



# MEMORANDUM

Date: March 3, 2008

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Terry Smith, Assistant Director  
Parks & Community Services

Subject: TRACKS Outdoor Initiative Presentation  
(*Informational – no Board action requested*)

At the Tuesday, March 11, 2008 Parks & Community Services Board meeting, we will be presenting information about Outdoor TRACKS. This new initiative was developed to promote participation in outdoor activities, connect residents to our natural environment and cultivate individual and community stewardship.

Prior to implementation of the initiative, a staff team spent over a year researching and evaluating a variety of local, regional and national outdoor program models. During this development process the team attended a presentation in Seattle by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*. This event provided additional incentive and value to the development of the TRACKS mission and guiding principles. In the Spring of 2007 Bellevue Parks & Community Services was selected and received a grant from the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) to operate a pilot program called Teens Outside. This pilot program provided us with an opportunity to implement and test the philosophy and standards of TRACKS through a partnership with the Bellevue Community College Outdoor Leadership program.

One of the key components of TRACKS is the set of standards that can be used and implemented by a variety of activities, contractors and partners. In addition to the development of a few new activities, we have been working to integrate these standards into the many outdoor activities we offer alone and/or with contractors or partners such as Cascade Canoe and Kayak (Enatai Boathouse), Min-Mountain (climbing wall), Andrews Consulting, Ltd. (challenge course), Pacific Science Center, Bellevue Community College and others.

The ultimate goal of TRACKS is to get people outside. As they enjoy outdoor activities on trails and in parks and open spaces, residents will be able to improve their physical and mental health. Youth and teens participating in TRACKS activities will have fun, gain activity skills, knowledge, and a greater understanding of the value and benefit of our natural environment. We'll provide activities and events for the entire family, including increased opportunities to volunteer and be more engaged in caring for our environment.

As TRACKS grows, we plan to create additional partnerships with businesses and organizations to offer even more opportunities and information. We hope that Bellevue residents will find an outdoor activity or adventure that can keep them "on track" to better health--and the health of our environment.



## Outdoor **TRACKS**

### **Mission:**

*Promote participation in outdoor activities; connect residents to nature; cultivate individual and community stewardship.*

### **Vision:**

*All our residents are connected to nature through participation in outdoor activities and are committed to the preservation of our natural environment.*

### **Guiding Principles:**

1. Provide and facilitate participation in outdoor activities.
2. Reduce barriers that prevent/impact participation in outdoor activities.
3. Support outdoor education, stewardship and conservation (that promotes environmental appreciation rather than exploitation).
4. Foster volunteerism (by providing opportunities for residents to give back to the community and our natural environment).
5. Emphasis skill competencies (allowing individuals and groups to safely participate in outdoor/adventure activities).
6. Promote leadership knowledge and training.
7. Be innovative in our programming (through frequent evaluation and keeping current on adventure recreation trends and opportunities).
8. Utilize resources efficiently (through partnerships with other departments, public agencies, private agencies and businesses).

### **TRACKS Standards:**

- \* **Teaching** - participants will learn skills to help them recreate on their own;
- \* **Recreation** - provides a healthy option to enhance fitness and play;
- \* **Adventure** - offers opportunities for active, experiential learning;
- \* **Competency** - helps build skill mastery;
- \* **Knowledge of the natural environment** - promotes understanding of nature;
- \* **Stewardship** - encourages/creates opportunities for volunteer service.