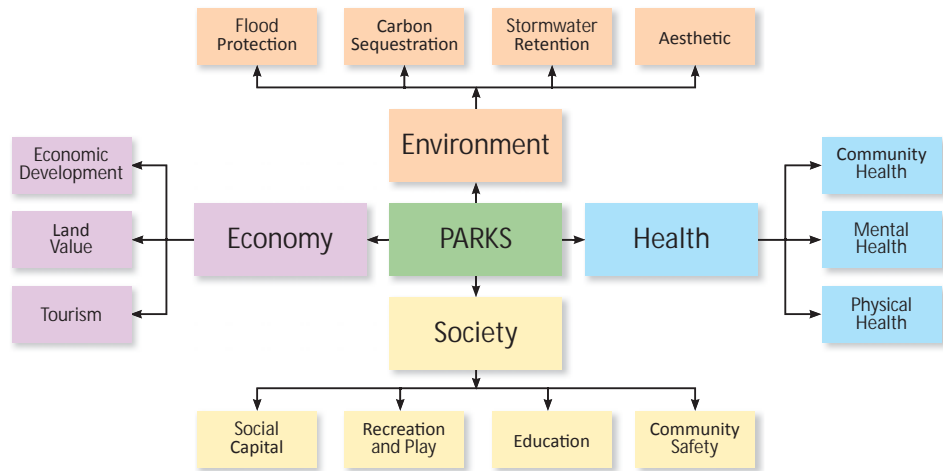


Park System Benefits provided to People



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Park System Benefits at a Glance

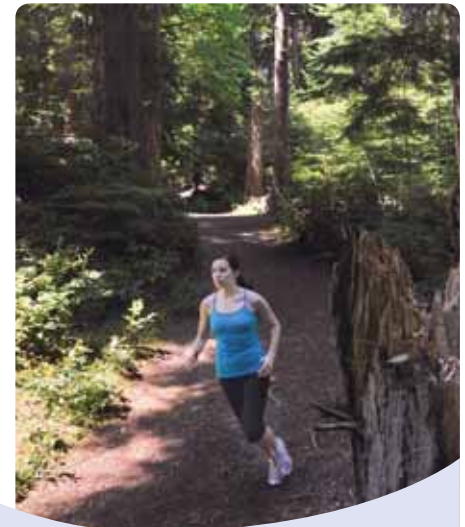
Most people have an intrinsic understanding that parks add value to the quality of life in our community. What most may not consider, however, are the many **economic benefits** parks and recreation programs provide the community annually through a myriad of health, social, physical and environmental services. Parks are a catalyst to spending and tourism and offer a solid return on the investment of taxes.

PARK SYSTEM BENEFIT formulas

Why are parks imperative to a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community?

By 2030, over 70 percent of the world's population is projected to reside in cities and towns. Urban park systems are critical to the health and well-being of residents. Although many of the benefits of park services have not been quantified, emerging evidence exists regarding the economic value of park district and visitor spending, benefits of ecosystems to our physical environment and reduction in health care costs. Even though strong correlations between use of parks and reductions in sickness, stress, and depression are recorded, no dollar amounts have been attached to value these factors.⁸ However, some quantifiable values are available for a park ecosystem's ability to combat flooding, moderate heat, increase opportunities for outdoor physical activities, sustain clean air and build social cohesion.¹

Since humans consume 40 percent of the planet's resources, affecting ecosystem operations and our own health, we must preserve these resources for future generations. Quantifying the economic returns these resources provide helps us value them in the scope of today's decision-making.² *See the attached chart of parks benefits on page 3.*



Want to learn more? For the full report, visit: MetroParksTacoma.org/Conservation



Did You Know?

✓ Average spending by city residents on park attractions and events, is \$13.76 per visit. Community parks generated more than 5,500 visits per summer during a recent study, contributing \$8.70 to the local economy per visit.¹¹

✓ Average spending by non-residents who come into urban cores and utilize park resources is more than three times what residents spend in the city; about \$28 per visit.¹²

✓ For every dollar spent by the park district in the community, the local economy benefits exponentially. Most public resources are spent locally (up to 75 percent, based on vendor lists and contracts). In 2009, Metro Parks' local economic impact was 128 percent of its expenditure budget; a return of \$14 million for the \$52 million expended.¹³



✓ Local parks with an average impact radius of two blocks returned an average of \$104,983 in incremental property tax increase due to higher property values. The average property tax incremental increase related to larger parks (five-block radius) was found to be \$340,536.¹⁴

✓ A 2007 National Center for Health Statistics study reports that 67 percent of adults are overweight or obese. Approximately 30 percent of adults who meet the national fitness standards for exercise do so by utilizing park settings.³ Furthermore, adults who regularly exercise in parks save an average of \$351 in medical costs per year and that savings increases to \$702 per year for adults over the age of 65.⁴

✓ The presence of parks and outdoor amenities increases activity.⁵ For every dollar invested in outdoor health activities at natural sites, visitors enjoyed \$4.32 to \$28.77 in benefits from reduced health care costs, skill development and reductions in antisocial behaviors.⁶

✓ Volunteer hours of service can be calculated at the Independent Sector rate of \$21.36 per year.⁹ These contributions to parks tend to be significant both to the operation of the park system and the health and social well-being of the volunteer.

✓ Cash donations given to park systems transfer discretionary personal income into public benefit, creating social capital.

✓ The value of public education in Washington State is \$4.56 per pupil per hour.¹⁰ Park systems provide formal tours and classes, as well as informal educational opportunities in outdoor classrooms and community facilities.

✓ For every dollar spent on restoration of habitat in the Puget Sound basin, there is a \$6 rate of return in environmental benefits.¹⁵

✓ Park land protects our streams and rivers from excess runoff that cause flooding and erosion. Developed watersheds increase the amount of runoff reaching streams and rivers from 15 percent to up to 70 percent.¹⁶

✓ For every acre of forested land, an average level of pollution removal is worth \$300 per year.¹⁷

✓ The Earth Economics study (pp. 54-56) provides a low and high range of values for known environmental benefits of each land cover type based on published research. Actual properties were evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If the ecosystem was of poor or degraded quality, a reduction factor was used: .8 (fair), .5 (poor) and .3 (dysfunctional). Park restoration efforts can retain or realize the full benefits of the ecosystem.

✓ *The ecosystem managed by Metro Parks Tacoma returns an average of \$10,198,382 (low of \$4 million, high of \$16 million) in recorded environmental, social and recreational benefits annually.*

Type	Ecosystem Benefits	Average Value per Acre per Year	MPT Acreage by Classification
Beach	Recreational and disturbance regulation	\$49,748.08	19.48
Forest	Recreational, biological, disturbance regulation, climate regulation, habitat, nutrient, pollination, soil erosion, water regulation, water supply, waste treatment	\$5,444.07	654.00
Grassland	Biological, food, climate, pollination, soil, waste treatment and water regulation benefits	\$424.00	49.78
Lake/River	Recreational, gas, climate and water regulation	\$16,260.52	25.14
Marine	Recreational, climate, habitat, storm protection, and water supply	\$2,344.01	30.86
Wetland Forest	Biological, food production, climate, nutrient, raw materials	\$182.62	58.64
Shrub/Scrub	Recreational, climate, habitat, education	\$1,511.44	96.74
Urban Greenspace	Recreational, climate, water regulation	\$3,250.77	630.70
Evergreen Forest	Recreational, disturbance regulation, climate, habitat, nutrient, raw materials, soil erosion control, and water supply	\$2,165.05	936.68
Wetland	Recreational, disturbance regulation, climate, habitat, nutrient, raw materials, storm protection, waste treatment, water regulation, and water supply	\$72,907.67	11.95