

BALLOT MEASURE

**Proposition No. 1
Formation of Chuckanut Community Forest Park District**

Shall the Chuckanut Community Forest Park District with boundaries encompassing Precincts 250, 251, 252, 256, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264 and 265, and the portion of Precinct 259 west of Interstate 5, all within the City of Bellingham, be created?

Yes _____ No _____

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Voter approval will create a "Chuckanut Community Forest Park District" governed by the board of commissioners elected simultaneously. The District would have all the powers provided in Ch.35.61 RCW, including, but not limited to, maintaining, improving and acquiring parks and recreational facilities; issuing bonds; and levying general taxes to the limit spelled out in RCW 35.61.100 upon real property within the District. The intended property tax levy rate of twenty eight cents per thousand dollars of assessed value would, in ten years, repay the inter-fund loan made from the Greenways Endowment Fund for the purchase of the "Hundred Acre Wood" by providing a dedicated funding source.



STATEMENT FOR:

The singular purpose of this Park District is to repay the loan that enabled the City's purchase of the Chuckanut Community Forest (aka Chuckanut Ridge), thereby assuring its preservation as a park, forever. The alternative is that an unknown portion of the land may be sold. Greenways paid more than half of the purchase price. The rest is up to us Southsiders who will most benefit from the forest's preservation or be impacted by its sale. With its lush, forested wetlands nestled between two salmon-bearing streams, the property's ecological merits are beyond challenge. As a park, the forest offers easy access to healthy outdoor recreation to five nearby Southside neighborhoods, while reducing the need for an expensive expansion of the 12th Street bridge. The commissioners, elected from among your neighbors, will assure its preservation, leaving management to Bellingham Parks. Proven around the state, the Park District model has empowered communities to keep what they hold dear, and ensure a legacy for generations to come. This much-loved forest has been defended by you and your neighbors for over twenty years. Now is finally the time to secure it once and for all. Vote YES for our forest. Learn more at www.chuckanutcommunityforest.com.

Rebuttal of Statement Against:

The CCFD is committed solely to repaying the loan by levying \$28/\$100,000 for 10 years; preserving the park forever. Park Districts work successfully throughout the state. Other financing avenues were explored, none were feasible. Sale of "large", not "small portion" is needed to raise \$3.2M. If sold, public will pay toward infrastructure. This is the last, best chance for preservation. We can buy into fear of park district power, or we can buy a park.

STATEMENT AGAINST:

A new park district (RCW 35.61) can 1) be independent of City government, 2) levy annual property taxes up to \$75/\$100,000 value, 3) operate parks, 4) pay District Commissioners' salary, and 5) condemn property "within or without" the District. These powers exceed the statements of the park district supporters. Our need is financial – repay City Council's \$3.2 million loan to restore our Greenways Endowment. Our need is NOT to create a competing branch of government with vast powers inside our City limits.

First explore all solutions to repay the loan, such as: keep the land but sell the density rights to another location; sell a small portion of the site; include the loan in future Greenways levy. Or, a private capital campaign by Park supporters. Divide \$3,200,000 among 1,600 park supporters equals \$2,000 each. Each could sign a personal note to pay the City over 10 years, thereby erasing the need for a parks district. Other financial solutions deserve a thorough review before we create a district with no end to its life, new taxing power over our current taxes and the power to condemn property.

Get informed at www.protectbellingshamparks.com and VOTE NO on PROPOSITION 1.

Rebuttal of Statement For:

Proponents cannot guarantee the Park district's future. State law permits perpetual operations (no sunset), condemnation of land inside and outside its boundaries, taxes levied at over twice the proponents' suggestion. Existing annual City Greenways 3 taxes are \$133/year on a \$250,000 house. A new parks district adds \$187.50/year on the same house. Apartments are also taxed; taxes will pass on to renters. Not a good deal. Read www.protectbellingshamparks.com and VOTE NO on PROPOSITION 1.

Statement For prepared by: Chuckanut Community Forest District Steering Committee
Statement Against prepared by: Bill Geyer and George Munger
Statements For, Statements Against, and Rebuttals are the opinions of the authors and have not been checked for accuracy by any government agency.