After welcome and introductions, the group was polled for the frequency of their use of the park. Most attendees visited the park at least once a month. Approximately half of those in attendance visit the park once a week or more. Meeting attendees, by and large, were connected to the park through its trail system (80% come to the park to walk or hike) and are drawn to the park’s various natural assets, or for the peace and quiet engendered by the park’s natural environment.

**EERC Planning Process**
The St. Edward Environmental Education and Research Center (EERC) Planning Team presented a summary of the planning process to date. Based upon input from public meetings, advisory committee meetings, and other research, the EERC Planning Team will present to State Parks a set of recommendations and a proposed business plan by June 30, 2019.

Once a final report is completed, State Parks will weigh its options and determine the best path forward. Public engagement and support is an important part of its consideration, as would be the presence of a strong partner or partners able to ensure financial support and sustainability. If Parks decides to move forward with an EERC, there will necessarily be more opportunities for public participation and engagement in the future.

In the meantime, Senator David Frockt and Representative Gerry Pollet have submitted a request to the state capital budget for renovation of the Gym Annex to create a classroom or multi-use space.

Meeting attendees expressed strong concerns about a concurrent proposal to convert the grass fields on the Seminary campus to artificial turf with lighting. Several members felt this activity would be in conflict with the needs and mission of the EERC and wondered how the Park could accommodate both.

**EERC Mission Statement and Focus Areas**
The Planning Team presented a revised mission statement for the EERC:

> To provide integrated environmental education and research experiences to a broad and diverse audience, with the purpose of advancing public understanding, scientific knowledge, and stewardship of Pacific Northwest ecosystems.

Drawing from this mission statement, the EERC would create a set of program-specific goals, such as preK-12 education, community science, and public outreach, depending on the focus of the EERC, available funding, community interest, etc.
The Planning Team has reviewed the programs and operations of more than two dozen environmental learning centers around the country. In general, these learning centers can be categorized into three main focus areas:

- **Research and Teaching Focus** - An undergraduate outdoor laboratory supporting academic research on urban wildlands, climate change, watershed health, human dimensions and public health. Key Ingredients: university faculty advisor, research grants, work study and student involvement, and community science program.

- **Education Focus** - A multi-purpose laboratory and learning space for preK-12 school-based field trips and out-of-school programs. Course content aligned to NGSS and FieldSTEM, supporting career-connected learning, and providing professional development for teachers. Key Ingredients: nonprofit partner with strong fundraising, administrative support and program development, as well as support from school districts and formal educators.

- **Outreach Focus** - An interpretive center that serves as a volunteer hub for public information, trail maintenance and restoration work, and interpretative programs for local residents and Lodge visitors. Key Ingredients: Strong volunteer base (50-100 regular volunteers), interpretive program development, and room rentals.

Meeting participants were asked to consider the following questions for each of the three focus areas presented: How does this focus fulfill mission? How does it respond to needs in the community? Who benefits? What are its greatest opportunities and benefits? What challenges and concerns would this present?

**Breakout Discussion #1: Research and Teaching Focus**

This focus area would be highly mission aligned.

Who benefits? The group discussed providing an education and teaching experience to a more diverse audience, including students with diverse abilities and a neurodiverse population. Benefits from this sort of learning center can be extended to the broader community through community engagement and mentorship. The group also discussed ways to share information in formats that can be distributed widely and equitably among different communities.

Opportunities and benefits? The EERC would have strong connections to local colleges, for both environmental science, as well as for graduate studies in community health education and public health. There is also potential for colleges to interact, as researchers and educators, with K-12 institutions and the general public. Overall, a research and teaching focus would have the benefit of increasing scientific understanding by providing a compelling education experience and teaching students how to use research to solve problems. Research outcomes can be used to help understand and support ecological health. This, in turn, may lead to grant and other funding opportunities.

Challenges and concerns? How would a university-led center interact with the broader community? How could it best understand community needs? It's important to make jargon and "scary" science more understandable and to highlight its interdisciplinary applications.

**Breakout Discussion #2: K-12**

Mission aligned? Yes, but the mission, as presented needs to have the word "connection" included.
Who benefits? Public schools currently do not have practicum that would guarantee students the kind of nature-based learning that an EERC would provide. Local schools, such as Finn Hill Environment and Adventure School seem like natural partners, as would programs like Head Start and other programs target underserved children.

Opportunities and benefits? Scientific inquiry is a skill and a mindset that needs more attention. Many local high schools have service hour requirements. Students could do public service in the form of research within the community. This could lead to better protection of wildlife and other natural resources.

Challenges and concerns? This model requires a strong non-profit partner. K-12 might be too narrow an age band; programs would be stronger with mentors for more advances students. It can also be challenging to build programs with existing schools. This focus area could also easily miss community involvement, which would be a lost opportunity.

Breakout Discussion #3: Outreach
Mission-aligned? Yes

There was considerable discussion around what is meant by “outreach?” Getting the word out, building awareness and visibility of the EERC in the local community? Or, are we referring to broad reach, low-touch interpretive type experiences in the Park that have the potential to deepen park users’ experiences? Or, some combination of both?

Who benefits? This focus area would serve families and individuals of all ages. It could be designed to serve diverse audiences. It could also serve Lodge guests.

Opportunities and benefits? Student-led volunteer training. Students (UWB, Bastyr, Cascadia, etc.) could provide interpretation of the landscape and subsequently develop curriculum for a volunteer docent training program. There are opportunities to connect to Bastyr’s Public Health/Community Health Education and botanical medicine.

Challenges and concerns? The group had concerns about how volunteers would be recruited and managed under this focus area. What would it cost and how would the EERC build long-term loyalty to ensure a return on investment? There would need to be considerable investment in communication, marketing, and branding to create enough visibility and program content to get money in the door. Early stage programming should be low risk, low investment, high impact (#’s of participants), with a high likelihood of success.

Conclusions
The group was clear that no single focus area would adequately address the opportunities presented by the St. Edward EERC and that a combined model was required in order to leverage different elements from each focus area. For example,

- There are opportunities to integrate learning between high school interns, college students, and young people by weaving together K-12 and university education.
- Developing a volunteer base strong enough to sustain an outreach-based focus could be difficult. But, you can build more energy by engaging volunteers in K-12 education and research opportunities.
• There is an increasing focus on having students understand HOW science is done, putting students in the field with other scientists, seeing concepts in practice. A college-high school connection, supporting NGSS and STEM learning, would be an asset to the EERC.

The EERC needs to focus first on what will attract funding to get it off the ground. There is existing momentum around outreach and scientific research. K-12 education might be harder to pull off.

Upcoming EERC Opportunities
Once a final report is completed and turned into State Parks, the Planning Team hopes there will be additional opportunities for public engagement around any next steps, perhaps as early as the late summer or fall. These might include EERC-based interpretive tours to look research in the park; fundraising events; and volunteer restoration opportunities. Meeting attendees were encouraged to sign up for communications and further news about the EERC.