



For Immediate Release

Contact:
Sandra Staples-Bortner
(Sandra@greatpeninsula.org)
360-373-3500

Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project:

Community group aims to help proposed conservation effort succeed

In response to a recently announced effort to conserve as much as 7,000 acres of forestland and 2 miles of shoreline along Port Gamble Bay in North Kitsap County, the Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project (GKFBP) has been formed. Through the experience and passion of its members, GKFBP hopes to foster community momentum by engaging, educating and creating enthusiasm for this ambitious effort.

GKFBP is a coalition of community and business organizations, including the Hansville Greenway Association, Hood Canal Coordinating Council, Hood Canal Environmental Council, Kitsap Audubon Society, Kitsap Citizens for Responsible Planning, Kitsap Conservation Voters, Kitsap Peninsula Visitors and Convention Bureau, North Kitsap Trails Association, Sustainable Kitsap, and West Sound Conservation Council.

Working in tandem with principal stakeholders—including landowner Pope Resources, Kitsap County, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, Cascade Land Conservancy, and Great Peninsula Conservancy—GKFBP will work to educate the community on the importance of the conservation effort while building public support and organizing opportunities for public involvement.

“Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project is an essential component to the success of the overall conservation effort,” said Sandra Staples-Bortner, Executive Director of Great Peninsula Conservancy. “A land conservation project of this scale has never before been attempted in Kitsap County. Public support will be imperative for success and Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project is in a unique position to create excitement within the community,” said Staples-Bortner, who serves as Chair of GKFBP.

“Of course, this effort wouldn’t be possible without the support of the land owner, Pope Resources. Their willingness to explore alternatives to developing the land has provided the people of Kitsap County with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to shape the future of our landscape.”

The 7,000 acres identified for conservation include four large tracts of land owned by Pope Resources, including those surrounding the communities of Port Gamble and Hansville. Shoreline areas, tidelands, wetlands, upland forests, and the Port Gamble Bay watershed are also targets.

The group sees this conservation effort as an opportunity to preserve significant areas of forestland and shoreline in Kitsap County while creating more options for outdoor recreation with public trails and

open space. The group believes this project, if successful, will provide large-scale, long-term community benefits, including:

- **Preservation of open space for public use and enjoyment.** The forests and waters of north Kitsap Peninsula attract outdoor enthusiasts from all over and support healthy activities such as walking, biking, bird watching, hiking, fishing, and kayaking, among others. These activities are not only fun, but some sustain cultural traditions for local tribes. Open space also encourages commercial enterprises, including the growth of eco-recreation services.
- **Protection of Port Gamble Bay and its watershed.** This environmentally sensitive estuary provides rich and productive habitats for a wide range of marine life, including clams, geoducks, salmon, and forage fish. Conservation of the Port Gamble Bay shoreline and upland forests will ensure a healthy future for its watershed.
- **Preservation of healthy Puget Sound shorelines.** Healthy shorelines are essential for a vigorous marine environment. For example, young salmon depend on near-shore shallows and eel grass to find food, evade predators and survive to adulthood. It's far easier to maintain shoreline habitat than try and restore it back to health once it has been damaged.
- **Protection of Kitsap's water quality and supply.** Virtually all of Kitsap County's fresh water—yes, including what comes out of the tap!—comes from rainfall. Mature forests and wetlands are ideal natural buffers for filtering and holding rainfall to replenish underground reserves. Preserving these areas is critical to protecting the public water supply!
- **Conservation of wildlife habitat.** A world of concrete and steel would be a drab place indeed. Not only do wildlife and native plants and trees provide our world with natural beauty, but declining numbers or disappearing species send a clear message as to the overall health of the environment that we depend on.
- **Providing economic benefits of a multi-use community forest and eco-recreation hub.** Sustainable forestry can create jobs and forest products, while helping achieve ecological goals and providing funds for long-term land stewardship. Businesses, merchants and the public ultimately gain when the community's quality of life and health-enhancing amenities make Kitsap more attractive to employers, employees, families and visitors.

ABOUT The Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project

Great Kitsap Forest & Bay Project (GKFBP) is a coalition of over a dozen community and stakeholder groups with the goal of conserving as much as 7,000 acres of privately-owned forestland and shoreline in Kitsap County. An option agreement signed by the landowner, Pope Resources, and Cascade Land Conservancy gives the public until December 2012 to make significant headway in purchasing the land.

The mission of GKFBP is to engage, educate, and create enthusiasm for the project among Kitsap County and beyond. The group expects to kick off a number of community engagement events late in 2011 and through 2012.

For more information on the group or ways to get involved, please visit www.GreatKitsapForestBay.org or email info@greatpeninsula.org.