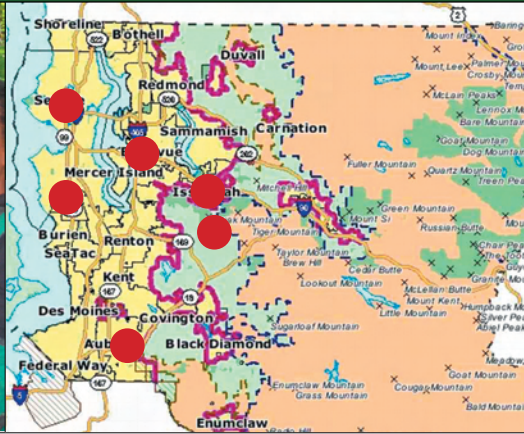


URBAN RURAL CONNECTIONS – A WHOLE KING COUNTY



More Than a Summer Job

The Summer Youth Forestry Institute,

Auburn, Bellevue, Issaquah, Sammamish, Seattle, and White Center

In July 2007, ten high school students from all over King County piled out of a van at the gate of Taylor Mountain Forest -or in the words of one participant, “the boonies”- for the first day of their summer job.

As participants in the inaugural Summer Youth Forestry Institute (SYFI), they awkwardly donned hard hats, orange tool vests, and work gloves. Over the next month, they became comfortable in this field gear, just as they became more comfortable with one another and more skilled in their work tasks.

The SYFI engages youth in meaningful summer employment, teaches science and natural resource skills, and raises awareness of the functions and values of forests in our landscape. The students learn plant identification, forest inventory techniques, GPS skills, and other field skills.

As a team, they install permanent monitoring plots at Taylor Mountain Forest and collect ecosystem inventory data. They learn how to use tools ranging from the simple to the complex. The data they collect is provided to King County forest managers and is part of a long-term monitoring program. Each student receives a stipend, work pants and transportation to the work site each day making the program more accessible to lower-income and urban youth.

The SYFI provides much more than a summer job to its participants. It provides an experience that challenges them physically and mentally, engages them in tough discussions about environmental stewardship, and builds skills that give them a career edge. The 2008 SYFI begins on June 30th; thirty students have applied for the 10 available spaces.

Taylor Mountain Forest, Near Hobart

In 1997, the Metropolitan King County Council took a major step in its effort to preserve the county’s rural forestland. It granted a conservation easement for the Taylor Mountain Forest to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources allowing Taylor Mount to become a working forest for future generations.

“This truly is a marquee piece of property, home to diverse wildlife and vital salmon-bearing streams,” said Councilmember Larry Phillips, who worked to find the needed \$2.8 million in the County’s 1997 budget to purchase the property.

King County manages over 3,000 acres of working forest lands. The 1822-acre site in Taylor Mountain is King County’s largest working forest which not only protects conserves and restores natural resources, but also models sustainable forest harvesting and provides the community with a beautiful spot for passive recreation.

The forest sits on the southwest flank of Taylor Mountain, near the community of Hobart in eastern King County. Taylor Mountain Forest provides a critical link between the City of Seattle’s Cedar River Watershed and Tiger Mountain State Forest. The site’s management plan calls for monitoring to assess whether stewardship goals are being achieved and to chart the course of future stewardship activities. In the face of County staff and budget limitations, the County is working with Washington State University King County Extension’s Summer Youth Forestry Institute (SYFI) to ensure monitoring goals are met. The data that the SYFI participants collect at Taylor allows County staff to make timely decisions that best protect the health and vitality of the forest.

