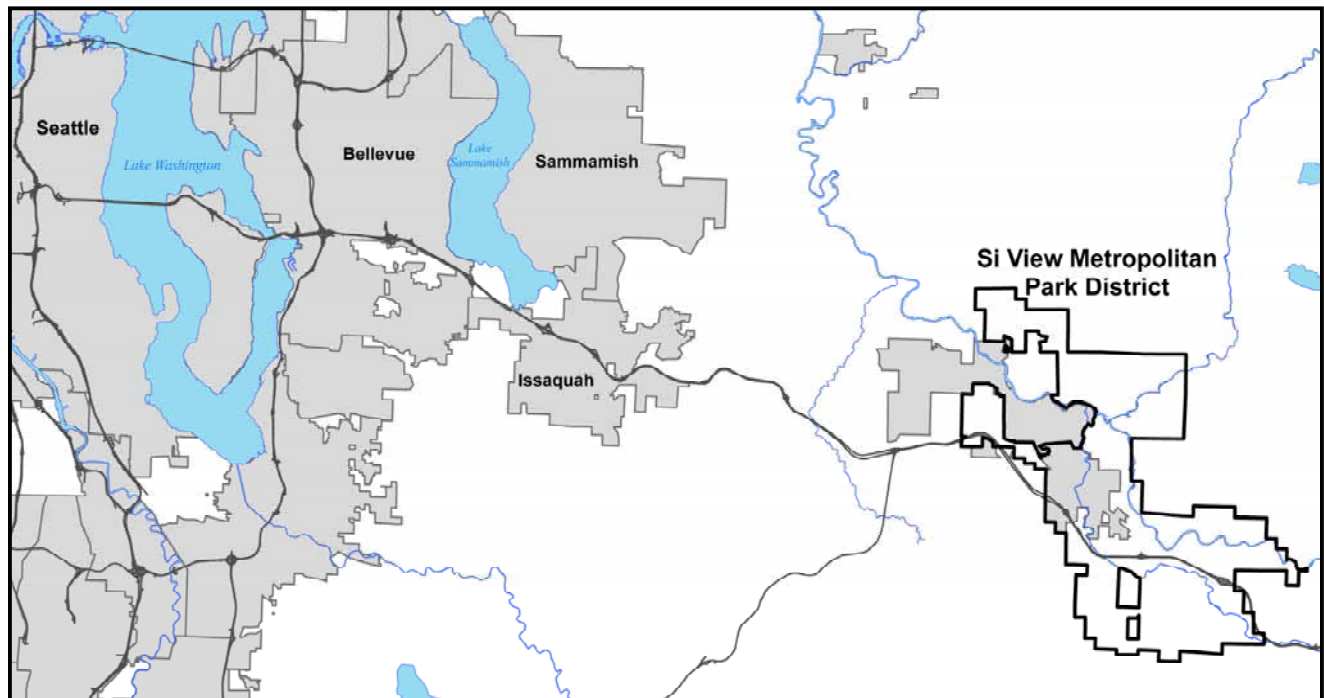




SECTION 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

As shown below in Figure 2.1, the District is located in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley, in east King County in the last river town before Snoqualmie Pass. Interstate 90 travels east and west through the District, providing a direct and easy linkage to Snoqualmie Pass and Cle Elum in the east and the Seattle metropolitan area in the west.



The District covers approximately 17,310 acres or 27 square miles, including the City of North Bend (1,897 acres) and Fire District No. 38, in unincorporated King County (15,413 acres). The District and the Upper Snoqualmie Valley are rich in natural resources and recreation opportunities including the Mount-Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, the Snoqualmie Pass ski area, Rattlesnake Mountain and Snoqualmie Falls.

Although the District is located on the state's major east-west highway corridor, it is surrounded by the Cascade Mountains to the east. These mountains, including county, state and local wilderness areas provide a vast number of recreation opportunities to Snoqualmie Valley residents and visitors to the area. Numerous agencies including the Mountains to Sound Greenway are working to protect and preserve this land for future generations. These efforts along with the regulations of the Growth Management Act, place restrictions on the future growth of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley. In addition, these restrictions have a corresponding impact on the growth of the District's tax base.



HISTORY*

Humans first came to the Snoqualmie Valley about 5,000 years ago after the glaciers receded. The glaciers left a fertile plain and a magnificent 300 foot waterfall. The river had been moved from its ancient bed by the glacier and could not seek its natural level because of the bedrock encountered at the lip of what is now known as Snoqualmie Falls. Mountain goats were plentiful on the crags; deer, edible bulbs, bracken fern roots and berries were abundant on the prairie. Without salmon there was little to draw a permanent year-round population above the falls, but as trade between the Native Americans on the coast and those inland increased, the prairie of the Upper Snoqualmie became a traditional seasonal rendezvous area.

The Valley was originally settled by members of the Snoqualmie Tribe. They christened the Valley "Snoqualmie," which in their native tongue means valley of the moon. In the 1850's white settlers began to realize the value of the land for both agricultural subsistence and small scale timber operations and began moving to the Valley.

By 1877 there were twelve logging operations on the Snoqualmie River. Some logs were floated over the falls and down-river to Everett and the Sound. By 1886, logging camps on the river employed 140 men and sent millions of board feet of logs down stream.

Three Puget Sound partners formed the Hop Growers Association in 1882. They purchased land and soon expanded to over 1,500 acres, about 900 of them in hops. The Snoqualmie Hop Farm was billed as "the largest Hop Ranch in the World," and was headquartered at Meadowbrook Farm. Hop growing flourished for about a dozen years, and then world market conditions and aphid attacks brought an abrupt decline into the late 1890's.

By 1889, Puget Sound entrepreneurs, tired of railroad barons bypassing Seattle, had funded and built their own railroad, the Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern Railroad, into the Upper Valley in a premature attempt to cross the Cascade mountains. This opened up the agricultural and timber resources to the markets of the world, and began the influx of tourists to the Snoqualmie Valley.

With the railroad came a feverish speculation in Upper Valley land. The Town of North Bend was platted originally as "Snoqualmie Prairie", and Snoqualmie was platted in August of 1889 as "Snoqualmie Falls" by Seattle interests. In the late 1890's a local civil engineer built the underground power plant at Snoqualmie Falls - which produced both electricity and local jobs. The original generators are still spinning today. A small company town, including a railroad depot, grew at the Falls to house workers. Expansion in 1911 added a second power house around the corner below the Falls.

In 1917 the second all-electric lumber mill in the nation opened at the new company town of Snoqualmie Falls, built across the river from Snoqualmie. The economy of the Valley was given a significant and stable employment base. As World War I funneled mill workers away, they were replaced by soldiers to keep essential wood products, which included spruce for airplanes, in production.



The building boom in Snoqualmie lasted until the Great Depression, which hit bottom in the Upper Valley in 1932. Salaries and wages fell, but the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Company mill continued to produce throughout the hard times. World War II and the post-war boom increased the lumber requirements of the nation but also increased personal mobility.

The Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) was designed to coordinate the programs of various federal agencies providing work to the unemployed during the Great Depression. Created under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, the guiding principal was that gainful employment on public projects was preferable to the acceptance of doles in terms of worker self-respect, the conservation of skills and solid economic recovery.

In King County, the WPA left a lasting legacy. With the establishment of the King County parks system in 1935, individual communities, the County and the WPA formed an effective public-private partnership. This partnership resulted in the acquisition and improvement of at least fifteen park sites and the construction of eight major recreational facilities, including the Si View Community Center and Pool in 1938.

Financing for the Si View Community Center and Pool project was worked out with the WPA, with 25% of the monies coming from the county and approximately 75% from WPA. Once built, the Si View Community Center was managed locally and served as it does today as the social hub of the community.

In the summer of 1941, the look of downtown North Bend changed suddenly with the completion of the Cross-State Highway, the forerunner of Interstate 90. Over the next several decades, North Bend's cafes and drive-in restaurants, motels, gas stations and garages, spread further and further to the east along the highway. By night, neon lights illuminated the busy thoroughfare, the only central business district remaining on the cross-state corridor.

Nonetheless, the inevitable bypass eventually came to be. By the early 1980s, I-90 bypassed the City of North Bend a half-mile to the south, leaving downtown North Bend to re-invent itself once again as an attraction worth stopping for. The Snoqualmie Valley and North Bend remain a tourist destination and a stop-over point for travelers on I-90.

**Source: A Short History of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley, Dave Battey*

PARK DISTRICT FORMATION

The City of North Bend and King County initiated the proposal to form the Si View Metropolitan Park District (King County Ordinance No. 14505 and City of North Bend Resolution 900) in October of 2002. The City and County worked collaboratively to find a solution to ensure the continuing operation of the Si View Community Center, Park and Pool. At the time, King County lacked the financial resources to continue to own and operate the Si View facilities, thus, without the District these facilities would have been closed. The solution mutually preferred by the County and the City was the creation of a Metropolitan Park District



that would equitably distribute the financial burden of operating the Si View facilities to all users (i.e., both County and City residents in the area).

The Si View Metropolitan Park District was incorporated on February 4, 2003 by a 71% majority vote of the community in a special election. At the same time, five Commissioners were elected and now serve as the governing body of the District. Commissioners serve staggered six-year terms.

The District includes the entirety of the City of North Bend and the unincorporated County lands located within the boundaries of King County Fire District No. 38 (except for that portion of the Fire District which is situated within the borders of the City of Snoqualmie). The Si View Community Center, Park and Pool serve as the centerpiece for the District. These facilities, which are 10.7 acres in size, are located within the City of North Bend and are the only such regional recreational facilities in the Snoqualmie Valley.

The District began offering limited park and recreation services in the summer of 2003 and moved to a full-scale park and recreation operation in the summer of 2004. The Si View Community Center, Park and Pool serve as the social, educational and cultural center of the community. Examples of current uses include: soccer, baseball, softball, tennis, gymnastics, day camp, fitness and aerobics classes, family (parent-child; adults; seniors) playground groups and swimming (private lessons, public swim, swim team). The facility also serves as a rental space hosting local PTA auctions, weddings, anniversaries, church groups and public and private meetings. In 2005 with the expansion of recreation programs, the District began to offer programs at other locations in the area including Two Rivers School, Meadowbrook Farm and the Mt. Si Senior Center.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Forecasts from the Puget Sound Regional Council up to the year 2030 indicate that King County and the region will continue to grow at a significant and stable rate. Specific forecasts for the Upper Snoqualmie Valley indicate a far more rapid growth – from a population of 13,851 in 2000 to a population of 16,500 in 2030, or a growth rate of 19% over the next three decades. Table 2.1 provides population data for the Snoqualmie Valley and the Upper Snoqualmie Valley.

TABLE 2.1 – Population of Snoqualmie Valley

Jurisdiction	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2030 Estimate	Change 1990-2000	% Change 1990-2000
Snoqualmie Valley	17,480	25,847	33,702	41,042	7,855	30.4%
Upper Snoqualmie Valley	8,885	11,285	13,851	16,500	2,649	19.1%

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, December 2003



The total population of the Si View Metropolitan Park District is estimated to be 14,000 residents. This is based on 2000 Census statistics for the Upper Snoqualmie Valley. Exact population statistics for the District have not been compiled.

Table 2.2 provides population data for the incorporated cities that comprise the Snoqualmie Valley. The District includes the entirety of the City of North Bend. The City of Snoqualmie lies to the west of the District on the I-90 corridor. Recent annexations led to the development of Snoqualmie Ridge, which more than doubled the population of the City of Snoqualmie from 2000 to 2004.

TABLE 2.2 – Population of Snoqualmie Valley Cities

Jurisdiction	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2004 Pop.	Change 1990-2000	% Change 1990-2000
North Bend	1,701	2,578	4,746	4,660	2,168	84.1%
Snoqualmie	1,370	1,546	1,631	5,110	85	5.5%

Source: 2004 King County Annual Growth Report and 2000 Census.

The City of North Bend’s population data from the 2000 Census is used in the following sections in lieu of District-specific data. The City’s data is considered to be representative of the District’s population. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the age range for the residents of North Bend. The median age of the population is 34.5 with 71% of the population being under the age of 45.

Table 2.3 – North Bend Age Distribution

Age Range	Under Age 5	Age 5-17	Age 18-64	Over Age 65	Total
Total	278	820	2,948	504	4,746
% of Total	10%	17%	62%	11%	

Source: 2000 Census.

Ninety-two percent of the population of the City of North Bend is white and nearly 70% of the households in the City are family households. The average household size within the Upper Snoqualmie Valley is expected to drop from an average of 2.68 in 2000, to 2.45 in 2010, 2.38 in 2020 and 2.34 in 2030. (2000 Census and Puget Sound Regional Council, 2003.)

WILDLIFE HABITAT

While the topography of the District is primarily a flat plateau of the Upper Snoqualmie River Valley, the District includes wooded landscapes, the Snoqualmie River system, and slopes of nearby mountains. The natural boundaries of the District include the southwestern forestland slopes of Rattlesnake Ridge, the eastern boundary is forestland of the Western Cascades and the northern boundary encompasses mostly forest and agricultural land with its most significant feature, Mount Si, at 3,400 ft. elevation.



Historically, the Upper Snoqualmie Valley was covered in coniferous forest, except where fire, occupation by native peoples, talus slopes, wetlands or rivers and streams provided breaks. The area falls within the *Tsuga heterophylla* zone and was dominated by conifers such as Western hemlock, douglas fir and western red cedar. The important deciduous tree was red alder and to a lesser extent big leaf maple. The understory varied with the soil type and moisture. Vine maple, oceanspray, salal, snowberry, Oregon grape and huckleberries would have been common understory shrubs. Sword fern would have been a common herb layer depending on moisture.

Today, the forested habitats in the District have been highly fragmented by development. Because the District is surrounded by forestland, however, most of these typical species still remain in the area.

Wildlife include the more common forest species such as elk, deer, black bear, cougar, bobcat, mountain beaver, weasel, deer mice and other rodent species, shrews and bats. Many of the larger mammals use the forest intermittently. Bird species include raptors, owls and smaller forest-loving species. Salamanders and some frogs occupy the forests as well. Wildlife that would have been more common in the past include wolf, marten and fisher.

A portion of the District is located on the floodplains of the South Fork and the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River. Prior to the Euro-American settlement, the rivers would have meandered across the flood plain creating a mosaic of riparian forest and wetland communities.

Riparian forests have been impacted by development in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley including levy construction and are largely absent from this area of the District. Some examples of this forest still exist, however, at Meadowbrook Farm, Tollgate Farm and some portions of the South Fork and its tributaries. Riparian forest is much more common along the rivers in the Three Forks Natural Area and the Middle Fork Natural Area.

Riparian forests are dominated by black cottonwood, red alder, big leaf maple and willow. Sitka spruce and western red cedar may have been much more common in the past. Understory vegetation included salmonberry, red osier dogwood and invasive Himalayan blackberry. Herbaceous vegetation is common and skunk cabbage occurs in wetter depressions. Many species use these riparian forests for cover, foraging and breeding. Elk, deer, river otter, mink and beaver most commonly use this habitat type. Cougar, black bear and bobcat pass through the riparian forests.

Many wetlands that were not filled or drained during the development of the City of North Bend have been impacted by agriculture developed in the floodplain. Cattle grazing and subsequent invasion by non-native species have had the greatest impact after draining and filling. Dikes along the rivers have isolated many wetlands from seasonal flooding and undoubtedly hastened the change in native plant species composition.

In spite of the many impacts, wetlands continue to provide habitat and flood control benefits. Many animal species use these wetlands for all or part of their lives. The more structurally diverse wetlands (i.e., more tree and shrub cover) provide the most optimum habitat. Many



species of bird and amphibians are particularly dependent on wetlands for critical breeding habitat.

Early settlers described much of the floodplain as “prairie.” The large open space was maintained by Native Americans in order to perpetuate certain edible plant species such as camas and berries. Fire was used to remove invading shrubs and trees. This open area would have also provided foraging habitat for various game animals such as elk, deer, bear, rabbits and grouse. Mice, voles and grassland birds would have been abundant along with skunks, weasels, raptors and owls.

Euro-American settlers with the development of railroads and roads, quickly converted the prairie to farms and travel corridors, eliminating most of the native plant communities. Undoubtedly, animal species associated with this community were lost, although many of the larger animal species adapted to the new, non-native species, albeit in smaller numbers. Some species that posed a threat to livestock or poultry, such as bears, wolves, cougars and bobcats would have been targeted for elimination. As the Upper Snoqualmie Valley grew, former prairie areas were lost to urban development. Today, what remains of the former prairies are largely farm fields, bisected by roads and highways and the abandoned railroad corridor. These transportation corridors are significant barriers for wildlife movement.

The existing farm fields provide habitat for small mammals and birds and are regularly patrolled by raptors, owls and coyote. In some areas, larger mammals such as deer, elk and black bear forage or use the fields to move to areas providing better habitat and cover. The largest remaining area of this particular habitat type occurs in the western part of the District. It includes Meadowbrook Farm, Tollgate Farm, miscellaneous intervening properties and the field south of the Nintendo complex.

The rivers themselves provide a special aquatic habitat. In spite of dikes along portions of the rivers, they still provide excellent habitat for such fish species as cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, whitefish and sculpin. Although the rivers are still listed as possibly having habitat for the federally listed bulltrout, this species no longer appears to exist in the rivers. Habitat for fish spawning is particularly good where the river is still connected with its off-channel floodplain. Parts of Ribary Creek provide excellent spawning habitat for cutthroat trout because of its heavily vegetated banks and clean sediments. Gardiner Creek also supports a healthy population of cutthroat trout.