URBAN RECREATION AREAS IN SMALL FORESTS

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ABSTRACT

Application of the principle of multiple-use forestry through a special use permit to a city recreation department will allow supervised use of the area. Owner is protected economically and legally while he maintains normal forestry activities.

TEXT

Groups of young people need peaceful, quiet, attractive, accessible, nearby areas for recreation and education. Forest areas for these purposes are scarce. A city park, a playground, or even a heavily-used river bank boat landing are not substitutes for a fragrant, shady forest where the primary sounds are the murmuring brook, a singing thrush and the howl of a coyote.

Discussions and inspections by city recreation people indicate that they will assume responsibility to develop and operate a forest recreation area that is easily accessible, comfortably organized, and well-supervised. The supervision can be, for example, by City or County Parks and Recreation Departments or by educational groups such as YMCA, Scouts, 4-H, Church personnel, and others.

An urban forestry development is shown in the attached sketch. The area is two miles outside the city limits of twin
cities (Longview and Kelso Washington) with a present total population of 45,000. The site is serviced by a city water system which already is used by adjacent local residents. The proposed recreation site has access to several small streams plus the 50-foot wide creek that is shown in the sketch. The creek each year has spawning Columbia River salmon and is open and used by trout fishermen.

Complementing the ten acre proposed recreation area, the land west of the creek is a forest of 70 acres with good possibilities for hiking trails and wildlife observation (deer, elk, rabbits, squirrels, coyotes, various song birds and game birds).

The Parks and Recreation people of the city of Longview are working with the landowner-forester on the plans for development. These include, first of all, a special-use permit for the city for a 20-year period and the right of first refusal, with the taxes and developmental expenses to be paid by the city. The development needed includes road and trail construction and maintenance, water and sewer installation, building location and construction; hazard control which includes removal of dangerous forest trees and snags, briar removal, isolation of hazardous terrain such as cliffs, dangerous rapids, and water holes in the creek.

The expenses to be assumed by the city include taxes for the developed area (not including the main part of the forest), insurance (liability, fire), legal services of the installation, surveys, publicity, and general administration.

Furthermore, the city will be responsible for road and trail costs, signs and instructions, a footbridge across the creek, construction of an entry station, meeting room, washroom, toilets and showers, and septic facilities.

A user-fee structure may include a fee for organized groups of a specific number of participants and, when applicable, free use for single users or for special arrangements.

Finally, what does the landowner-forester receive from this proposition? As a forester, he views with pleasure the increase in multiple-use of his forest area. The possible benefits to his home community appear to be considerable. It appears that monetary benefits are enhanced; the city pays the annual taxes, the construction process will provide merchantable forest products for sale by the forest owner, and the entire forest receives favorable publicity in the community which will enhance future marketability of both products and land.
The forest land remains the property of the owners and their heirs while contributing to community welfare in a broad scope without expense to the owners.

A final word: This area is the last easily accessible and usable area where both sides of Coal Creek can contribute to beneficial use by the public. Furthermore, with the increase in population and the expansion of urbanization, areas such as this may soon be, or already are, of the historical past.

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(MAP ATTACHED)