

## Survey reflects desire for OPG trail system

By Annie Tietje

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A little over two months ago, more than 500 people packed into the Kingston Middle School gym to show their support and voice concerns about a trail system plan proposed by Olympic Property Group. At the end of August, the company released the results of a survey it conducted in addition to the meeting, and the positive response is encouraging OPG project designers to clear the network of paths as soon as possible.

One concern consistently raised since the June 27 meeting, and repeated in the survey is trespassing.

"The only way, and we haven't gotten our brains in it that deep, is to mark the trailheads," said OPG project manager Sue Schroader. "That's what we can do. That's pretty much all we can do. We can't police the property, there's just too much of it. Well, we've only heard of a couple really frustrated owners."

She suggested landowners living near one of the six parcels, which equal 8,000-acres and stretch from Port Gamble south toward Suquamish and north to Hansville, clearly mark their property and request any potential trespassers to seek alternative routes to the paths. Some trail users may not realize they are trespassing, and others may need verbal reinforcement, she said.

Despite this concern, the trail project has reached its second phase, namely sharing the results with

other local and state organizations that could help boost the project further.

"We used the results of the trail meeting to share with our board of directors at an important quarterly meeting in August," said OPG President Jon Rose. "We intend to schedule follow up meetings with both North Kitsap cities, tribes, federal delegation and other elected officials in which the trail results will be shared. This is a regional project that will only be accomplished through a broad coalition of support — so it will be important to showcase to our regional leadership how widely used and supported trails are to our quality of life."

Many residents and visitors who use the trails travel from outside the North End to do so. Schroader said this was the biggest surprise of all from the survey, noting it is more than just Kingston, Hansville and Port Gamble residents putting the open space to use.

"The only thing I think was one of the biggest surprises was a lot of trail users are from Poulsbo," she said. "There's a large group that do have to travel a little way to get to the trails, they have to make an effort, and they are willing to make it to use the trails."

Despite the large amounts of work, monitoring and funding a project of this scale, most residents seem in favor of doing their part to make it happen. The trail system would be a part of a pilot program Kitsap County is trying out, the Rural Wooded program, that would cluster development on 25 percent of land designated rural, and allow the other 75 percent to be used as open space.

The full report can be found online at [www.portgamble.com](http://www.portgamble.com), click on the Port Gamble's Future tab, and select the Trails tab.