WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF Natural Resources | Caring for your natural resources ... now and forever

Lake Kapowsin

PROPOSED AQUATIC RESERVE

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing to establish Lake Kapowsin in eastern Pierce County as a state Aquatic Reserve. The reserve would be composed of existing state-owned bedlands and shorelands. Working with the local community and stakeholders, in 2014 DNR is discussing and developing a management plan for the proposed reserve.

Lake Kapowsin is a 512-acre low elevation freshwater lake with mostly undeveloped natural shorelines. The lake's natural character is unusual in the Puget Sound lowlands, where most lakes have modified and developed shorelines. During the heyday of early logging in Washington, a booming town and lumber mills were along the western shoreline of the lake. In the 1920s, fires ravaged the town and mills, and in 1928 the city of Tacoma condemned property near the lake, anticipating the need for a new reservoir.

Lake Kapowsin
Photo: DNR

Special Features of Lake Kapowsin

This lake has a unique origin: it was created when the *Electron Mudflow* rushed down the Puyallup Valley from Mt. Rainier and dammed Kapowsin Creek, flooding the valley floor and drowning the native forest. Geologists place this mudflow at approximately 500 years ago and many of the stumps from this ancient forest remain in the lake, now a legacy of the geologic event. Scientists have studied the tree rings from the stumps as part of the primary evidence for this fascinating story.

The large amount of wood and stumps in the lake provide valuable habitat for fish, amphibians, as well as the invertebrate species that supply their diet. The lake is popular with fisherman and supports a range of native and stocked sport fish. These species include coho and steelhead salmon; rainbow trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass, yellow perch, rock bass, black crappie, bluegill, pumpkin seed sunfish, walleye and bullhead catfish. The lake's extensive wetlands provide habitat for many small mammals and amphibians.

What is a state Aquatic Reserve?

Aquatic Reserves are state-owned aquatic lands designated to protect important native ecosystems.

DNR's **Aquatic Reserves Program** ensures environmental protection of these lands through preservation, restoration and enhancement activities, and adaptive management practices.

The program encourages public use and access, provides for greater public input into conservation management, and works with stakeholders, citizens, other state and local, federal, and Tribal governments to help develop and implement site-specific management plans.

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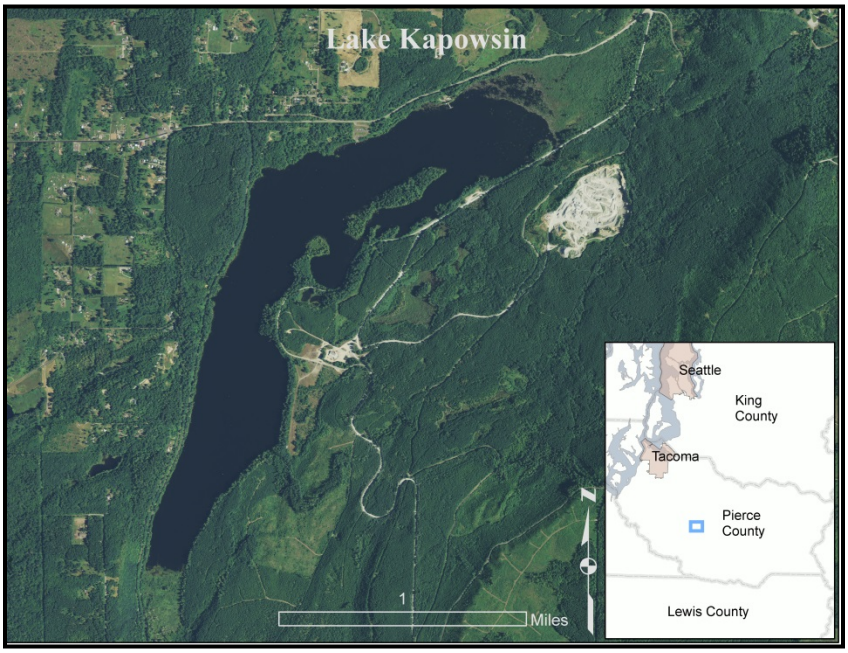
After a plan has been developed and drafted with public involvement, the Commissioner of Public Lands will evaluate the proposal. If the designation is approved, Lake Kapowsin will be the first freshwater aquatic reserve managed by DNR.

DNR will work to develop partnerships with adjacent landowners and land managers for conservation, restoration and enhancement, and low impact recreational access.



Goals for the Lake Kapowsin Aquatic Reserve

- Conserve and enhance these native habitats, and protect and restore the functions and natural processes of this freshwater lowland lake and associated wetlands.
- Preserve existing low impact public use and enjoyment of the lake, such as fishing.
- Promote stewardship of riparian and aquatic habitats and species by providing education and outreach opportunities, and coordinating with resource managers, neighboring landowners, Tribal agencies, angler groups and non-governmental organizations.
- Protect opportunities for scientific research such as geologic investigations of the lake's origins and tree ring evidence.

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