



The Moose Call

*The Newsletter of the Friends of
Mt. Spokane State Park
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From the President

Cris M. Currie

The year started normally with two successful Friends Group guided First Day Hikes on January 1st, followed by three more FG guided snowshoe hikes organized by Spokane Parks & Recreation. On one of those hikes, I helped lead four vision impaired snowshoers and their personal guides to the snowshoe hut. While not everyone actually got to the hut during the time allowed, all were empowered with the knowledge and confidence to try again on their own. The last meeting of the Mountain Recreation & Education Center planning group met on February 5th and concluded that the \$25M project was unrealistic. About two weeks later, and after personally consulting with most of the group members, I submitted an alternative proposal to the Parks Commission on behalf of the Friends Group. This plan was later incorporated into the Commission's capital budget request.

As COVID-19 began to wreak havoc across the world, activity slowed considerably. The park was closed for 41 days. The trails and parking lots reopened on May 5th while the buildings remained closed and social distancing measures were enacted. Volunteer activities were limited, but WTA was still able to contribute hundreds of volunteer hours maintaining trails and working on the Trail 131 reroute. Evergreen also had numerous trail maintenance work parties and continued work on upper Trail 290. They were also able to hire two professional trail builders from Terraflow

Trail Systems to construct the top half of that trail. Early October snow cut that work short, however. I completed my 51st consecutive knapweed pull on Ragged Ridge and concluded that the weed has finally been eliminated from the entire ridge except for a handful of tiny spots in the original area of infestation which will require at least one more year of attention.

Unfortunately, the Vista House interpretive project made very little progress, and the Spokane Tribe interpretive project was set aside, while our proposed ADA interpretive trail around the Cook's Cabin Heritage Area was rejected due to potentially high costs. However, work is nearly complete on our proposal for an interpretive sign to be mounted inside the restored CCC woodshed. I was also able to work with park staff over the summer to update the GIS trail map and the park brochure, but staff have yet to complete the final products.

At our virtual September meeting, I announced my retirement from the Board and the remainder of the year was spent clarifying the Friends Group's role, organizing our archives, transcribing more of our history, trying to improve communications with staff, and reorganizing the group to better divide up the responsibilities. A trails committee was established. Its initial goal is to update the current trail plan with a formal recommendation to the Commission. An education committee was also established, and specific responsibilities were assigned to all of the officers. A group email address was created and an online application form was made for prospective new members.

A Retrospective

When I volunteered to serve as Chair of the newly appointed Mt. Spokane State Park Advisory Committee (AC) on May 25, 1995, I had no idea I would be leading the group for almost 26 years! I was already passionate about Mt. Spokane, and I was half way through a Masters in Conflict Resolution at Antioch University. Since the purpose of the group was essentially to resolve conflicts through a consensus process, and since I was the only one who knew how to run a consensus process, I figured I may as well try to broaden my experience with the skills. I had also recently “retired” from my position as founder and co-director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Spokane County, where I conducted and promoted mediation sessions. And, I had plenty of time and youthful energy to devote. I also had three years of experience as president of the Washington Mediation Association.

The AC had been formed to advise the state on how to manage Mt. Spokane State Park after its rather disastrous attempt to classify most of the land as Natural Forest Area. This would have effectively terminated any further recreational development other than for hiking. The AC was also given the task of facilitating the formation of a separate, nonprofit Friends Group (FG) to raise \$100,000 in matching funds for a park master planning process. A separate group was needed because advisory committees are not permitted to raise money, but the Commission wanted to maintain control over who served on the group providing them with advice. It would have had no such control if only a Friends Group had been created in the beginning. The Friends Group was formed in August and received its tax-exempt status a year later.

The two-group arrangement and the fundraising assignment were both quite problematic. It was very difficult to recruit members for the FG, because the real action was in the AC. It also turned out that FG members needed the same information that the AC did and vice versa, so it made sense to attend each others’ meetings. This led to

scheduling consecutive meetings on the same night, quickly giving up the unrealistic fundraising goal, then merging the two memberships and officers, and eventually dissolving the AC in 2013. It was then expected that the FG would continue to give advice, an expectation that has only marginally been fulfilled.

So, how to sum up 26 years? It’s no secret that I have played an outsized role in the work of the AC and FG. While a lot has been accomplished, my success with sharing the load and delegating has been rather limited. Obviously, that is about to change with my retirement this month. The FG Board has reorganized with the establishment of three important committees and job descriptions. It has also been involved in a process of redefining its role and improving communications with Parks staff. To further aid the transition, I have been busy writing summaries of all of our past and current projects and have organized and digitally collected together all meeting minutes, newsletters, and important documents, including the procedures for fulfilling our responsibilities to the federal government, the state, county, city, and others.

During this process of looking back, I’ve put together the following list of our accomplishments. Our longest and most important project was assisting with land classification and drafting both the interim and final comprehensive trail plan and its addendum as part of the Master Facilities Plan of 2010. We were also instrumental in designating the snowmobile and snowshoeing trails and expanding the trail system for Nordic skiing. Funding, constructing, and maintaining the Snowshoe Hut was our second biggest project, along with securing the funding for a new vault toilet near the hut. Since 2000, we have worked on several trail rerouting and maintenance projects before turning most of that work over to WTA and Evergreen. We have created and published park maps and brochures since 2000, as well as various trail signs. We created a website for the free distribution of all manner of detailed

information about the park. Annually for over 20 years we have worked on eliminating knapweed and illegal access from the Ragged Ridge Natural Area Preserve. We have created four interpretive signs with a fifth on the way. We published a unique 150 page guidebook for the park and the 250 page book on the unique history of Spokane skiing. We restored the CCC woodshed in the Cook's Cabin Heritage Area. We have provided park tours and interpretive services for Spokane Parks & Rec outings and other groups. We replaced an historic plaque on the Day Road. We have donated trail building tools, funding for a new CCC cabin roof, and emergency repairs for a Nordic groomer. We facilitated the construction and placement of two trailside log benches. We have published this annual newsletter. We have been a consistent advocate for balancing recreation with preservation, and for expanding the park's boundaries. And we have proposed a consensus-based Selkirk Lodge expansion plan, as well as recommendations for a Cook's Cabin interpretive trail, Vista House interpretation, and a tribute to the Spokane Tribe's history on the mountain.

Brad Retires and Jim Arrives

After an incredibly productive (as detailed in my skiing history book) and stressful 16 year tenure as Mt. Spokane Ski & Snowboard Park's general manager, Brad McQuarrie and his wife Brenda are finally getting their much deserved time off. When last heard from they were living on a boat, heading north out of Portland.

Jim van Loben Sells became the new GM in July with a new management team. Jim is also the owner of Arbor Crest Winery, but has gradually shifted management of the winery to others so he can devote full time to his other great love of skiing. Apparently, his new job happened suddenly and unexpectedly, but so far, he is loving it! He is also now an ex-officio member of the Friends Group and is excited to be formally

working with it.



Jim van Loben Sells

Here's a toast to the continued productivity of the Friends Group!



Cris and Nora in situ on the Day Road

New Park Vehicle

After the park's ATV and trail bike were stolen, staff received a brand new side-by-side this summer. It's perfect for getting around on park trails and transporting tools, supplies, and even injured hikers, according to park aide Dana Tague. Dana and his wife Pam started as volunteer campground hosts 3 years ago and later became summer park aides. Last September they permanently



Dana Tague in the new ATV

moved to Arizona, and they will really be missed! This winter, tracks were purchased for the vehicle with the help of a Winter Rec. grant. According to Ranger Jerry, having a heated cab makes cutting trees on the Nordic trails way more comfortable!

Lodge Area Expansion Proposal

Last February, six years of planning for a new building to replace the Selkirk Lodge were wrapped up. After the total estimated cost of the construction, which included a new parking lot and horse camp, was revealed in November at \$24,455,000, the project was deemed infeasible. The Friends Group had been involved in the planning process, but was only invited in after consultants had been hired, and initial plans for a new multi-story lodge at Junction 1, a 30-station biathlon range on Brian's Hill, a parking lot on the Linder Ridge Road, and 5K of 9m wide racing trails had been made. Once the initial plan was rejected, Brian Patnode, the new parks planner assigned to the project after Richard Brown, led a stakeholders group through a needs assessment process culminating in the above mentioned infeasible proposal. Then, 16 days after the final stakeholder's meeting, the Friends Group submitted an alternative plan, to be accomplished in separate stages that we believe better fits the need. The first stage would be to build the additional parking lot and horse camp as previously envisioned. The second stage is to build a 30' X 40' addition onto the west end of the Selkirk

Lodge for more event space and then a new equipment storage garage behind the lodge. The third stage would include another, two-story addition onto the east end for expanded restrooms, a rental concession, ski patrol, and storage. Finally, a heated race timing shack would be built up near the present learning area, which would be expanded for race starts and finishes.

After receiving the proposal, Brian divided it into a scoping phase for 2021-23 that would reassess the needs and the potential for expanding the lodge to meet them, and a construction phase for 2023-25. He requested about \$5M in the capital budget, but it did not make it into the governor's budget, so the project is at a standstill. Brian did however, recently express interest in working with the Friends Group and other volunteers to add more architectural and construction detail to the proposal to increase its chances of future funding.

Trail Plan to be Updated

State Parks has applied for a \$200,000 RCO grant to update the park's trail plan produced by the AC and FG in 2010. If the grant is approved, Parks plans to hire technical consultants for assistance. Whether approved or not, the FG is planning to spend the next year working on its own recommended revision.

New Directors

At this month's annual meeting, Mary Ann Sullivan, Duane Crockett, Don Story, Carol Corbin, and Sean Harrington were newly elected to the FG Board. They are filling the positions vacated by Ray Downard, Phil Kramer, Steve Sparks, Shelley Tschida, and Cris Currie. Re-elected were Dean Meakin, George Momany, Holly Weiler, John Nelson, and Darrell Soyars as VP. They will join President Jeff Gibson, Treasurer Ken Carmichael, Secretary Mike Henneberry, Anita Boyden, and Chris Conley. The Board extends a hearty welcome to its new members and sincere thanks for the many hours of service donated by those who are leaving.