



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No. 10c

ACTION ITEM

Date of Meeting March 12, 2024

DATE : February 21, 2024

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Cox, Director Aviation Environment & Sustainability
John Evered, Aviation Senior Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Introduction of Resolution No 3821: SEA Land Stewardship Plan and Tree Replacement Standards

Amount of this request: \$0

Total estimated project cost: \$0

ACTION REQUESTED

Request Commission introduction of Resolution No. 3821: a resolution of the SEA Land Stewardship Plan and approval of proposed SEA tree replacement standards. No funding is requested for this action at this time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Request seeks authorization to adopt the SEA Land Stewardship Plan (LSP) and SEA Tree Replacement Standards Policy Directive (STRS). Both the LSP and STRS are Strategies in the Environmental Land Stewardship Principles (Principles) Order 2023-10 approved by Commission on July 11, 2023. The Principles offer a value statement and guidance for decision-making that balance stewardship to improve the livability, accessibility, and environmental health of the region with Port operations and development requirements. The Principles emphasize comprehensiveness; capital process integration; consideration of equity and community partnerships; and holistic ecology practices.

The LSP is specific to SEA and establishes programmatic Objectives supported by measurable Goals and Actions that integrate and balance environmental land stewardship with airport operations, planning, and development. LSP Objectives support comprehensive application of the Principles using an approach tailored to SEA operations and land use. The Objectives include maintaining a current natural resource inventory; restoring forest and other habitat; connecting and expanding contiguous habitat; offsetting development and operational impacts to trees and other habitat; applying an equity lens; providing benefits in support of community equity; and supporting community partnerships that extend benefits into neighborhoods in the vicinity of SEA.

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The LSP also provides a baseline inventory of land use and land cover that is used to inform stewardship recommendations in partial achievement of the LSP Objectives. The LSP also assesses site resources and opportunities in site-specific plans that can be used to inform capital projects by identifying applicable regulatory, permitting and mitigation requirements; identify potential locations for wetland mitigation and tree replacement; and supporting capital project planning by informing preliminary scoping, design and cost estimates.

Pursuant to the Principles and the LSP, tree replacement standards are being adopted for SEA Airport Activity Area (AAA), as defined in the adopted (Resolution 3741) 2018 Port-SeaTac Interlocal Agreement and administered by the Airport Building Department. Port-owned property outside the AAA is subject to tree replacement standards established by the local jurisdictions in which the properties are located. Currently certain Port-owned property within the SEA AAA airport boundary is not subject to City of SeaTac tree replacement standards. The tree replacement standards (i) exceed the minimum regulatory requirements of our neighboring jurisdictions; (ii) ensure continued compliance with city, state, and federal development standards for all operations and development activities; and (iii) ensure development and other land use projects replace cleared trees and identify opportunities for additional types of beneficial habitat such as pollinator meadows and wetlands.

JUSTIFICATION

The Port operates essential transportation infrastructure to ensure the efficient movement of people and goods in the region and must utilize its land for development and operations, which can include tree removal. At the same time, the Port recognizes the importance of balancing its operations and development with responsible use of economic, community, and natural resources.

The Port understands that trees, forest and other habitat provide valuable benefits to the public and the environment. The Port continually strives to go beyond minimum regulatory requirements to address environmental justice, improve environmental health, increase climate resilience, and improve habitat for fish and wildlife.

The LSP and STRS, in line with the Port Equity Policy, will ensure in part that SEA responsibly stewards its economic, community, and environmental resources to further improve the livability, accessibility, and environmental health of the region.

DETAILS

To support implementation of actions to achieve objectives and goals, the LSP provides planning-level information to inform decision-making for both Land Stewardship Program activities and capital project development. Specifically, the LSP includes:

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- 1) *Baseline inventory.* Provides current landscape-scale and site-specific current information on operational restrictions, existing/planned development; equity attributes; and natural resources, including regulated stream, wetlands and buffers as wells as land (tree) cover.
- 2) *Stewardship recommendations.* Management Units demarcated based on common planning and resource attributes are categorized into management recommendations. Vegetation management in operational areas are highly restricted, and third-party entities are responsible for maintaining ground lease sites. Stewardship is not recommended for these areas. Stewardship at development sites focus on public safety, including cleaning up illegal dumping; pruning vegetation to mitigate hazards to infrastructure (buildings) and human safety (publicly accessible areas; roadways); security; and operational safety (flight corridor safety; wildlife hazard management).

Stewardship activities in ecological Management Units focus on improving forest health through long-term stewardship of existing mitigation; construction of new wetland mitigation to offset development impacts; and forest stewardship, including voluntary actions and meeting regulatory requirements for tree replacement.

- 3) *Site-specific stewardship potential.* Site-specific plans are created summarizing site condition and evaluating the extent and health of trees, forest, and other habitat within each Management Unit. That information is used to evaluate potential for stewardship and recommend specific actions for tree planting, tree protection, and restoration of invasive areas. Evaluations also provide planning level information for capital projects to identify applicable regulatory, permitting and mitigation requirements; identify potential locations for wetland mitigation and tree replacement; and inform preliminary scoping, design and cost estimates.
- 4) *Site Prioritization.* Prioritize ecological sites for stewardship based on relative potential for ecological lift and increased benefits to community equity. Prioritization is based on indexing for equity and ecological attributes. Equity criteria include the Port equity index; urban heat island effects; and improving aesthetic of areas that are physically and/or visually accessible to the public. Ecological factors include potential for expanding contiguous habitat, connecting existing isolated habitat, and restoring fish passage.

Because most of SEA's tree canopy is managed in large tracts of open space that is predominantly forested, the SEA Tree Replacement Standards apply a holistic ecological approach to tree replacement that emphasizes improving forest health by increasing canopy, protecting existing trees from invasive threats, and restoring invasive areas to native vegetation. The standards acknowledge the intensive land use the airport and requires retention of existing trees on developing site to the extent practicable.

Each tree removed will be replaced with four "stewardship credits". This credit-based approach include the following actions that can generate "replacement credits" by enhancing forest health:

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- 1) Plant new trees to increase canopy. (1 tree planted = 1 credit)
- 2) Protect one existing tree from invasive threats to its life and vigor. (1 tree protected = 1 credit)
- 3) Clear invasive species and restore native understory. (200 square feet restored = 1 credit)

These actions combined will increase overall canopy; ensure canopy is not lost due to invasive threats; and improve structural and species diversity of restored areas.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

The recommended alternative is required by Commission Order to adopt Environmental Land Stewardship Principles so is required to be implemented. A range of ancillary factors are considered for the alternatives analysis.

Alternative 1 – Do not adopt SEA Land Stewardship Plan and SEA Tree Replacement Standards

Pros:

- (1) Does not increase operational and capital effort and costs.

Cons:

- (1) Does not achieve conditions of the Commission Order to adopt Environmental Land Stewardship Principles.
- (2) Does not support Port Mission and Values to responsibly steward resources and improve regional quality of life.
- (3) Does not balance SEA operations and development with environmental stewardship to further improve the livability, accessibility, and environmental health of the region.
- (4) Does not enable a programmatic and comprehensive approach to SEA Land Stewardship.
- (5) Does not establish a repeatable standard for avoiding and offsetting tree clearing impacts, instead relying on *ad hoc* outcomes that vary across projects and activities, which increases uncertainty and risk for projects and initiatives.

This is not the recommended alternative.

Alternative 2 – Adopt the SEA Land Stewardship Plan and adopt SEA Tree Replacement Standards

Pros:

- (1) Achieves conditions of the Commission Order to adopt Environmental Land Stewardship Principles.
- (2) Supports Port Mission and Values to responsibly steward resources and improve regional quality of life.
- (3) Does not balance SEA operations and development with environmental stewardship to further improve the livability, accessibility, and environmental health of the region.
- (4) Enables for a programmatic and comprehensive approach to SEA Land Stewardship.
- (5) Establishes a repeatable standard for avoiding and offsetting tree clearing impacts, which increases certainty and reduces risk for projects and initiatives.

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Cons:

- (1) May increase operational and capital costs.

This is the recommended alternative.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

- (1) Resolution No. 3821
 - Exhibit A: SEA Tree Replacement Standards
 - Exhibit B: SEA Land Stewardship Plan (attachment 1)
- (2) Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

February 20, 2024 – Briefed the Sustainability, Environment, and Climate Committee (SEAC) Committee on SEA Tree Replacement Standards and SEA Land Stewardship Plan.

February 16, 2024 – Briefed Commissioner Hasegawa on SEA Tree Replacement Standards and SEA Land Stewardship Plan.

November 6, 2023 – The Commission Sustainability, Environment, and Climate Committee (SEAC) Committee received a briefing on SEA Tree Replacement Standards and SEA Land Stewardship Plan.

July 27, 2023 – The Commission authorized an Order to implement the Port-wide Environmental Land Stewardship Principles and Strategies.

February 21, 2023 – The Commission Sustainability, Environment, and Climate Committee (SEAC) received a briefing on the Port-wide Environmental Land Stewardship Principles and Strategies.