

From: [Rebecca Messinger](#)
To: [Cnty 2025 Comp Plan](#)
Subject: FW: FOCC comments on Parks Chapter
Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2026 4:44:25 PM
Attachments: [FOCC Parks Chapter Comp Plan Comments.docx.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)

Hello,

Please see the below email and attached comments from Friends of Clark County.

Thank you!

Rebecca



Rebecca Messinger
Clerk to the Council
COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE

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From: Ann Foster <annfoster5093@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 11:10 AM
To: Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Wil Fuentes <Wil.Fuentes@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Matt Little <Matt.Little@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>; Ross Hoover <Ross.Hoover@clark.wa.gov>
Cc: Rebecca Messinger <Rebecca.Messinger@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: FOCC comments on Parks Chapter

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Hello Councilors, County Manager Otto, Community
Planning Director Orjiako, Parks and Nature Division

Manager Hoover,

Please find below comments from Friends of Clark County regarding the Parks and Open Spaces Chapter of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.

We, as always, appreciate your attention and consideration.

Regards,
Ann Foster



Friends of Clark County

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

July 7, 2026

TO: Council Chair Sue Marshall, Councilor Wil Fuentes, Councilor Michelle Belkot, Councilor Matt Little, Councilor Glen Yung, County Manager Kathleen Otto, Public Works Director Ken Lader, Parks and Nature Division Manager Ross Hoover

Cc: Community Planning Director Oliver Orjiako

Councilors and Staff:

My name is Tonya Enger and I am a member of the board of Friends of Clark County (FOCC). FOCC recognizes that our parks, recreation, open spaces, and trails are not merely destinations for recreation and community use, but are also under-utilized natural assets that have potential for supporting the climate goals identified in the Climate Element Policies in the draft of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update, and as recommended by the CAG. Parks and open space are integral to improving both human health directly and indirectly through their facilitation of vital ecosystem services including but not limited to climate regulation, watershed protection, air quality improvement, habitat connectivity and biodiversity, and groundwater recharge that support human communities. Beyond human impact, parks and open spaces are equally important to the health and flourishing of local wildlife, including migratory birds, and overall landscape integrity. Projects such as the East Fork Lewis River Reconnection Project already demonstrate the interconnectedness of parks land and wildlife habitat.

Policy 14.15.1 in chapter 14 of the Comprehensive Plan Update draft states that climate resilience goals must be incorporated into all county planning documents, including those for Parks, Recreation, Open Spaces and Trails plan. As written, the goals in this draft of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Chapter, as well as Appendix I: Climate Element Support Document, inadequately address topics that are discussed in the CAG's recommendations and are wholly relevant to our parks and nature space such as: biodiversity conservation, habitat connectivity, ecosystem services, climate adaptation, natural climate solutions, pollinator habitat, green infrastructure, conservation and stewardship and nature-based stormwater management.

Incorporating goals and policies that reflect the important and multi-faceted role that our parks and open space play in county health and climate resilience is necessary if we are to adequately harness the most effective use of county resources in the next 20 years. Including

goals and policies as we recommend below will achieve continuity between climate change planning and PROST objectives. It would also serve to highlight our county's responsiveness to regional trends and help maintain competitiveness with other metropolitan areas that have already implemented similar policies.

Recommendations for inclusion of goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan Parks Chapter

Goal - Improve ecosystem health and function by identifying, protecting, preserving, and rewilding environmentally critical areas within the county's park system including riparian areas, wetlands, prairies, forests, and urban and rural open space

Policy - Identify, enhance, and protect areas that provide for wildlife habitat connectivity as well as safe passage of migratory species in alignment with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife guidance.

Policy - Strategically acquire, protect and ecologically enhance county lands for parks, recreation, and trail system usage.

Policy - Community-wide restoration efforts and restoration projects on county-owned properties must be developed and implemented such that species composition, species conservation, and ecosystem processes are sustainable.

Policy - Require the use of northwest native plants in landscaping, particularly adjacent to critical areas and habitat connectivity corridors, eradicate priority invasive plants in conjunction with state and county noxious weed guidelines

Policy - Enhance natural areas and green infrastructure in county parks lands to reduce heat effects, improve watershed health, and foster resiliency to climate impacts such as minimizing impermeable surfaces and utilizing bioswales and rain gardens.

We at FOCC support evidence-based solutions in determining responsible and effective policy. While we recognize that there holds significant potential to address climate action goals within the scope of a parks plan update, we understand the important role that public engagement and education plays in the acceptance of policy implementation. Research suggests that parks improvements aimed at addressing climate, conservation, and biodiversity goals are best received and accepted when there is both perceived benefit and understanding of the effectiveness of green infrastructure improvements to address these goals (Chinga et al., 2024).

The component of public education and engagement will be even more critical to achieve public support and regional cohesion for implementing smart policy as our county population and demographics are set to grow and change. This is why we support the inclusion of a goal to align with Climate Advisory Group's goal 18:

Goal - Improve public awareness of environmental services of the county's park system including native plant communities and ecosystem functions; water quality and watershed functions; climate change effects on local landscapes; conservation and biodiversity; regional wildlife and human relationships to nature.

Policy - Develop and promote programs in collaboration with community partners that expand awareness of parks planning goals and improve understanding of the environmental and socioeconomic value of parks and natural areas including the role of green spaces on functional biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Policy - Partner with schools, public and private community-based organizations to expand educational awareness and volunteer engagement opportunities to promote stewardship and foster participation, pride in and knowledge of the County system of parks and natural spaces.

Policy - Enhance, expand, protect, and maintain County-owned greenspace and tree canopy, while providing all ages environmental volunteer opportunities, community engagement, and service learning through tree planting and green space stewardship.

Friends of Clark County values the unique wildlife and natural lands that provide an abundance of recreation opportunities in our region and we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Parks issues. Well planned and administered park lands contribute to overall health and wellbeing for our growing community and the ecosystems that support critical services. Our parks and open lands will also provide additional respite and resiliency from the local effects of climate change which will be increasingly more urgent in the next 20 years. We hope that these recommendations will be considered so that our parks, recreation, open space and trails lands can provide the most benefit and value for our county and remain a source of shared regional identity.

Best regards,

Tonya Enger,

Board Member, Friends of Clark County

Sources

Chinga, J., Murúa, M., & Gelcich, S. (2024). Exploring perceptions towards biodiversity conservation in urban parks: Insights on acceptability and design attributes. *Journal of Urban Management*, 13(3), 425–436.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2024.05.006>