



The Moose Call

*Newsletter of the Friends of
Mt. Spokane State Park*

February 2012

President's Message

by Cris M. Currie

In 2011, the Mt. Spokane State Park Friends Group made substantial progress on several recently approved long term projects. Repairing the existing trails and building a few new trails are top priority projects that were conceptually approved last year. Since Mt. Spokane is primarily a trails park, it is essential that the trail system be sustainable as well as functional and enjoyable for all visitors. To that end, the Washington Trails Association (WTA) held its first five work parties in the park. WTA's involvement with Mt. Spokane was originally facilitated by board member Chris Bachman in 2010. The work parties were organized and led by Jane Baker, Eastern Washington's only WTA crew leader, and supervised by park staff and myself. Completed work included repairs and improved drainage on two sections of Trail 130, rebuilding a short section of Trail 100 to eliminate a set of problematic steps, repairing damage at the bottom of Trail 110 caused by a fallen tree, and reconfiguring the bottom of Trail 104 at the Kit Carson Loop Road. Jane and her experienced crews are in high demand throughout Eastern Washington, so we were very fortunate to have garnered so much attention this year, and all at no charge to the park or Friends Group! We expect this to be an ongoing relationship, as plans for this summer have already been formed.

Another project that unfortunately

was not included in the Master Facilities and Development Plan is a mountain biking management plan. Interest in mountain biking at Mt. Spokane has dramatically increased over the last several years and concerns have arisen regarding its compatibility with other recreational activities in the park. Since Deb Wallace, the state parks planning director who finalized Mt. Spokane's master plan, is no longer working for the agency, Nikki Fields was assigned to facilitate creation of this plan. She brought together a state-wide committee of biking enthusiasts as well as Friends Group members to create a draft proposal. So far, a survey was sent out in late 2011 with 764 responses! A phone conference was held in early January and alternatives are being developed. Interested persons are encouraged to follow the planning on the project's website at:

www.parks.wa.gov/plans/mtspokanemtbnike

The third major trails related project that got off to a good start in 2011 is the park guidebook. The Friends Group plans to publish a comprehensive guide to the park sometime in 2012. Most of the text has been written, and volunteers Bea Lackaff, along with two recent geography graduates of EWU, are finishing up the maps.

Also in 2012, we hope to construct a new backcountry hut primarily for snowshoers and skiers. We are now about halfway through the permitting process thanks to some volunteer structural engineering services from DCI Engineers, Spokane!

New Trail Numbers and Signs

As part of the 2010 master trail plan, the park's trail numbering system was modified. Trails are still identified by a 3 digit number, but now all main trails end in a zero, and those ending with any other digit are branches off that main trail. For example, Trail 130 is the longest trail in the park and is also known as the 'Round the Mountain Trail. Trails 131 through 138 are shorter trails which split off from 130. This system makes it easier to locate a trail by its number and determine its function within the larger network. Only a few existing trail numbers needed to be changed, such as Trail 115 (changed to 140) and Trail 135 (made part of Trail 140). All 134 trails in the park, whether public, administrative, proposed, open, or closed, have been identified with a number and a name. The Friends Group has also digitally mapped every trail and described it in detail on an Excel spreadsheet. Last fall, local Boy Scouts started installing new signs and posts at trail junctions so that the new maps, numbers



New Trail Junction Signs

and signs will all match. A different style of sign was chosen, and the hope is that they will last longer.

Ragged Ridge NAP

The park's Natural Area Preserve (NAP) on Ragged Ridge was established in 1985 and encompasses about 624 acres. It is in the far southeast corner of the park and was set aside for preservation to protect several rare plant associations. Only pedestrian use for research and recreation is permitted. Round trip hiking to the ridge from the Selkirk Lodge requires 6-8 hours. Because of its remote location, management issues such as illegal entry, have been a significant challenge. ATV riders, snowmobilers, and equestrians have been trespassing for many years and damaging the integrity of the preserve. Serious soil erosion and the introduction of invasive species such as Spotted knapweed and Dalmation toadflax has been the result.

About 15 years ago, wire fencing was stretched across both the north and the south boundaries with signs indicating that permission was needed for entry. Almost immediately, the barriers were torn down. Later, large holes were dug into three of the four access trails, but a new trail quickly appeared. Last summer, Andrew Fielding, the regional stewardship coordinator, Steve Christensen, the park manager, and Cris Currie, the Friends president, went out to Ragged Ridge to study the area and post some new signs indicating that entry is illegal except for scientific research and day hiking. So far the signs do not seem to be completely



New NAP Signs

effective.

After 11 years of spraying and pulling, the Friends Group is coming very close to eliminating the knapweed and toadflax, but to ensure that it stays out, the motorized and equestrian traffic must be stopped, and the eroded areas will need to be revegetated. The recent regional attention to the NAP is a very positive development, but it remains to be seen whether a new management plan will be any more effective than one developed in 2001.

WBA Visits Ragged Ridge

Five members of the Washington Butterfly Association (WBA) made a trek to the Ragged Ridge Natural Area Preserve in July



WBA members on Ragged Ridge

to see what they could find, and search for the elusive Compton tortoiseshell butterfly. This year, the WBA annual conference was in Newport, and Spokane member John Baumann led this field trip in conjunction with the conference. The weather was not very cooperative, but the group saw lots of potential for future expeditions to the area.

Alpine Ski Area Expansion Update

At the May 19, 2011 Parks Commission meeting in Spokane, the Commission finished the land classification for the unclassified area west of the summit

formerly known as the Proposed Alpine Ski Expansion Area (PASEA). In 1999, the Commission deferred classifying this 850 acre area until the ski area concessionaire (Mt. Spokane 2000) proposed a specific plan for expansion, including environmental studies. The expansion plan was presented and conceptually approved in May, making the classification decision possible.

Mt. Spokane 2000 is now going through the formal permitting procedures to develop 82 acres with a new chair lift and 7 new runs on the west side of the summit. In addition, 197 acres north of the new runs and above the Chair 4 Road will be officially available for tree skiing, for a total of 279 acres. The land with the formal runs was classified as Recreation (as is the rest of the current ski area), while the treed islands between the runs and the forest north of the runs was classified as Resource Recreation to set a higher level of natural resource protection for these areas. The remainder of the PASEA below the Chair 4 Road was classified Natural Forest Area.

The only conditional uses permitted in the area north of the runs are undeveloped alpine skiing and activities in support of search and rescue operations. These activities essentially consist of dropping downed and leaning trees to the ground to allow for appropriate corridors for emergency snowmobile access. Additional development associated with the new runs will be limited to sanitary facilities, warming huts, and minimal clearing of deadfall within the tree islands. No lodges can be built, and no new multi-use trails will be permitted. The amount and type of clearing permitted in the treed areas is expected to be less than that permitted in the current ski area.

For a review of the land classification designations, see the Friends website at www.mountspokane.org.

Staffing Cuts

As of February 2012, Mt. Spokane State Park had to say goodbye to two long time employees because of budget cuts. The intrepid ranger Clayne Perrins' position was eliminated, and maintenance man extraordinary Warren Arcano was transferred to Pearrygin Lake State Park. They will be sorely missed!

Join a Trail Crew!

If you would like to help build and maintain the trails at Mt. Spokane, work with fun



WTA volunteers removing a stump

loving individuals, learn new skills, and gain a deeper appreciation for the natural resources within our wonderful state park, then consider volunteering for a trail work party. No experience is required. Jane Baker, the Eastern Washington Crew Leader for The Washington Trails Association, will be organizing work parties this summer. To find out when, periodically check the WTA website at: www.wta.org/volunteer/trail-work-parties for Mt. Spokane, and then sign up.

Or, if you are a Spokane Mountaineers member, contact Holly Weiler at hmweiler@yahoo.com, for information about joining a Mountaineers crew.

Or, if you have a particular distaste for spotted knapweed, contact Jeanie Wagenman, at lyk2hyk@juno.com, and help

her eliminate this noxious weed from around the NOVA Hut.

Thank You Volunteers

Thank you board members: Mark Augenstine, Chris Bachman, Anita Boyden, Mike Brixey, Ken Carmichael, Mike Close, Cris Currie, Robin DeRuwe, Ray Downard, Rob Lindsay, George Momany, Barbee Scheibner, Shelley Tschida, Holly Weiler, Brad McQuarrie, and Sam Deal.

Also many thanks to our loyal volunteers and donors: Jane Baker, Lynn Smith, Bea Lackaff, Andrew Hunton, Steve Gurney, Stephanie Hughes, Ben Wadden, Mark Aden, Matthew Thomas, Parviz Partovi, Jeanie Wagenman, John and Megan Roland, Deidre and Cameron Allen, Dale Gill, Rick Haney, Debra and Bruce Howard, Duane Crockett, and Robin and Scott Redman!



Be sure to visit our newly revised website for updated trail maps, parking and permit regulations, a full copy of the approved trail plan, photos, information about the fire lookout, historical information, the snowshoeing brochure, past newsletters, and our new donation button!

If you would like to make a donation to the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park, you can do so through the website, or you can mail a check to:

The Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park
921 West Broadway, Suite 304
Spokane, WA 99201

Thank you!!!