



Date: July 16, 2012

To: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Chair
City Council Parks and Neighborhoods Committee

From: Leah Tivoli, Acting Natural Resources Manager
Mark Mead, Parks Arborist
Dan Johnson, Acting Parks Division Director

Subject: Green Seattle Partnership

Background

Seattle's dying and declining forested Parkland

The City of Seattle owns 2,500 acres of forested parkland, 7% of Seattle's land area. These forested areas had not been properly managed since they were logged in the early 1900's and now invasive plants were preventing seedlings from growing and replacing trees that are at the end of their natural lives. Without direct intervention, we estimated that 70% of our forest will be dead within 20 years.

It was not until the initiation of the Green Seattle Partnership in 2005 that there was a dedicated funding stream to manage our forested parkland. The Green Seattle Partnership's (GSP) primary goal is to engage the community in removing non-native invasive weeds and establishing native trees and understory to protect these forested areas for future generations.

Our continued support of GSP *stewards* forested areas for the long-term; *retains* natural systems that protect habitat and manage stormwater and pollution in lieu of engineered solutions; *protects* the sweat equity and millions of dollars invested by government, community and partners since 2004; and *sustains* the legacy of the Emerald City for generations to come.

Green Seattle Partnership

In 2005 the City of Seattle and founding partner Forterra (formerly Cascade Land Conservancy) embarked on an innovative 20-year effort to restore over 2,500 acres of urban forested parkland. This effort would not be possible without significant levels of volunteerism, a dedication to appropriate ecosystem science, and high levels of executive and managerial support across the City and within our community. The GSP has become one of the largest and most successful programs of its kind in the country primarily because of the tireless investment of residents, community leaders, agencies, non-profits, companies and the City. Forterra has replicated the GSP model, launching similar programs in five cities in the region.

The GSP is a platform for civic engagement where concerned residents and Government come together from all angles to help solve the problem of our declining and dying forests. There are more than 130 volunteer Forest Stewards who have adopted the long-term care and maintenance of forest areas across 80 parks. In 2011, over 800 people attended Green Seattle

Day and it is estimated that over 25,000 residents participated in at least one GSP event in 2011. Thanks to the efforts of Forterra, The Nature Consortium, EarthCorps, Seattle Goodwill, 70 schools, and over 20 other committed non-profits, these work parties have turned out close to 580,000 volunteer hours since the inception of the program in 2005. Through education, outreach and hands-on training we have seen a shift in Seattle’s awareness of invasive plants and the importance of urban forest conservation.

The role of Seattle Parks and Recreation is to provide planning, scientific direction and support to volunteers as well as tools and materials, work party advertisements, and assistance with grants. Parks staff ensure that these 800 work parties per year are done safely and in compliance with City best management practices and codes. Parks also performs work not appropriate for volunteers such as herbicide application, use of power equipment, and work in critical areas, such as steep slopes. Other City departments supporting the GSP are Seattle Public Utilities and the Office of Sustainability & Environment.

Figure 1. Green Seattle Partnership’s Structure

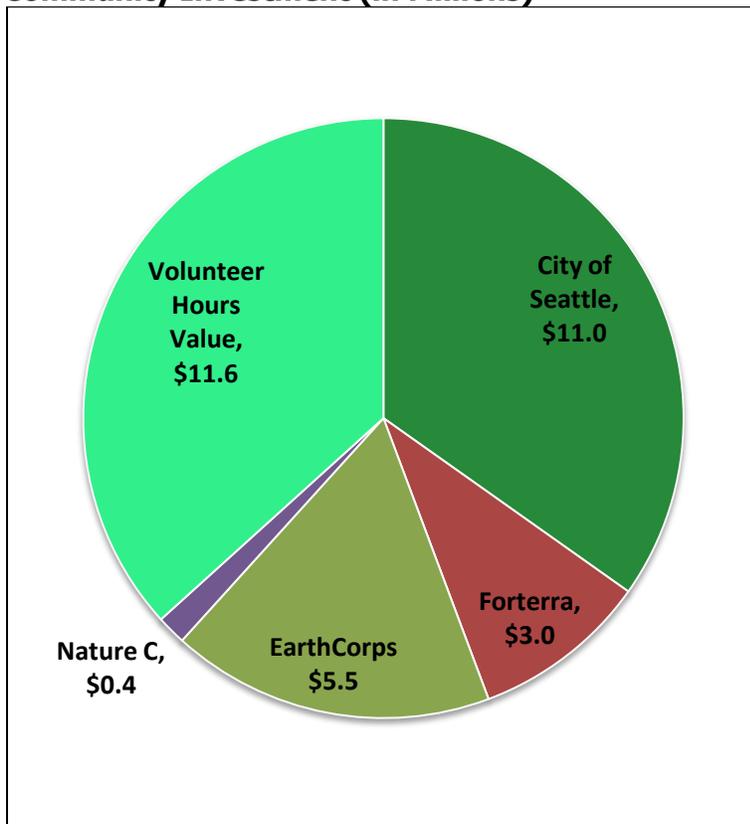


The City cannot accomplish the work alone –2 to 1 Community Match¹

Core to the GSP is the community match. The City’s investments in contractors, partners and the community have historically generated a 2 to 1 match in volunteer labor, donated materials, professional services, and/or cash donations from community members.

Over the past six years, the City has invested \$11 million from a combination of the Cumulative Reserve Subfund (CRS), the Pro Parks Levy, the 2008 Parks & Green Spaces Levy and SPU funding. This \$11 million has fueled an estimated \$20.5 million of in-kind support. Our non-profit partners go far beyond the contracted work the City pays them for. EarthCorps estimates their organization has contributed/matched \$5.5 million toward restoration efforts in Seattle’s natural areas (includes work done before the initiation of the Green Seattle Partnership). Nature Consortium estimates they have contributed/matched close to \$360K toward restoration efforts. Heron Habitat Helpers has raised over \$250K in the last 6 years to fund restoration efforts for Kiwanis Ravine, and our Forest Stewards have been awarded grants ranging from \$10K to \$250K for the restoration of their sites. Our most recent partner, Seattle Goodwill raised \$100K this year to help fund the Youth Green Corps, a summer youth employment program that focused on restoration work.

Figure 2. Actual City of Seattle Investment Compared to Contributed or Matched Community Investment (in Millions)²



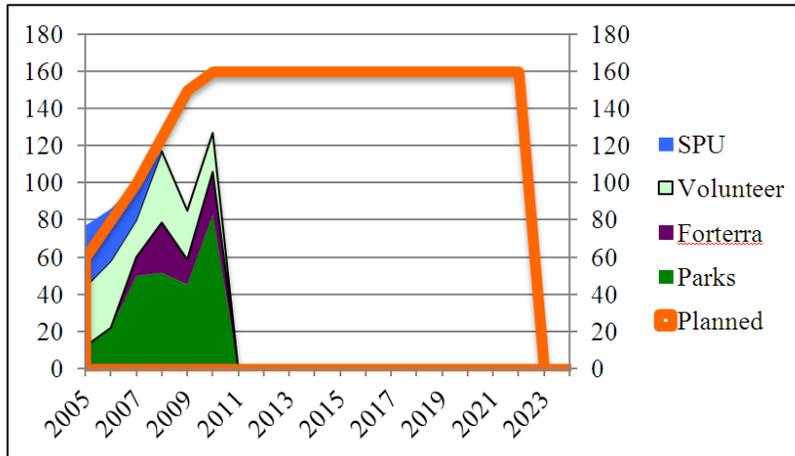
¹ It is likely the match is even higher than 2 to 1 given Forterra’s \$3.0 million only includes the initial GSP campaign and no corporate or government grant dollars, leveraged volunteer funds, volunteer time, etc.

² EarthCorps and Nature Consortium’s dollars include their lifetime contributions to Seattle’s urban forest restoration efforts that pre-date GSP in addition to cash contributions, in-kind contributions and unfunded professional services. Each volunteer hour is worth \$20 based on national standards making 580,000 volunteer hours worth \$11.6 million.

Operating and Maintenance (O&M) dollars

As of 2011, the GSP has accomplished 30% of the 2,500 acre project scope (Figure 3). As we restore acreage, O&M funding is needed to keep invasive weeds from returning. Maintenance of these forested areas is projected to cost \$500/acre, which is relatively inexpensive compared to the projected \$15,000/acre cost for a developed park maintained to industry standards. The cost to maintain the completed 2,500 acres is projected to be \$1.25 million dollars.

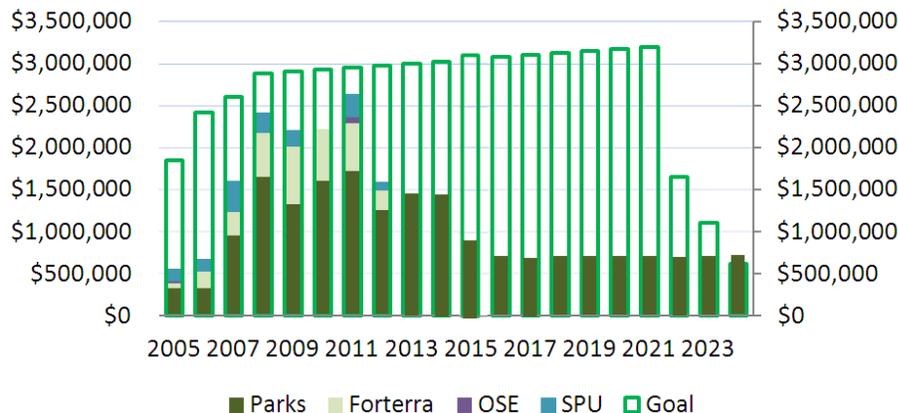
Figure 3. New Acres brought into Restoration by Partners compared to 20-year Plan



Funding Outlook

The GSP is below its restoration targets due to reduced funding levels. As Figure 4 demonstrates, the GSP 20-year Strategic Plan estimated City of Seattle funding to be at about \$3 million/year. The program has been funded with \$1.4 million since 2009. This level of funding is projected to continue through 2014 when support from the 2008 Levy ends. In 2015, the program will either need to seek alternative sources of funds or continue to be funded at a reduced level.

Figure 4. Actual and Projected Funding Compared to Original 20-year Plan



Forterra has reached its original intended goal to raise \$3.0 million for the Partnership by 2011, and in 2012 entered into a contractual phase with the City. In support of Forterra's work for the GSP, Parks will contract services with Forterra for \$145K in 2012 only (funding for this contract will be \$45K from Parks and \$100K from SPU). Forterra has committed to \$235K in leveraged value in 2012.

Future of Green Seattle Partnership

The GSP strategy of the community matching public funds with at a 2 to 1 level has been working very well and is funded to continue through 2014. Staff is exploring potential funding alternatives to be considered during the 2015-2016 budget process. These alternatives may include:

- Assess the services our forested parklands provide and consider integrating 'green infrastructure' into 'engineered infrastructure' to better serve a growing Seattle at less cost.
 - We should be able to answer questions such as 'does higher quality forested parkland result in quantifiable benefits in stormwater retention, air pollution and erosion control?'; 'is the cost of restoring and managing forested parkland less expensive than engineered solutions for the same benefit?'
- Consider other models from different cities, such as New York, that demonstrate the benefits of a non-profit foundation directed towards developing sources of funding for contracted restoration and helping fund partner programs which leverage resources for field work.
- Create developer permit offsets to restore forested area as a way to mitigate the impact of building at greater density.
 - South Lake Union created a tax improvement district to help offset the planned development.
- Explore alternate long-term public funding sources that include green infrastructure in the environmental category.
- Outreach to new private and non-profit partners to join the GSP.

Additional Information

Leah Tivoli, leah.tivoli@seattle.gov , 684-4108