

New Land Moves Sound-to-Canal Trail Project Forward

By Derek Sheppard
Sunday, December 23, 2007

HANSVILLE

A years-long dream to connect Puget Sound with Hood Canal through trails in Hansville is one big step closer to reality.

For about two decades, volunteers with the Hansville Greenway and Wildlife Corridor have hoped to connect the two waterways with a network of trails, and the connection could be complete this summer.

Last week the Kitsap County Commissioners approved the purchase of about 112 acres of land from Olympic Property Group for approximately \$1.1 million.

In addition, OPG, a subsidiary of timber company Pope Resources, donated 2 ½ miles of trail easements to the county as part of the deal. The process began years ago, and in 2004 the county received a \$582,000 state grant to fund half of the project.

The trail easements and new land increase the Hansville Greenway by 50 percent, and provide that long sought canal-sound connection.

"Sid Knutson had that original goal in the mid 90s," Greenway president Ken Shawcroft said of the man who spearheaded efforts to start the Greenway.

Shawcroft said trails through the new land, bordered on the south by Hawk's Hole Creek and on the north by the Shorewoods neighborhood, have been surveyed and marked. They should be passable by next summer, he said.

When the county closes on the land deal, the Greenway will top 300 acres and contain nearly 8 miles of trails, 3 ½ miles added because of the trail easements and new land.

"You could go out and run through the woods for hours," said Rick Fackler, a parks planner who worked on the deal under contract for Kitsap County.

OPG President Jon Rose said the deal shows that his company and the county have good-faith intentions to pursue more trails in North Kitsap.

"I really like how it shows the serious intent on the trails issue," he said.

The company has met with trails leaders and the community at-large, floating a proposal that would connect a much of its 8,000 acres of timber lands in North Kitsap with a trails network.

Rose said the Hansville project doesn't contain all of the complex issues the grander plan entails — such as being allowed to cluster homes in rural areas — but he agreed that it can serve as a beta test of sorts.

"And we can do much more in the future," he said.

Adding more trails not only provides the community with attractive amenities but also serves a business purpose for OPG, Rose said, making such deals mutually beneficial. Some of the new trails in Hansville will connect a new OPG development, Chatham, to Point No Point and the Greenway.

Shawcroft said the work with OPG, who owns most of the land south of the Greenway, to increase the Greenway isn't over, stressing that he would like to add more protected open space.

"You've got to have the dedicated natural spaces around it (trails)," he said.

He also hopes to eventually connect trails further south on Hood Canal where the hairpin turn lies along Hood Canal Drive. The county owns about 200 feet of waterfront road right of way, there. The current Hood Canal connection at the end of Hood Canal Drive is only as wide as the road, 40 to 60 feet.



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