

# OPG's trail proposal makes sense

It's now or never. Either folks show up and give them the "luv" and get a truly magnificent jewel for Kitsap County or no one comes and the land gets divided up into 20-acre parcels, not even coming close to being a cubic zirconium.

Olympic Property Group (OPG) is asking all those who use the trails in their properties in North Kitsap and anyone who has a thought as to what could be done with thousands of acres that could be set aside for trails, open space and wildlife corridors to come to a community meeting. They want to hear from the hikers, bikers and horseback riders and all those who have ever wandered down a trail anywhere to express their opinions about the possibilities for OPG's land in the north end.

The amount of land under discussion is significant. There are about 8,000 acres between the land in the Arborwood project and what lies in and around Port Gamble. The idea is to do clustering and put the density into a small portion of the land and leave the rest, up to 75 percent, available for trails, wildlife corridors and timber managed open space. The alternative is to chop the acreage into individual lots of 20 acres with no control over what will be done to the land.

OPG is led by Jon Rose, a truly worthy successor to David Cunningham, OPG's former lead developer. Jon has the vision, creativity and staff that have enabled him to put forth a proposal that is impressive and far-reaching. It has all the earmarks of the boldness he believes is needed today.

Jon likes to use the phrase "String of Pearls" to describe what he sees happening in the future. Looking at a map, one can

## Torrens Talk By VAL TORRENS



easily how he came to that: the land and communities involved form an almost complete circle running from Hansville to Kingston to Indianola to Suquamish to Poulsbo to Port Gamble. The particular properties that OPG and Jon are looking at to develop the trails are the large tracts outside

Kingston and Port Gamble with some connecting parcels in between.

What can be done with the trails show the level to which Jon and OPG have gone to make this an appealing and desirable direction. The big question is to what extent the public will be behind it.

That is what the meeting is about: to gauge the depth of support and commitment in order to decide which way to go with the land. If people are excited about the proposal and are willing to do the legwork necessary to make it come about, then OPG will be right there with them. If the public and the user groups decide they want things to stay as they are, they will be unhappy since that will not happen. The forestry acreage will be sold off in 20-acre lots and it is anybody's guess as to what will transpire.

OPG does not have to do this. It has no reason or obligation to get public input on what to do with the land since selling 20-acre parcels is the current zoning. It could simply

do that and be done with it. Instead, it wants to honor what folks have used its property for all these years and give them the chance to make it permanent.

This will only come about if the public is truly committed to doing its part.

This will entail supporting OPG when it goes for the Rural Wooded Incentive Program and Transfer of Development Rights in developing the properties in question. It will also mean identifying and supporting a trail management entity to construct and maintain the trails. This entity will need to have funding since the money has to come from somewhere. It is a big project with big dreams with an equally, if not larger, commitment needed from the public to make it work. Clearly, there are trade-offs and OPG wants us to tell them if we think they are worth it.

If you want a sneak peek visit Port Gamble's Web site. You can even give your opinion online by filling out the questionnaire. But, to really get a flavor of what is possible and with whom you would be working, the meeting is a must. Go to Kingston Junior High on at 6:15 p.m. June 27.

Help decide whether North Kitsap will be a jewel of a place or just another unremarkable spot on the road.

*Val has been called a community activist — or agitator — depending upon one's view. She contributes her time in the fields of arts, education, human rights, lacrosse, land use, politics and her Jewish community. Val has been an adjunct faculty member of OC since 1980 where she teaches political science and speech. She resides outside of Poulsbo with her husband and their pets.*

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