

Executive Summary

This document serves to update of the Union Bay Natural Areas and Shoreline Management Guidelines, developed in 1994.

Site:

The combined area of the UBNA and the University shoreline is 73.5 acres. Of that area, 14.4 acres have been restored, most of it with volunteer labor. An assessment of the condition of the restored sites indicates that 6.9 acres are in danger of reverting to a weed-dominated condition; 0.9 acres already need to be restored again to the desired condition. Resources are needed both to begin new restoration projects and to maintain areas that have been restored.

Staff:

UBNA is maintained by a staff gardener, less than half an FTE; faculty supervised students in class work; volunteers; and a half-time Research Assistant (RA), two academic quarters each year. The majority of the work is invasive weed control; most of the planting has been done by classes and volunteer groups. Two shoreline projects (Dempsey Indoor Practice Facility and Conibear Shellhouse) were installed for the University by contractors. Based on staffing rates for maintenance in the Arboretum Master Plan, for primarily low intensity care, the core areas of the UBNA, the University Slough, and the shoreline will require 3.5 FTEs to provide an adequate level of maintenance and care.

Volunteers:

Volunteer work is important for restoration and maintenance of the natural ecosystem that has developed in the UBNA. The RA works almost entirely with students in classes with restoration as a component of the course and students in natural science courses that can take advantage of the site. There is also the potential to restore, teach, and gain active support among volunteers from the interested community. A volunteer coordinator is needed to organize the work of volunteers and, taking advantage of the public interest in restoration, nature, and horticulture, recruit new volunteers. The time of the position of volunteer coordinator could be shared among the programs of the UWBG.

Site Improvements:

The trails of the UBNA are explored extensively by the public and offer an important opportunity for teaching and outreach and building support for the UWBG. The trails follow the shore of Lake Washington and extend through the managed and restored areas. The value and use of the site can be increased by expanding the trail system. A loop trail is proposed for the northwest sub-area: from Shovelers Pond, northwest between wetland and grassland, intercepting the University Slough at Clark Road; south along the Slough, perhaps in a new forested riparian buffer, to Wahkiakum Lane at the footbridge. Trail and boardwalk systems are also needed, 1) to provide access from the Center for Urban Horticulture to the lakeshore by way of the small creek that runs into Lake Washington just east of Shovelers Pond and 2) to open the swamp forest in East Basin. The area behind the Center for Urban Horticulture would require only a short section of

boardwalk, while the trail in East Basin would need at least 750' of boardwalk construction. These plans would be coordinated with state agencies responsible for shoreline management.

Site Expansion:

Parking lot E-5 has been envisioned as part of the UBNA for many years. It has great potential for restoration to a South Puget Sound prairie ecosystem (since it is all gravel, similar to natural prairies). Approximately one-third of E-5 was turned over to the Center for Urban Horticulture in the mid-nineties and now supports camas, Garry oaks, and Idaho fescue. The expected date to obtain E-5 is 2012. The site is suitable for part of a future system of trails and native plant communities. Plant propagation may begin earlier in anticipation of restoration.

Structural Improvements:

Structural improvements would offer many desirable features to the UBNA. These might include such things as bird photography blinds, kayak pullouts, wildlife structures and feeding stations, trail drains; short paths with lookouts for access to wetlands, slough, and the shoreline; and interpretative signage.