

## North Kitsap Heritage Park Officially Opening, Thanks to Hard Work by Volunteers

By Brynn Grimley

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**NORTH KITSAP** — The North Kitsap Heritage Park is officially open, thanks largely to a group of volunteers who dedicated the last year to building trails on the 460 forested acres near Kingston.

The volunteers approached Kitsap County last year about doing the trail work. Although the park wasn't officially open, people had been using the land since the county bought the park from Olympic Property Group in 2004.

The volunteers were tired of using old logging roads and unmarked, defunct trails, and were willing to donate their time and sweat to improve things.

With the work completed, the park is officially open, said Lori Raymaker, volunteer coordinator with the Kitsap County Parks and Recreation Department.

The volunteers expanded the parking lot on Miller Bay Road. If weather permits, they hope to line the lot with loose gravel in the next week, Raymaker said.

They also plan to add a kiosk at the entrance of the park that will include information and a color-coded map detailing the network of trails.

The park is opening at an opportune time as the county prepares to resume negotiations with OPG, the real estate arm of Poulsbo-based Pope Resources, about the purchase of 380 acres of land the company owns adjacent to the park.

When the county bought the first 460 acres from OPG in May 2004, the sale agreement included a five-year option for the county to buy the remaining land to complete the heritage park.

The option expired last year, but county Commissioner Steve Bauer and OPG President Jon Rose haven't lost interest in the deal.

At the time the option expired, the county didn't have money available to buy the land, Bauer said. The county hopes to apply to the state's recreation and conservation office this spring for grant money to help cover the cost of the land.

"The first priority at this point is to complete the purchase of the second half of the property option," Bauer said. But it could still be another year before the county takes ownership.

Trails in the heritage park will connect to a wider network of trails — called the String of Pearls — meant to tie the North Kitsap area together.

Trails from the heritage park will also connect to the White Horse housing development and to OPG's recently approved [Arborwood housing development](#). OPG will also dedicate 104 acres of forested land from that development to the county to connect with the park trails.

Bauer commended the work of the volunteers, calling their dedication an “excellent resource for the county.”

“Without them, we wouldn't have been able to get the park open for use,” he said.

The official opening of the park also comes with restrictions, including the prohibition of motorized vehicles — including dirt bikes and off-road vehicles — on trails. County ordinances prohibit the use of these types of vehicles because of public safety concerns as well as trail degradation, Raymaker said.

The main entrance to the North Kitsap Heritage Park is located on the east side of Miller Bay Road about a mile north of Indianola Road and a mile south of West Kingston Road.



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