

FRIENDS OF MT. SPOKANE STATE PARK

News 2000

A Report from the President

It was a very busy two years for the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park and the MSSP Advisory Committee. The two groups worked very closely together on the Mt. Spokane State Park Classification and Management Planning project (CAMP). In March of 1999, the CAMP project officially began with a Parks Commission staff meeting I was privileged to attend at Hyak Lodge, a new state parks facility on Snoqualmie Pass. Olympia staff members also spent several days touring the park and holding additional meetings in Spokane. They met with the Advisory Committee at its June meeting and throughout the summer for a total of 11 additional meetings, to reach agreement on a set of proposals for the park classification and management plan. The Committee was able to reach consensus among its own members and with staff representatives on all but two issues. Some disagreement remained concerning whether some areas deserving higher protection should be classified as Natural Forest Areas, or as Resource Recreation Areas with a special added emphasis on resource protection. The Committee also expressed stronger concerns than staff over the possibility of expanding the alpine ski area to the west side of the summit. Many Advisory Committee and Friends Group members attended the public meetings on August 19 and October 6, in addition to the Parks Commission meeting on October 29, where the staff proposed classification plan was finally approved by the Commission after several hours of further discussion.

Once the classification plan was approved, the task of creating an interim trail plan was initiated. Additional input from mountain bikers and snowmobilers was obtained during two trail planning meetings in November, and additional data were gathered from the field. Olympia staff then presented their draft interim trail planning document to the Advisory Committee at its February, 2000 meeting for comments. The plan was finalized and approved in October, 2000. The interim plan will be in effect until the long range trail plan is completed.

In July, 1999, the Friends Group held its second annual Mt. Spokane State Park Appreciation Day. Dr. Arthur Partridge, retired professor of entomology and forest pathology, joined Friends Group Board Member and retired natural resources professor Bill Birk, in an afternoon of environmental awareness experiences near the newly reconstructed CCC cabin. Various displays were set up in the cabin, and a potluck picnic supper was held. The event was open to the general public and about 40 people attended. The Friends sold newly created t-shirts at the event along with the new park trail maps that the Back Country Horsemen had just published. The annual event had to be canceled for 2000 because of the road washout.

The Friends Group and Advisory Committee also helped to secure the purchase by the Parks Commission of the 160 acre Quartz Mountain property. After obtaining a copy of the Quartz Mountain owner's Forest Practice Act application, Friends Group members submitted extensive comments to the Department of Natural Resources regarding the owner's logging plans. As a

result, the proposed logging operation was further delayed and State Parks was able to complete their purchase of the property on December 30. Quartz Mountain is now officially part of Mt. Spokane State Park!

This last summer, several trail improvement projects were completed by Friends Group volunteers. About 25 new or modified trail number signs were erected at trail heads and intersections. These signs will make it much easier to navigate the trails once the new brochure, map, and trail guide are completed and distributed. Several log water bars and steps were installed on Trail 100 to help control some badly eroded areas. Numerous illegal trails were filled in with slash and rocks to also help control erosion. Volunteers also re-routed the lower part of Trail 110 near the park entrance to help prevent accidents from cyclists coming down the hill and riding out into the main road. A patch of Spotted Knapweed was discovered next to the trail on Ragged Ridge, so volunteers hiked out four different times through the summer to hand pull these highly invasive noxious weeds. The Friends Group is committed to doing this every summer until the weeds disappear. Volunteers are truly making a big difference at Mt. Spokane State Park!

Cris M. Currie, President

IEP Restricts Access

Due to increasing problems with soil erosion, dumping, vandalism, wood theft, tree damage, and illegal off road vehicle use, the Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) is revising its public use policy. The company is restricting entry to all of its lands and is considering a user fee program. A new gate was installed just below the Selkirk Lodge on the road leading out of the park. It will be kept locked during the summer to prevent unauthorized vehicle access to paper company lands. Illegal ORV use on the Ragged Ridge section of the park has been a problem for over 25 years. Since riders gain access to the ridge through IEP lands, the company's new restrictions should really help put an end to the problem. The company has also promised to assist with closing the trails from IEP land that lead to Ragged Ridge.

Winter Use Changes

The Interim Trail Plan has placed additional restrictions on snowmobile use within Mt. Spokane State Park, but it has also provided an opportunity for a new snowmobile route to the summit. Snowmobiles are now restricted to the existing groomed snowmobile trail, the Kit Carson and Day Mountain meadows, and the CCC meadows, as well as a couple of designated ungroomed trails. All other cross country snowmobile use is prohibited. Recreational snowmobile use is not permitted within the boundaries of either the nordic ski area or the alpine ski area. However, Mt. Spokane 2000 (the alpine area operator) and the Parks Commission did reach agreement to designate a snowmobiling corridor (on a trial basis) from the Cook's Cabin area to the south end of the summit. Snowmobilers will be required to stay within this marked corridor or risk losing the corridor completely. It is critical for skier safety and enjoyment that snowmobilers not enter the ski area and that skiers not enter the snowmobile corridor. Studies of plant growth within the corridor boundaries have also been initiated to help determine any possible effects of snowmobile use on the fragile sub-alpine vegetation. Additionally, snow depths will be

monitored so that the meadows can be closed to snowmobiling when depths are insufficient.

Park staff also reached an agreement with officials at Inland Empire Paper to prohibit snowmobiling on the north summit of Shadow Mountain at the far end of the nordic area. And as part of the recent road repair, a parking area was added to the Lower Kit Carson Loop Trail Head (the hairpin). A \$20 Sno-Park permit is required to park in this lot during the winter. Trails 100 and 110 (accessible from the new parking area), and trails 120a and 120b (accessible from the park entrance), have been designated for snowshoeing and back country skiing.

Road Repair Completed

The spring of 2000 brought some heavy rains which washed out a substantial portion of the only paved road into the park. As a result, the road was closed to all but authorized vehicles above the Lower Kit Carson Loop Trail Head for most of the summer. Using funds that were left over from the road reconstruction studies as well as funds previously earmarked for projects in other parks, this section of road was rebuilt for about \$800,000.00. This included the addition of a new parking area and surface patching the rest of the pavement. Periodic, temporary road closures are expected to continue over the next several years as the remainder of the road is rebuilt.

Volunteers Honored

A bronze plaque, honoring the many volunteers (especially Carl and Roxie Miller) who planned and built the Selkirk Lodge has been installed in the lodge. The Friends Group and the Winter Knights Snowmobile Club split the cost, to remind everyone that the lodge was built by volunteers for the enjoyment of all.

Contact Your State Legislators

According to Cleve Pinnix, Director of the Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, our Washington State Parks are in an advanced state of decay and getting worse fast.¹ Consider a few facts:

- ⊗ While our park system is the fourth most visited and one of the largest in the country, it ranks 49th in per visit spending.
- ⊗ Washington currently spends about \$0.63 per visitor compared to the national average of \$1.85 per visitor.
- ⊗ The ancient campground electrical system recently failed at Deception Pass, while the main access road at Mt. Spokane actually slid down the hill last April resulting in an \$800,000 repair. Addressing both of these crises required putting projects in other parks even further behind.

Numerous other emergency problems caused by neglect have forced the Parks Commission to defer more and more preventive maintenance which has in turn caused more deterioration, compromising visitor safety and substantially reducing the overall attractiveness of our parks.

Why is this important? Parks are an essential part of a healthy community. They provide much needed environments for leisure activities and challenging sports. The Parks Commission's

mission is to acquire, operate, enhance, and protect a very diverse system of recreational, cultural, historical, and natural sites. The Commission fosters both recreational use and preservation to ensure that our incredible natural resources continue to enrich future generations. And our parks are very important to an economy based increasingly on tourism. According to Pinnix, “spending by visitors who use the state parks system returns about \$80 million a year in state sales tax. So if you just look at it as a numbers-cruncher, you’d say this system more than pays its own way.”

Washington State Parks deserve better. For the 2001-2003 biennium, the Commission is proposing a much larger budget than ever before, \$124 million. Legislators are now better informed with regard to the extreme need, and there have been indications that over two decades of waiting could be near its end. But it is critical that our legislators hear from those of us who really value our parks. Therefore, the Board of the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park would like to encourage every local state park user to contact their state legislators and tell them to fully fund our state parks over the next biennium. Please see our web site for a sample letter. You can also call the legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.

Thank you!!

¹See “State of Decay” by Bob Mottram, Tacoma News Tribune, 8/23/00.

Friends Group and Advisory Committee Combine

The Friends Group is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1995 to enhance the programs and services of Mt. Spokane State Park and to encourage general awareness, further public interest, and provide public education in an effort to promote the responsible use of the Park and its cultural, recreational, historical, and natural resources.

The Friends Group was formed by the Mt. Spokane State Park Advisory Committee as a means for coordinating volunteer involvement in the Park and as a vehicle for raising funds to support Park projects. The members of the Mt. Spokane State Park Advisory Committee are appointed by the Director of the Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission.

At its March, 2000 meeting, the Friends Group modified its bylaws and board composition to mirror those of the Advisory Committee, such that the two groups will now operate much more as a single entity. Technically, the Friends Group is not empowered to render advice to the Parks Commission, and the Advisory Committee cannot raise money, so the two groups will maintain their separate functions.

The combined MSSP Advisory Committee and Friends Group Board now consists of Cris Currie (President), Chic Burge (Vice-president), Randy Knight (Secretary and passive summer recreation), Anita Boyden (Friends Group Treasurer), Bill Birk (at large), Phil Bolich and Mark Augustine (motorized winter recreation), Jeff Corkill (education), Tom Frost (non-motorized winter recreation), Ken Carmichael (equestrians), Gino Lisiecki and Mike Brixey (active summer recreation), Sam Moeller (at large), Sheila Pachernegg (environmental), Avery Peyton (business), Barbee Scheibner (at large), and Sherm Spencer (at large). Ex-officio members are Caroline

Halley, Don Hurst, Kirk Duncan, and Aaron Spurway.

Committees Need Help

If you would like to join a Friends Group committee, please contact Cris Currie at 466-9540 or by e-mail at criscurrie@igc.org.

The Trails Committee assists in implementing the trail plans and in organizing volunteer work parties. The Education Committee is producing new park brochures, a Friends Group web site, and other park interpretation materials. The Newsletter Committee is keeping our growing membership better informed. And the Park History Committee will eventually publish a comprehensive park history.

Joining the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park

Individual Membership: \$25 or 5 hours of volunteer service per year.

Family Membership: \$40 or 10 hours of volunteer service per year.

Corporate Membership: \$100 per year or more!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Send to The Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park

621 W. Mallon Suite 509

Spokane, WA 99201

Message phone: 509-467-9343

All contributions are tax deductible. Thank you!

Check out our new web site at www.mtspokane.org!