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PACIFIC HARBORS COUNCIL

TO: Friends of Camp Thunderbird-BSA; Neighbors in the Summit Lake Area; and others interested in our plans for a youth environmental education camping experience at Camp Thunderbird

FROM: The Pacific Harbors Council, Volunteers and Professional Staff

RE: February 2023 Update to the Plans to Upgrade Camp Thunderbird near Olympia WA

Most of you are aware that the Pacific Harbors Council has been working since July 2020 to upgrade and modernize our Camp Thunderbird on Summit Lake. We are close to having all of our final permit documents in to the County to advance to Final Approval and begin construction. Prior to the County approval, they will initiate the SEPA and Project review process by notifying the Summit Lake and area Community, government agencies, and other interested parties. They will outline the project they are considering and the SEPA review process. We feel it is important that all of our neighbors around the Lake and all others with an interest in the project are aware of our plans. This letter is one effort to keep everyone informed of our plans. Please review our project summary, a site map and our Frequently Asked Questions. If you still have questions about our project, please contact our Scout Executive, Karen Meier at karen.meier@scouting.org by email or call her at 253-682-2217. Additional information on the County permitting process can be found at the Thurston County Website for Community Planning & Economic Development Home/Permitting Home.

THE PROPOSED CAMP THUNDERBIRD PROJECT ON SUMMIT LAKE, NEAR OLYMPIA WA

The Pacific Harbors Council (PHC) of Boy Scouts of America initiated a PHC Camp Consolidation Plan over five years ago. As a part of that plan, the PHC chose to focus their camping program at Camp Thunderbird and subsequently initiated the planning, design, and permitting process that will upgrade the 123 acre site into a quality camping program for area youth.

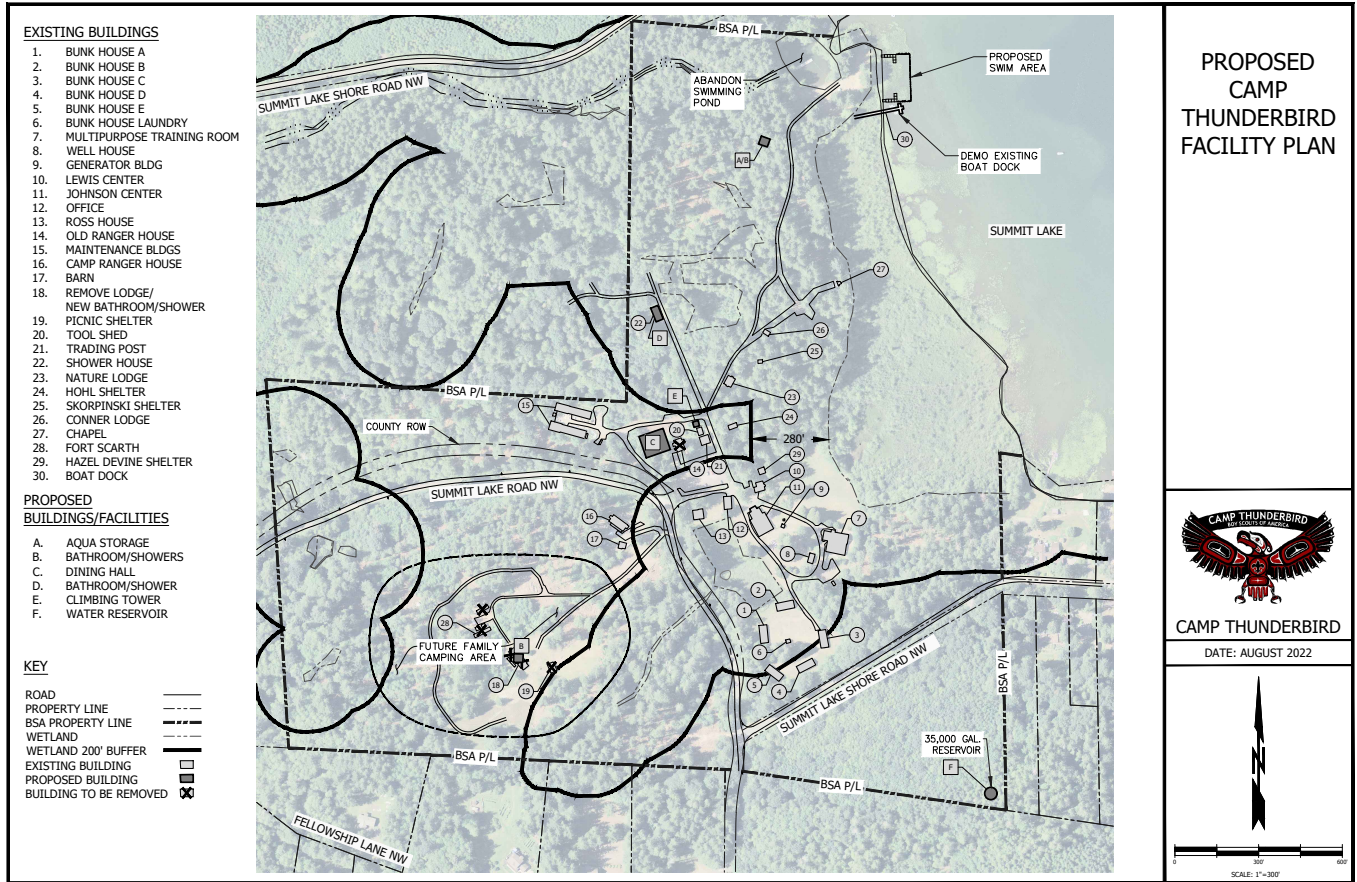
The planning and permitting process was interrupted by the COVID 19 Pandemic and all of the attendant challenges for the PHC and for the County, State and Federal permit procedures. The initial Site Plan changes and improvements that were distributed to the Public was based on the Thurston County Pre-Proposal Application for a Special Use Permit and the associated Shoreline Permit from the State. That original plan incorporated in the Application for a Special Use Permit No 2020103171 for BSA Camp Thunderbird submitted on July 24, 2020 remains largely the same. Only changes requested by Summit Lake neighbors and the County have been made. The following is a summary of the current plan.





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CAMP THUNDERBIRD POPOSED NEW SITE PLAN

--Camp Thunderbird is owned by the Pacific Harbors Council. It is about 123 acres. Adjacent to the camp is an additional area owned by Green Diamond that is sometimes used for short term camp sites. No new permanent structures are proposed on the Green Diamond site.

--The Camp currently is designed to accommodate 300 overnightcampers, including guests and staff. On a major weekend camp outing, up to 600 day campers can currently be accommodated on the site. The proposed site improvements will not increase the capacity of the camp site or planned use.

--A major improvement that is proposed is to convert the existing swimming pond (originally constructed in the 1960's by the US COE) to wetlands, and to remove the existing, and at this point, unsafe boating dock. The proposed plan is to implement a combined swimming and boating dock and area in Summit Lake. The waterfront area will be to the northwest of the existing to-be-removed dock. It can be seen in the upper right portion of the site plan. The waterfront area shore will be on the eastern berm built by the US COE in 1965 to improve scouting lake access. This new floating dock system is smaller and has





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less impact on the lake than the old existing system. We will need to remove the “muck” build up in the water front area from the many years of accumulated invasive lily pad die off. This is necessary to make the new area a safe useable swimming and boating area for the youth. Recent soundings in this area showed muck depths from between 2 and 6 feet deep, certainly nothing we would want youth to be swimming in. The location chosen for the waterfront was in large part to minimize impacts to the wetlands. The primary vegetative species in the area are an invasive lily pad.

--Additional to the new aquatics area, the proposal includes a new 300 person dining hall, a new climbing tower, and three stand-alone multiple single unit bathroom/shower units for youth safety (one at the aquatics area, one at the center of the camping area, and one near the planned Family RV area. All other bathroom facilities will be within the other existing structures.

--As noted on the attached site plan, dated August 2022, several existing structures will be removed permanently and replaced only as noted. The water and waste disposal system will be upgraded to meet current State standards while serving the same camp capacity.

--Camp Thunderbird and the waterfront is in a major wetland area. Even though most of the improvements will lie outside the buffer area of the wetlands, the aquatics waterfront naturally is located in that wetland. The PHC contracted with two wetland consulting firms and has spent over two years in evaluating and designing a wetland mitigation plan to meet the County, State and Federal current standards. The newly submitted Camp Thunderbird Wetlands Mitigation Plan has been approved by County and State staff as fully mitigating the plan as shown on the attached.

The County is now initiating the SEPA review for the proposed plan. The public will be asked to comment on the Proposed Plan and the associated permits required. This is directed primarily at the wetlands and waterfront program. The County sets the schedule for formal public hearings and reviews, after they have completed their recommendations for compliance with current County, State and Federal laws. Their SEPA documents will be distributed in the near future with an outline of the formal process that they and we are following.

Once public comments have been adjudicated, that part of the project may go forward. The PHC may proceed now to upgrade other existing facilities to meet current Building Codes for current uses.

During the three-year process, various questions have been raised and some project changes have been made to respond to those questions. The following “Frequently Asked Questions” are presented to help the public to expand their understanding of this exciting project.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – CAMP THUNDERBIRD PROPOSED SITE PLAN UPGRADES

- 1) *WHAT AREA IS INCLUDED IN THE CAMP THUNDERBIRD PLAN?* The Camp Thunderbird site includes a 123-acre existing camp. Camp Thunderbird has, for many years been allowed by the Green Diamond Company, to use their adjacent site for a temporary youth camping area. The PHC would like to purchase some of the Green Diamond land to continue this seasonal program. No permanent structures are planned for the Green Diamond site. See Attached Site Plan.
- 2) *WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF CAMP THUNDERBIRD?* The current camp has the capacity for 300 guest and staff for overnight campers. On a special weekend day camp, up to a total of 600-day campers can be accommodated on the existing site. The new proposed capacity will be the same as the existing camp.
- 3) *WON'T 600 DAY CAMPERS OVERWHELM THE CAMP AND LAKE?* No, all day camping and use activity is highly programmatic. What this means is there may be a cub pack swimming, while another does archery, while another works on scout crafts. The youth will be spread out doing different activities and will not overwhelm any resources.
- 4) *WHAT CHANGES WILL BE MADE TO THE CAMP HOUSING PROGRAM?* There will be very little changes except for upgrading existing structures to meet current codes and single person bathroom/showers. Additional to the five bunkhouses that are being upgraded and house 140 campers, the outdoor camping area will include 4 and 8 person Adirondacks/mini daks that will replace the existing wood platformed tent structures. The mini daks are moveable and temporary and will be located where the tent camping has occurred in the past.
- 5) *WHAT CHANGES WILL OCCUR ON THE WATERFRONT?* As noted and shown above, the old swim pond will be converted to wetlands and the old dock will be removed. The new swim/boat docking system will be located in between. Two new swim docks 150 feet apart (swim merit badge distance) will extend 50 feet into the Lake. Floating swim ropes will extend another 50 feet (total of 100 feet) to protect the deep swim area from area boaters. Canoe, kayak, and rowboat tie-ups will occur on the outside of the two swim docks. A nearby storage area (life jackets and paddles) will be combined with a two unit single bathroom/shower and a four person outside rinse-off shower in a new small structure 200 feet set back from the Lake. The bathrooms will be connected to the new STEP system for remote waste disposal.
- 6) *I HEARD THE WATERFRONT AREA WILL NEED TO BE DREDGED. WILL THAT HARM THE LAKE?* Everything about the dredging was designed to protect the lake. As discussed above, the waterfront area is currently unsafe to swim in due to the depth of the muck. Only the waterfront area will be dredged. The plan was developed by a local environmental engineer who has significant experience dredging harbors and waterfronts at the industrial level. To protect the lake and Kennedy Creek the dredging is planned for late September to early October during the season when there is no outflow from the lake. Additionally silt curtains will surround the





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dredging area so any sediment and turbidity will be constrained to the dredging area. The muck will be moved to a previously County approved disposal site on camp grounds across the road from the lake. Public notice will be made well in advance so all residents will know when the dredging is occurring.

- 7) *HOW WILL THE NEW AQUATICS SITE IMPACT THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LAKE LEVEL?* It will have no impact on the lake level. The new docks are designed to float on the Lake. The old swim pond will transition to a natural waterway and wetland leading to the dam and Kennedy Creek. The existing dam will remain as it is, and the Lake outlet will continue to be managed by others per the department of Ecology's directives. Access to the dam site will continue to follow the current process, based upon PHC authorization.
- 8) *WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED COUNTY AND STATE APPROVED WETLAND MITIGATION PLAN?* After two years of field study and detailed wetlands evaluations, the Plan identifies the number of square feet of impacts to the existing wetland by the remodeled Aquatics waterfront, including the new Aquatics storage and bathroom referenced above. The PHC has agreed to create new wetland areas near the existing swim pond and old dock, provide special new plantings, expand and upgrade the wetland area south of the existing parking lot, and to "Permanently dedicate a major area of existing wetlands between the Lake and the current camping area into a title easement as a Wetland Preservation Area". This will guarantee that the designated Preservation Area will always be a preserved pristine wetland. The almost 100 pages of reports fully identify the wetland mitigation plan that the PHC has agreed to support and oversee for the future of the camp.
- 9) *WHAT CHANGES DOES THE PLAN DO TO THE SEPTIC TANK SYSTEM?* There are 11 existing septic tank and drain fields throughout the site. The County has approved a new STEP (Septic Tank Effluent Pump) system that will upgrade or replace all septic tanks and install a system to pump the effluent to a new large drain field across the road from the lake and camp (next to the Ranger's home). This site has been approved by the County. So, all human wastes will be transferred further away from the Lake. All piping will be located along and under existing trails and roads—no new disruption of the forests.
- 10) *WHY CONSTRUCT AND LOCATE A WATER STORAGE TANK AS SHOWN ON THE SITE PLAN?* The camp's existing State approved Group A Transient Water System and Well are approved for the planned camp capacity. However, the new Dining Hall, and potentially the transformed existing dining hall into a new training hall, requires "fire sprinkling" for fire protection per new County Codes. The preliminary engineering report for the water system upgrades suggested a "Baker Silo type storage tank—similar to the storage tank near the area fire station" that would have a capacity of about 35,000 gallons. This is what the County Fire Marshal required. The site shown has good elevation to provide the storage and pressures desired. The water tank would be filled





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by the existing well pumping system, and then flow by gravity back to the new dining hall area. Now that the final design for the building plans are being evaluated, alternative tank sites and sizes are being further evaluated to obtain the most cost effective way to meet the fire codes of the County. A Geotech Engineer will assist in the design of the foundation for the tank.

- 11) *ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS TO THE STORAGE TANK?* Yes, the plan is to have the pipeline from the new Storage Tank to end near the new Dining Hall with an outside fire pump connection. It will also include a public water kiosk for lake residents to be able to easily access the PHC Camp State Approved Public water system during periods when the County has designated the lake water as not acceptable for use as drinking water. The fire connection will also give the Fire Department a second source of water for Fire Tank Refills in case of a home fire in area residents.
- 12) *WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE SCOUT RIFLE & BB GUN RANGE AND ARCHERY SITE?* The original plan was to locate these facilities to the southeast area of the camp property to be closer for youth activity. Based on community input, the PHC has chosen to continue to use the existing ranges across the road and away from the lake area.
- 13) *WHY IS A FAMILY RV AREA PLANNED AND WHAT SERVICES WILL BE INCLUDED?* With the variety of grade and middle school youth that will be using the upgraded camp, we recognize some family oversight help may be appropriate, particularly for handicap students. The Family RV camp planned for 30 sites, would provide family camping options that currently do not exist. The Family RV area is across the County Road west of the Rangers home. Existing camp buildings will be removed and replaced by a five-unit single bathroom/shower facility. The RV sites will be provided with electric and water connections. There will be no septic tank connections. This site is planned for short term RV use by campers participating in programs at the camp.
- 14) *WHO GETS TO USE THE CAMP?* While PHC Scouts will remain the primary users, the Pacific Harbors Council is currently in discussions with other youth groups to allow broader access to this wonderful resource. We may see youth from several area School Districts, the YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club at the camp.

If you have additional questions or would like a representative of our Pacific Harbors Council Team to meet with your organization to discuss this proposal, please contact the Pacific Harbors Council Scout Executive, Karen Meier at karen.meier@scouting.org or the Camp Ranger, Daniel Collett at Daniel.collett@scouting.org

The Mission of Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.





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