

## ESRM 301

### Wednesday Afternoon Field Trip February 7, 2005

#### Schmitz Preserve Park



**Site History and Description:**<sup>1</sup> “Schmitz Preserve Park was donated to the city in pieces between 1908 and 1912. The most generous chunk (~30 acres: park now has 50.4) came from a German immigrant/pioneer/banker/realtor named Ferdinand Schmitz, who served on the park commission during those years. It was Schmitz’s idea, as he saw how rapidly the great forest was disappearing, to preserve part of it in its natural state. Even Schmitz’s land had not been completely untouched by logging, though. Some huge stumps in the park still show deep notches hacked high above the ground for the “spring-boards” on which axe men would stand to avoid having to chop through the lower root crown, the thickest and hardest part of the tree. After 1908, however, the new park rapidly gained popularity as a quiet complement to the West Seattle park complex. Except for the paved entrance and a parking lot at the northwest corner, the park has remained essentially unchanged ever since.

“In 1969, Neil Johannsen, a UW student at the College of Forest Resources, wrote an **Interpretive Master Plan for Schmitz Park Preserve**, which outlines a plan for a self-guided nature trail and lists the animals and plants. Johannsen’s plan states that the park received 8,000 visitors in 1959, 10,000 visits in 1964 and 13,000 people in 1969.”

**Parks and Recreation web site:** <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/Schmitz.htm>

**Don Sherwood History Notes**<sup>2</sup>: <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/history/SchmitzPreservePk.pdf>

**Friends of Schmitz Park:** FOSP is a group of neighborhood volunteers who are dedicated to the preservation of the park as a natural area. They have provided about two thousand hours of volunteer time each year since 1992. Be sure to look at their web site: <http://www.schmitzpark.org/>. You might find their “History,” “Plant List” and “Wildlife List” pages to be particularly interesting.

**Suggested Reading:** Franklin, J.F. and R. Van Pelt. 2004. Spatial aspects of structural complexity in old-growth forests. *J. of Forestry* 102(3):22 – 28.

**Questions :** Each will group explore the park for 45 minutes and prepare for a discussion.

- (1) How does your group define old-growth?
- (2) What elements of your definition do you find at Schmitz Park?
- (3) What elements of your definition do you not find at Schmitz Park?
- (4) How has the park changed since 1908?
- (5) How might these changes affect what you see today and what you will see in 50 years?
- (6) What management elements would you add to what you have seen in order to increase the “preservation of old-growth within the city limits of Seattle?”

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: *Schmitz Preserve Park, 2005. City of Seattle Parks and Recreation web site. [cited 2007 Feb. 07]. Available from <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/Schmitz.htm>*

<sup>2</sup> See the Parks and Recreation web site <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/history/sherwood.htm> for more information about Don Sherwood





### Schmitz Preserve Park Trails

Map date: November 14, 2000  
Trails Determined using  
Global Positioning Systems

#### LEGEND

- Trail
- Stream
- Park Boundary
- Street Right-of-Way



1:3600



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