



Snohomish County

Parks, Recreation & Tourism

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Dave Somers
County Executive

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Myra Barker
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Regarding: Paradise Valley Conservation Area

Myra,

Recently I learned that you determined that "agricultural use" on a portion of the Paradise Valley Conservation Area (PVCA) constituted a "conversion." I disagree with your determination. To the contrary, the no-till planting activities on the former Lloyd Family Farmstead are consistent with the purchase and sale agreement. Furthermore, the agriculture activities taking place are consistent with Davey and Elisabeth Lloyd's wishes.

They sold their property to Snohomish County Parks and Recreation with the understanding that the 31-acre portion of the original 663.31-acre acquisition was to become the *James and Eliza Lloyd Family Farmstead Park* upon their passing. One of the negotiated conditions of the sale of the property was that "the Lloyd Family Farmstead property be retained forever in its open space and **historical condition** and to prevent any use of the property that will significantly impair or interfere with the open space, wildlife habitat, and **historical values of the property.**"

The purchase of that property from the Lloyd Family in 2000 was the first land acquisition by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Funding Board with the objective of protecting Chinook salmon habitat. The land encompasses a significant portion of the Bear Creek headwaters. As you know, that stream supports Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye salmon, steelhead, resident and sea-run cutthroat trout, and a variety of other aquatic species.

Because this important watershed spans two counties, the acquisition effort was initiated by both Snohomish and King Counties in partnership with the Cascade Land Conservancy. In addition to the aforementioned Salmon Recovery financial support, additional funds for the original \$1.3 million purchase price came from the Snohomish County Conservation Futures Fund with matching funds from King County and the Martin Miller Fund. Snohomish County Parks and Recreation assumed the role of property manager and steward of the property.

The Lloyds agreed to a sale price that was significantly below the property's appraised value because Snohomish County Parks and Recreation established a "life estate" arrangement that allowed Davey and Elizabeth to live on their farmstead as long as they were able to do so, and they were pleased that, after their passing, their farm would become a park within a park.

Shortly after that property acquisition, I transferred from Snohomish County's Planning and Development Services Department to Parks where I could put my natural resources background to better use. In my new capacity as the Senior Naturalist for Parks, I was initially tasked with developing and writing the *Paradise Valley Conservation Area Adaptive Management Plan* published in June 2004.

During that four year period, I was also responsible for closing the site to public access during the management planning process, closing poorly planned trails created by a numerous irresponsible visitors, and conducting several well attended and sometimes contentious public meetings. In addition, I organized a natural resource survey of the PVCA; that inventory led to the decision to prevent public access to the property between Paradise Lake Road and Bear Creek until such time as a boardwalk or other non-intrusive public access system was installed. It also led to the system of trails that exist on site today that were designed by me and landscape architect Chris Mueller.

During the planning period, I spent many hours with Davey and Elizabeth at their farmstead home. Then, there were a few horses, chickens, cows and goats on the property. When I asked them about their views of "historical values of the property," they replied that they wanted Parks to keep the farm "alive" so people could actually experience a farm rather than simply turn the house into a static museum where people would look at old dusty pictures on the wall.

They loved to sit on their porch with their over-fed pug and enjoy seeing their few farm animals. While sitting with them, I learned that they never went to a grocery store as they grew most of what they ate on the ground between their house, barn and out-buildings. Davey also advised that he used to cut hay from the fields east of the house and Paradise Lake Road "pretty close to the creek." During those discussions, I made sure that the Davey and Elizabeth understood that the area between Paradise Lake Road and Bear Creek would be reverting back to natural condition and, also, it was unlikely that Parks would be able to keep farm animals. However, I told the Lloyds that Parks would do what it could to keep their Farmstead "alive."

Later, I continued my relationship with Davey and Elizabeth when they moved to an assisted living facility. After Elizabeth passed, I also spent time with Davey in the hospital before he passed. Because of the trust they had in me, along with Parks Property Manager (Ret.) Dianne Bailey, I was able to negotiate the purchase on an additional 120 acres from Davey before he passed. That acquisition expanded the Paradise Valley Conservation Area to 783.31 acres.

Time has passed. In 2017 Snohomish County Parks established a partnership with a non-profit corporation, Farmer Frog. That organization is tasked with keeping the "*Eliza Lloyd Family Farmstead Park*" "alive" and they are doing so by creating no-till gardens and demonstrating to school children and community members sustainable and organic food growing techniques. Davey and Elizabeth would be pleased.

In addition, Farmer Frog staff and volunteers are monitoring wildlife use on the "farmstead property" and have assumed from Parks the responsibility of maintaining the house and other structures on site. These actions are consistent with the original purchase agreement that was agreed to and recorded by all parties. The agriculture activities should not constitute a "conversion." I recommend that you reconsider your conversion determination.

Please contact me if you would like any additional background on the Paradise Valley Conservation Area.

Sincerely Yours



Thomas B. Murdoch
Senior Naturalist

CC:

Josh Lambert, Salmon Grants Manger
Recreation and Conservation Office

Tom Teigan, Director
Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism