and other invasive plants. Without a massive, coordinated community effort, 7 out of 10 trees in these natural areas will be dead within twenty years.

In response to this community need and by building on the existing and ongoing work of committed volunteers, the City of Seattle launched the Green Seattle Partnership in 2004. By mobilizing Seattle residents to donate two million volunteer hours and plant 200,000 trees by 2025, the GSP will create healthier and more livable communities and pass on a legacy of community service to future generations.

Since the program's inception Parks investment of \$8 million in CRF-REET and Levy funding has brought over 600 acres into restoration and leveraged community investment of over 500,000 hours of volunteer support and \$4 million in community donations and grants. Cascade Land Conservancy has leveraged the model this program to launch similar programs in four cities in the region. The GSP is charting the course to a more livable community that cities around the country can follow.

**Strategic Action Plan**

The GSP is directly identified in several elements of the Strategic Action Plan. The Partnership addresses:

Goal 1B: Increase restoration of Seattle's natural ecosystem.

Goal 1E: Develop and maintain partnerships to enhance Seattle's parks and open spaces

Goal 3C: Provide volunteer opportunities and community stewardship projects

The GSP is called out specifically in the Division Work Plan for 2011 with a goal to: Plan for the continued success of the GSP program (incorporated in the Maintenance Strategies Action Team – Gap Analysis and strategy recommendations). The GSP directly services Parks 2011 Work Plan goal to: Expand and Support Partnerships across Parks. We will also be servicing the division goal to “Increase Coordination between Parks Resources and NRU” by “Reviewing, updating and providing on-going training in our best management practices”. The Partnership is directly “Pursuing partnerships to support ELC sites and programming (included in the Partnerships Action Team)”

### **Public Involvement Process**

Over 900 public meetings, in the form of volunteer work events, are held annually for the GSP. Public outreach is managed by a committee of the partners and includes development of advertisements, materials, posters and attendance at local festivals and events. The Green Seattle Day has been held on the first weekend of November since it was decreed by the Mayor in 2004. In 2010 over 1,000 people attended this event and it is estimated that over 22,000 citizens participated in at least one of these events in 2010.

The scope and scale of community investment in this effort has not been truly acknowledged by the City. Just to illustrate a few of the investors: there are over 100 dedicated volunteer Forest Stewards that donate Saturdays every month, hundreds of small and large companies donate staff time and resources, over 20 non-profits leverage City funding and over 70 schools participate annually in the GSP.

### **Issues**

No major issues of conflict have been raised or encountered during the last five years of the GSP. The GSP can be directly linked to the citizen advocacy for this type of work over the last 20 years. The GSP is the culmination of the Capital Funded Forest Restoration Program begun in 1994 by Parks. In consideration of the broad citywide impact of the program there are potential issues of conflict, such as working in around encampments, slope stability, worker safety, losses of privacy and potential view conflicts. These issues are or have been addressed directly through applicable procedures or measures.

The sustainability of the GSP is contingent upon significant City investment, the scope and scale of this project cannot be supported by grants, one time funding or private donations.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The intention of the GSP is to positively impact the overall environmental and community health of Seattle by modeling a sustainable program that directly

improves the sustainability of our forest resources, creates the management infrastructure to support these efforts and creates a community of knowledgeable and engaged stewards

### **Budget**

The current combined CRF\_REET and Levy Funding for 2011 is \$1.4 million. The CRF-REET funding future is uncertain at this time and the \$3 million assigned from the Levy will be expended by 2012. The initial Capital funding for the GSP was estimated at \$53 million over the 20 year life of the initial restoration process. As planned there would be a concurrent gradual ramping up through the 20 years to a sustainable General Funded budget of \$1.5 million for crews and ongoing maintenance of the forest once it restored. All funds are calculated in 2005 dollars. These funds and efforts would be supplemented by outside leveraged funds from grants, gifts and other sources. As an example the \$1.0 million donation to the restoration of Seward Parks' forest and the \$630K from the Coleman Park Illegal Cutting settlement are considered part of the GSP effort. In addition, Seattle Public Utilities and other departments in the City are contributing in-kind resources and staff time for development as the GSP's goals are similar to theirs.

### **Schedule**

The GSP was originally developed as a 20 year plan. Budget reductions and changes in Capital fund availability have increased the timeline on the outcomes. Current estimates are that the restoration process will be extending to 25 to 30 years.

### **Additional Information**

Information about the GSP can be found at [Greenseattle.org](http://Greenseattle.org)