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## "Dialogues" are first step

By [Christopher Schwarzen](#)  
*Times Snohomish County bureau*

Gene Duvernoy knows he won't see the end results of an ambitious plan being formulated by the Cascade Land Conservancy.

After all, creating a four-county land-protection plan for the next 100 years is quite presumptuous, the land conservancy's president says. Still, if he wants his grandchildren's grandchildren to enjoy the Pacific Northwest's natural resources, Duvernoy believes he and others need to act now.

Such is the thinking behind the Cascade Land Conservancy's "Cascade Dialogues," a series of community discussions designed to identify unprotected resources in danger of development or destruction and to find ways to protect them or use them while leaving behind little human trace.

Focusing on Snohomish, King, Kittitas and Pierce counties, the land conservancy has been meeting with the public since last month to kick off the project.

A series of open houses, like last week's meeting in Everett, is designed to spread the word about the effort as well as to collect ideas. About 40 people attended the Everett meeting.

Though this may be the easiest step in the process, it's also the most necessary, Duvernoy says. Without a clear idea of what people believe is important, there's no way to build public and private support later when it's time to put a plan in action.

"We're asking, what does this region want to be 100 years from now?" Duvernoy said. "And how do we build a consensus and partnerships with business, civic organizations, government and communities to make it work?"

The Cascade Land Conservancy is asking participants to think about the watersheds in each county as well as the Cascades. It also wants people to think about the opportunities in their communities.

No county plan will look exactly like another, and meetings held in each county already have pointed out cultural differences affecting the way people think about conservation.

"While all four counties have population growth, the data suggest it's a higher occurrence in Snohomish County," said John Howell, the conservancy's board chairman. "We're looking at how we manage that high rate of growth to sustain the economy and protect the natural environment here."



Gene Duvernoy heads the Cascade Land Conservancy.

### Insight panel

The Cascade Land Conservancy will host a panel discussion on Snohomish County's conservation opportunities from noon to 1:30 p.m. today at The Manor, 13032 Admiralty Way, Everett. The cost is \$30, including lunch. Information: [www.cascadedialogues.org](http://www.cascadedialogues.org).

Snohomish County has large swaths of working forest and farmland threatened by development, participants in last week's open house said. Weekend recreation in the foothills and mountains in Snohomish County also is very important to residents, participants said.

In King County, people were willing to consider options in which land is protected and handed over to local governments for control. But in Kittitas County, with a strong agricultural background, participants seemed more willing to conserve property as long as landowners could still use the land under its agricultural zoning.

Pierce County residents know they have Mount Rainier in their back yard, and they expressed interest in making sure the land surrounding the dormant volcano also is protected.

The next step is taking these ideas and putting them together in an action plan that then needs to be sold back to the communities that created them.

But that wouldn't be easy, officials say. As governments struggle with declining budgets, it will be hard to garner support needed to make conservation projects work.

"In our case, there's no money being spent to develop (park areas) until 2007," said Snohomish Mayor Liz Loomis, who is a member of the Cascade Land Conservancy's steering committee that will make recommendations to the full board. "We're considering whether we can even float a parks-and-recreation bond package to raise some money."

But Duvernoy says he isn't daunted by the challenges that lay ahead.

"We're a long-term sustainable organization with a mission," he said. "We know we'll need to come back every three to five years and see if there are changes we need to react to."

The conservancy hopes to come back in the fall with an initial list of suggestions. It wouldn't be as specific as naming individual properties for purchase but more of a guideline that communities could follow.

"Conservation is becoming easier because we're getting more creative at it," he said. "But we'll only succeed here if we continue to expand the partnerships and the number of colleagues we have."

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