

# *Friends of Cheasty*

3820 Cheasty Blvd. South  
Seattle, WA 98108

-----FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-----**Parks Department fails to prove mountain bike park will have no significant environmental impact on local greenspace** (January 27, 2016)

Friends of Cheasty (“FOC”) is pleased to announce the successful overturn of the Seattle Department of Parks & Recreation’s (“Parks Department”) Determination of Non-Significance (“DNS”) in its environmental review for a mountain bicycle and pedestrian trail system in the Cheasty Greenspace. The Seattle Hearing Examiner concluded that the Parks Department failed to identify adequate information to support its determination that the proposed mountain bike park would result in no significant impacts on wetlands and wildlife habitat on the site. The Hearing Examiner also concluded that the Parks Department failed to accurately describe the scope and size of the mountain bike and pedestrian trails.

Through testimony and evidence before the Hearing Examiner, FOC met the extremely high burden of appealing a DNS. The Hearing Examiner was required to accord the Parks Department’s DNS substantial weight, and could not support FOC’s appeal unless FOC demonstrated that the DNS was clearly erroneous. Friends of Cheasty met this extremely high burden of proof, and the Hearing Examiner was “left with a definite and firm conviction that a mistake has been committed.”

FOC Attorney, Ryan Vancil, stated ‘the ruling is notable because it is extremely rare for a citizen’s group to prevail in an appeal of this kind because the burden of proof is so high. It is only possible where an official has egregiously failed to fulfill his or her duty for environmental review.’ The Hearing Examiner reversed the Parks Department’s decision, and the Department must now perform an adequate analysis of the mountain bike park impacts on wetlands and wildlife habitat.

‘We applaud this ruling by the Hearing Examiner’, said FOC spokesperson Sarah Welch. ‘We have worked tirelessly to support science-based forest restoration of natural areas and to convince the City to comply with the environmental laws and policies of the State of Washington and City of Seattle when considering such a project.’

While the mountain bike park ultimately may still move forward in some form, Friends of Cheasty will continue its vigilant watch on the Parks Department to see that the wildlife habitat and wetlands of Cheasty Greenspace are protected.

###END###

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## **Background**

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation plans to build a mountain bike trail system in a 28.5-acre parcel within the larger 43 acre Cheasty Greenspace. Cheasty Greenspace is a preserved forest, rich in biodiversity located on the east side of Beacon Hill southeast of downtown Seattle. This pilot project sets a dangerous precedent for all Seattle many undeveloped greenspaces and natural areas.

Friends of Cheasty (<http://www.savecheastygreenspace.org/>) opposes the installation of a mountain bike park and all forms of bike trails in Cheasty Greenspace. We advocate for protection and expansion of quality habitat, trees, wildlife and healthy native plant communities in Cheasty Greenspace, and all Seattle Greenspaces and natural areas for the benefit of all people. Friends of Cheasty is a long established local community group advocating since the 1980's for acquisition and preservation of parcels to create this large urban forest.

With this appeal was Friends of Cheasty's highlighted the dismissive stance of the Seattle Parks Department toward the environmental impacts resulting from the conversion of a passive greenspace to the active recreation of a mountain bike and pedestrian loop trail system.

What started as a local neighborhood issue heightened concerns from many forest stewards and 'friends of' groups working throughout the City to preserve and restore Seattle's natural areas. The parcels of land that comprise Seattle's natural areas were acquired by the City to preserve native wildlife habitat. They will be even more fundamental to the quality of life of Seattle citizens as the City undergoes rapid growth and development. Coalitions of environmental groups herald this decision as a statement that Seattle citizens value environmental policies that preserve urban forests.

Friends of Cheasty is hopeful that this decision will encourage the Parks Department to reconsider its approach to providing mountain biking opportunities in the City. Instead of forcing a mountain bike park within one fragile natural greenbelt, the City should undertake a comprehensive planning strategy to serve the mountain bike community similar to the planning undertaken for skate boarders in the City of Seattle.

However, Friends of Cheasty recognizes that this decision may not end the mountain bike park proposal. FOC will continue its advocacy to protect this natural area, including following any project permitting by Parks. We will look critically at any attempts by Parks to exempt itself from compliance with the City's environmentally critical areas ordinances or any other environmental laws or policies of the Federal, State or City governments.

The coalition of communities that are concerned with the preservation of these precious urban forest network advocates for their preservation. Friends of Cheasty will continue our work with organizations throughout Seattle to preserve all of our urban forests for all the environmental and health benefits that they provide for current and future generations.

The Hearing Examiner's Findings and Decision is available at: [Hearing Examiner Findings and Decision](http://www.savecheastygreenspace.org/) on the Friends of Cheasty website: <http://www.savecheastygreenspace.org/>