

Executive Summary

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Cooper Mountain, located on the southwest edge of Beaverton, was formed by the Columbia River basalt flows millions of years ago. Rising nearly 800 feet, it is a prominent feature in the landscape of the Tualatin River Valley. The mountain has been part of the forest and farm fabric typical of the region; it has historically been used for timber production, and more recently, for recreation. In recent years, as the urban growth boundary has expanded, the north and east slopes of the mountain have become fully developed residential neighborhoods.

With 1995 bond measure funds, Metro purchased 256 acres in the Cooper Mountain Target Area, including 231 contiguous acres near the crest on the southwest slope of the mountain. Cooper Mountain Natural Area is a mosaic of oak and madrone woodlands, native prairies, and mixed conifer forest. These habitats provide



Conifer forest, oak woodland & native prairie

homes for nine plant and wildlife species that have been identified at the state and federal level as “sensitive species” or “species of concern” – species at risk of being listed as threatened or endangered. The site also contains the headwaters of Lindow Creek (a major tributary of the Tualatin River), and offers commanding views of the valley.

Process and Goals

The Cooper Mountain Natural Area Master Plan is the result of a public involvement process that engaged neighbors, local governments, recreation groups, and natural resource specialists in creating a viable long-term vision for the site. This input, combined with assessments of the site’s resources, opportunities and constraints, shaped six broad goals for the natural area:

1. Protect and enhance Cooper Mountain’s unique natural and scenic resources and create a place for wildlife to thrive.
2. Encourage community access and recreational use that is compatible with natural resource protection.
3. Interpret the unique natural, cultural and scenic resources of Cooper Mountain.
4. Maximize operational efficiencies and protect the public’s investment.
5. Minimize impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and farmlands from site development and public use of Cooper Mountain.
6. Work with our partners to seek appropriate public and private funding for master plan implementation and ongoing management.

Recommendations

The master plan recommendations are an attempt to balance the need for protection and enhancement of the unique natural resources present on the site, with the public's use and enjoyment of nature-based recreational activities. The preferred site design concept includes the following elements:

- A 3.5-mile trail system, marked by interpretive signs, to accommodate hikers, wheelchair users, and equestrians.
- A nature house that will provide classroom and meeting space for field trips and community groups.
- Two parking areas and trailheads – one on the north edge of the site at Kemmer Road and the other at the southeast corner of the site at Grabhorn Road. Both will offer restrooms, shelter, picnic tables, and other facilities.
- A children's play area designed with natural elements of sand, rock, water and plants to accommodate educational activities and neighborhood use.
- A caretaker residence and maintenance yard to provide a management presence and to oversee facilities.

In addition, a Natural Resource Management Plan and an Interpretive Program Concept are being developed to help guide the habitat management and educational programming that will occur on site. A phased implementation plan is recommended for the development of the facilities in order to consider visitor needs and minimize construction costs and operational impacts.

This Master Plan represents today's vision for an important regional natural area that provides an exciting opportunity for habitat enhancement and compatible public use within a neighborhood context. In addition to providing a framework for future development and management, the plan also identifies long-term opportunities. For example, if adjacent properties come up for sale

in the future by willing sellers, consideration will be given to purchasing these parcels in order to expand habitat protection goals, recreation uses (including regional trail connections), and buffers between the natural area and surrounding neighbors.

Conclusion

In 1995, voters approved a bond measure to acquire regionally significant natural areas, parks and other greenspaces throughout the metropolitan area. Cooper Mountain Natural Area is one of these regional treasures – a place where nature is flourishing in the midst of our neighborhoods. In 2002, the Metro Council dedicated resources to develop Cooper Mountain Natural Area for public use. This master plan is a key step toward responsible management of this resource, while providing the public with a safe enjoyable experience of one of our region's great resources.