



P.O. Box 30544
Seattle, WA 98113

April 30, 2008

Timothy Gallagher, Superintendent
Seattle Parks and Recreation Department
100 Dexter Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109

Regarding: Comment on Strategic Action Plan;
Request to add job description:
Green Lake ecosystem manager

Dear Mr. Gallagher,

Friends of Green Lake is a citizens' organization that works for the long-term protection of the watershed and water quality of Green Lake, to benefit recreational users and wildlife. I am writing to comment on the Strategic Action Plan with a request that the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation create a job description that specifically identifies management of the Green Lake aquatic ecosystem as a core responsibility.

Friends of Green Lake (FOGL) was established in the spring of 2003, following closures of Green Lake to swimming and other water contact during the summers of 1999 and 2002 because of bluegreen algae blooms caused by excess nutrients. Green Lake was closed because of algae blooms again in the summer of 2003, and FOGL members carried petitions and lobbied the Mayor and City Council until early in 2004, when the City allocated \$1.5 million for alum treatment. Green Lake was treated with alum in April 2004, but because alum treatment is temporary, FOGL has continued to study and monitor water quality issues affecting the Lake.

Green Lake is unique because it is the only large lake (256 acres) wholly owned by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (the Parks Dept.). Friends of Green Lake recommends that the Parks Dept. develop a position description for an employee with a background in aquatic science who would have responsibility for control, care, and management of the Green Lake ecosystem. Currently, the Lake is managed piecemeal by various segments of the Parks Dept. and other agencies, without coordination or long-term planning.

For example, the water level in the Lake is controlled by an outlet weir, which sometimes is adjusted by Parks Dept. grounds-keepers and at other times by the Parks Dept. Small Craft Center. The level of the Lake affects the amount of shoreline erosion, which loads nutrients into the Lake. Appropriate shoreline plantings can reduce erosion, and have the potential to enhance wildlife habitat; shoreline planting and trimming currently is managed by gardeners and grounds-keepers. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife plants fish in the Lake, but does not remove fish that have proven to be detrimental (grass carp). King County DNR determines which of the two swimming beaches is monitored for bacteria. Seattle Public Utilities controls the discharge of storm-water into the Lake from the Densmore outlet, and has responsibility and

control over that structure and the upgradient drainage system. This past December, an overflow of 95,000 gallons of combined sanitary sewage and storm-water was discharged through the Densmore outlet into Green Lake.

Other than the storm-water drains that feed into the Densmore drainage system, most of the watershed for Green Lake is within jurisdiction and control of the Parks Dept., but it isn't clear that impacts to the Lake are considered when managing these areas. For example, who manages the use of fertilizers and fungicides on the pitch and putt golf course that is adjacent to the Lake? The large playing fields near the Green Lake Community Center and the athletic fields of Lower Woodland Park also drain into Green Lake, but who within the Parks Dept has responsibility for regulating the use of fertilizers on these areas, and for ensuring regular maintenance of the drainage structures that help reduce nutrient and bacterial loading from these areas into the Lake?

Green Lake Park is not as large as other regional Parks, but is reportedly the most intensely used Park in the state, because of the amenity of the Lake. For example, during nine months of the year, the Lake supports the extensive rowing, kayaking, canoeing and sailing programs of the Small Craft Center for students, seniors and competitive clubs from around the region. The Small Craft Center sponsors three regional regattas each year, and in August 2006 hosted semi-final rowing events for the U.S. Olympic team on Green Lake. Green Lake also is the venue for the Washington Canoe and Kayak Club, which in August 2007 held a two-day national competition on the Lake. People from around the country come to Green Lake to compete, to support their team, and to share in the excitement of competition. Annual events held on Green Lake include the cross-lake swim in June, and the Milk Carton Boat Derby and outrigger canoe races in July. These events draw participants from throughout the region, and are dependent upon clean, safe water. Green Lake provides the only public warm-water swimming beaches in the City, where even young children can enjoy swimming in a natural setting. Green Lake Park draws users from throughout the metropolitan area for family picnics, jogging, rollerblading, or just walking with friends largely because of the pleasant, ever-changing water view when using the trails around the Lake.

Members of the Friends of Green Lake voted at the April 22 meeting to make "consolidating management of Green Lake in a person with understanding of aquatic ecosystems" our only comment on the Strategic Action Plan, because we felt this was vital to improving long-term stewardship of the Lake, a unique City asset. We hope you agree the new 5-year Strategic Action Plan is an opportunity to incorporate "overall management of the Green Lake aquatic ecosystem" into a position description within the Parks Dept organizational structure, but realize that not all appropriate considerations can be identified in a short letter. Friends of Green Lake officers would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Gayle Garman, Chairman
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Cc: Kevin Stoops