

Bainbridge Island Sportsmen's Club Past, Present, Future

Past

The Bainbridge Island Sportsmen's Club has been an important part of the island heritage for 80 years. The club was formed in 1929, incorporated (as a non-profit) in 1938, and moved to its current location in 1939. The club owns 16 acres of forests, pond and wetlands in the center of Bainbridge Island. The land, originally donated to by one of its members, is classified as "green space" and is maintained by the club for use by the local community. The current clubhouse was built in 1939.



The club was formed primarily to provide a safe place to enjoy firearms, to promote safe and courteous handling of firearms both on and off of club premises, to promote conservation of our natural resources and protection of the environment, and to provide recreational and educational opportunities for club members and for the community.

Present

The club currently has over 320 members. This represents about 1.4% of the island population, a high figure for any club in any general population. Our website, www.bainbridgesportsmensclub.org lists our activities and times, membership dues, and has photographs of many of our events. Our monthly newsletter, accessible on our website, contains current information on club news and events. Copies of our web pages and our latest newsletter are attached.

The club facilities include a rustic lodge clubhouse with a sizable meeting room for club and other non-profit organizations use, trap/sporting clays range, pistol and rifle ranges, fishing pond for children's use, wetlands, and nature trails and observation sites. The club has hosted, free of charge, the State of Washington Hunter Education Program since the program inception. The Hunter Education Program uses the clubhouse meeting room for classroom activities and the pistol range for firearm instruction. Similarly for Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts, and Indian Guides. Recently, the local conference of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul asked to use our clubhouse for their monthly meetings while their facility is being rebuilt over the next year.

We offer an excellent portfolio of NRA classes (see website materials). Attendees to educational events are required to pay a nominal fee to cover the cost of course materials. NRA certified club members volunteer as instructors. The club and club instructors supply firearms and ammunition for those attendees that do not have firearms. All firearms classes are conducted in the club's facilities on Bainbridge Island.

We offer free, private, use of our firearms ranges to the Bainbridge Island Police Department (BIPD) for training and qualification. All members of the BIPD are club members, at half dues rate. We have an agreement with the city to maintain this arrangement to 2030. The Acting BIPD Chief is a member of our board and some of the officers participate as instructors in our firearms classes. The use of the range provides a large cost savings to the city (the next nearest facility is off-island and about 35 miles away) and allows officers to be immediately available, on-island, in case of an emergency.

We recently won a grant from the local Rotary to upgrade our clubhouse. Once this is finished, the BIPD plan to use it, free of charge, for their regular meetings. The city does not have an available facility large enough for the whole police force to meet at one time. The clubhouse will also be available to other island civic groups and non-profit organizations.

The club conducts and participates in trap, pistol, rifle, and “cowboy action shooting” contests over the course of the year. The schedules are on our website and in our newsletter. The yearly cowboy action shooting event is very popular with island parents, who bring their children to see, learn, and participate in the basics of shooting for fun.

For over 25 years, the club has put on free Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for island seniors. The seniors are transported, by club volunteers, from local nursing homes, senior living facilities and private homes to our clubhouse for dinners prepared and paid for by club volunteers.

Our fishing pond, which is a club owned park, is available, free of charge, during fishing season for island children 14 years and younger. The pond is stocked and maintained at club expense. At the start of fishing season, the club hosts a “Huck Finn/Betty Thatcher Day” fishing contest. The club supplies, poles, lines and bait. Club volunteers assist, serve refreshments, and judge contests for first and biggest fish.

The club sponsors a scholarship fund for local high school students interested in pursuing education and careers in fields associated with wildlife and fish management and conservation, forestry, marine sciences, and riparian and waterways management and conservation.

The club is currently proposing to donate our privately owned park to the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park and Recreation District. The ~ 3 acre park includes a fishing pond, spectacular mature forest, and wetlands. The park is located in the middle of Bainbridge Island and is the centerpiece of the club-sponsored Heartland Connections concept that links historical, recreational and natural areas from all corners of the island.

All of the existing facilities were built by club volunteers, with some help from outside contractors for specialty services. In 2002-2004, the pistol range was rebuilt to make it safer for member and police use. The total cash received from the city, NRA and member contributions was approximately \$40,000. The members contributed over \$250,000 worth of labor, per city audit, to complete the facility. Recently, the members built a building on the trap range. The building was built for less than \$10,000 of club resources plus over \$45,000 of club volunteer labor.

The club recently competed for and won two, large, cost matching grants from the state. One grant is for \$110,000 (\$58,000 from the state, balance from the club) is to upgrade our pistol range to make it even safer, quieter, better for police use, and ADA accessible. The other grant is for \$91,100 (\$41,000 from the state, balance from the club) to create an indoor/outdoor archery range for families and Olympic class archers and will also be ADA accessible. This will be a unique facility in all of Kitsap County. Both projects have started and are to be completed in three years.

Future

The club goal is to increase the size and scope of its efforts on behalf of the Bainbridge Island community:

- Increase the asset base for our Scholarship Fund so that we can offer more and larger scholarships. Eventually we would like to be able to give full year university scholarships for students majoring in environmental and nature preservation curricula, as well as sponsor internships and other education opportunities for qualified students
- Build programs that address the growing number of island seniors.
- Add programs that specifically address people with disabilities that want to enjoy firearms, archery, fishing and other outdoor sports.
- Expand our firearm instruction program. Firearm ownership is at a all time high and continuing to increase. The club is the only on-island organization offering firearms instruction, and specifically,

firearms safety instruction. We want to involve more children and teenagers, as well as adults in firearm safety education.

- Continue to expand our role in helping to create and carry out the Heartland Visions concept and work to extend the embodiment of the concept throughout the island.