

## Parks Service to Help Plan Trail Network

By Derek Sheppard  
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The National Parks Service is lending a hand to create a trail network in North Kitsap.

The [North Kitsap Trails Association](#) announced it has received its first grant, valued at \$60,000, which provides assistance from NPS community planner Sue Abbott for one year.

Abbott will work with the trails association and its volunteers to create a plan for a regional water and land trail system.

The proposed trail network would crisscross portions of Olympic Property Group's 8,000 acres of timber lands in North Kitsap. The area already [contains miles of trails](#), but the plan would create a permanent, maintained network.

It has been called the "String of Pearls," an idea hatched by OPG and now shepherded by the Trails Association, which is in the midst of applying for nonprofit status.

A "water trail" designed for kayaks around North Kitsap waters is also planned.

Trails Association vice-president John Willett said more than 2,400 volunteer hours have gone into the project so far.

"To see that effort recognized and supported by our federal government is a real boost and affirmation that we are on the right track," he said in a statement.

The trails plan would likely require public financing, and has been proposed as a parks district, which would require a public vote.

As land values increased, OPG's corporate parent, Pope Resources, asked the company to look into ways to better utilize those 8,000 acres.

In the trails proposal, OPG would set aside the trail easements in perpetuity in exchange for the ability to transfer development rights to areas nearer infrastructure services [around Port Gamble](#).

Another option would be dividing the land into and selling large rural housing lots, effectively ending the trail network there now.

