

## 2.0 SITE HISTORY

One of the defining characteristics of the Puget Sound region is the dynamic coastline, which includes over 1400 miles of beaches, built out of sands and gravels from nearby feeder bluffs. A feeder bluff, as defined by the Washington State Department of Ecology, is an eroding coastal bluff which delivers a significant amount of sediment to the beach over an extended period of time. In its historic natural state, the Schuster Slope was a feeder bluff, contributing eroded sediment to the beaches along the Tacoma shoreline as it went through its natural processes.

The upland portions of the Schuster bluff would have historically contained what is defined by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources as the North Pacific Maritime Mesic-Wet Douglas-fir-Western Hemlock Forest (WDNR 2011). This ecological system develops through succession over time in which climax species, such as western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), supplant earlier successional species such as red alder (*Alnus rubra*) and bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). More information on this ecosystem type is presented in the Target Ecosystem, Section 4.1 of this document.

As Tacoma has settled, established, and urbanized, the once natural state of the Schuster Slope was significantly altered by development. Some of the most notable alterations to the slope included Tacoma's first lumber mill, the Hatch Mill which began operations in 1877, and the Centennial Flour Mill which was in operation from 1905 to 1965. In order to service these industries, significant clearing and re-grading of the hillside was conducted to accommodate general access and a railroad line on the northern half of the project area.

In 1973, construction commenced creating Bayside Drive (later renamed Schuster Parkway) and was completed in 1976. This project established the road grades and topography at the toe of the Schuster Slope as seen today. In conjunction with the roadway project, a cross-slope recreational trail network (known as the Bayside Trails) was also completed in 1975. This public trail system was closed in 2000 due to vandalism, erosion, and unsafe conditions.

The project area frequently experiences skin slides, debris flows and sloughing as it tries to revert to a natural feeder bluff. The project area geology and slope stability has been the focus of two previous City lead studies conducted by GeoEngineers, the first in 2000 and again in 2014. In 2002, the City developed a management plan for the Schuster Slope using the data produced in the 2000 report; however, this plan

was never implemented due to lack of funding. With the transition of Open Space properties to ES oversight in 2014 (along with a new sustainable funding mechanism) the City began a public process to update the 2002 plan with the goal to ensure that the new plan is reflective of the current conditions, best available science, and regulation compliance.