



The Moose Call

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

February 2005

President's Message

by Cris M. Currie

Much has been accomplished by the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park over the last two years. The Quartz Mountain lookout project literally got off the ground, a long range trail planning process was started, and the Knapweed eradication program on Ragged Ridge continued in its fifth year. These projects are all described in greater detail in this newsletter. In addition, we now have a group of three volunteers who are busy compiling and collating 75 years worth of historical data about the Park for eventual publication. Volunteers are needed more than ever. For example, we are still looking for a newsletter layout editor, and representatives for the environmental community, nature based recreation, and passive summer recreation. So if you would like to get involved, be sure to contact the Friends!

Fire Lookout Off the Ground

On October 8, volunteers closed in the newly reconstructed fire lookout on Quartz Mountain for the winter after two weeks of steady work. The 14' X 14' wood frame lookout was originally built on the summit of Mt. Spokane in 1979 by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) using a 40' wood tower. It was actively used for spotting fires until 1994, when it was permanently closed. The lookout represents the end of an era on Mt. Spokane which started in 1934 with the construction of the Vista House and the attached fire lookout at its north end. In 1948, an 85' wood tower lookout was constructed, but it collapsed during its first winter under the heavy snows. A new 45' tower was built in 1950, and then it was replaced in 1963. The Mt. Spokane



The Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park
621 W. Mallon, Suite 509
Spokane, WA 99201
(509) 467-9343
www.mtspokane.org

structures had to endure the worst icing conditions of any fire lookouts in the state, and the DNR could no longer afford the constant repairs, for what it believed to be an obsolete technology. The lookout was destined for demolition until the Park staff and the Advisory Committee requested that it be given to the Park.

With much Advisory Committee input, it was decided that the lookout would be best utilized as a recreation rental cabin, but that it should be moved to the top of Quartz Mountain, the 5,160' summit just to the southeast of Mt. Spokane that was purchased by State Parks in December of 1999. The plan also includes maintaining the ability to use the structure for spotting fires by trained personnel during "red flag" summer conditions. Moving it well away from the paved road and busy transmitters on the summit will make for a higher quality experience. It also means that renters will need to make the 2.25 mile trek to the tower under their own power. It is expected that since Quartz Mountain is about 700' lower in elevation, and since the lookout is now sitting on only a 10' tower, the icing problems will be greatly reduced. It might therefore be possible to eventually utilize the cabin during the winter. Since the DNR had already budgeted funds for its destruction, the agency simply gave the Park the lookout and the budgeted demolition funds to do as it pleased. So in June of 2001, crews scrapped the tower after removing the 9000 pound cabin with a crane, and moved it by truck to a storage area in the Park where it remained until the end of August of 2004.

It took three years to get permits for the tower construction, prepare a business plan, secure funding, plan the sanitation facilities, and figure out how to move the cabin from the ground near the Park entrance to the top of Quartz. Army Air Guard Chinook helicopters have been used in the past to move lookouts, with varying degrees of

success, but the war in Iraq made that option nearly impossible. In October 2003, the Parks Commission committed funds to a total of 100 state park projects (known as 100 Connections) involving nearly every park in the state as part of its Centennial 2013 Vision. Because the Friends Group was willing to commit \$5000 in matching funds, the lookout project was included as one of these statewide priority projects. The Centennial Vision states that "in 2013, Washington's state parks will be premier destinations of uncommon quality, including state and regionally significant natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources that are attractive for public experience, health, enjoyment and learning."

In late August of 2004, a state parks maintenance crew made the old road passable for heavy trucks, poured 4 concrete pillars, erected the tower, and prepared the site for the CXT vault toilet. When the toilet was delivered, it was decided that the same truck with its boom crane would attempt to transport the lookout and lift it to the top of the tower.

Two sides of the catwalk and roof were cut off of the cabin and the windows were removed in preparation for its trip up the steep and narrow mountain road. The boom was stretched to its maximum, but the plan worked and the cabin was bolted into place! During the first part of September, the crew worked feverishly, often in inclement weather, to restore the roof, the catwalk and the railing, insulate the ceiling, and build an access stairway. Then

Jim and Linda Frey, the volunteer campground hosts, took the responsibility to complete the reconstruction. Jim is a retired Marine and home builder with many years of construction experience, and he took on the project with



gusto. The immediate goal was to get the structure closed in so it would survive the harsh winter conditions. The Freys and a handful of other volunteers (including **Bill and Eunice Birk**, **Cris Currie**, **Carol Ann Christensen**, and **Ray Kresek** a retired fire spotter, fire fighter and author of “Fire Lookouts of the Northwest”), along with Park staff, were able to complete this task just before the weather turned colder. They pulled out the moldy carpet, cleaned mold off of the walls, hand installed 34 Lexan windows, got an initial coat of paint on the exterior and stain on the catwalk, wrapped the walls in plastic, nailed on the shutters, closed in the stairway, and cleaned up the site. Lightning protection was also installed.

Next summer, the work will continue. The window moldings and caulking need finishing, the interior and exterior needs



additional paint and stain, the ceiling and flooring need finishing, a door needs to be built and hung, the cabinets and bunks need to be constructed, new winter shutters need to be designed and built, and the furnishings need to be purchased so that the cabin retains the flavor of a historic lookout. It is expected to be ready to rent by mid-summer of 2005.

Trail Planning Started

The Mt. Spokane State Park Advisory Committee/Friends Group has taken on the task of creating a draft proposal for a comprehensive trail use and development plan for the Park. As part of its long term park planning process, the Parks Commission determined that such a plan was needed for Mt. Spokane because of the many complex and interrelated issues involving environmental protection, recreational use, user conflict, and visitor safety that exist. While the Commission intends to eventually allocate funding through its capital budgeting

process for the development of such a plan, it is extremely doubtful that funding will appear any time soon. Meanwhile, no further changes or improvements to the trails can be made until a trail plan is brought before the general public and approved by the Commission. Because the Friends Group has been collecting data about Park trails for several years, the group decided it was time to take the initiative and make a proposal. Currently, there is an interim trail plan in place that addresses some of the more urgent needs, but that is the only template, since no Washington state park has ever done a comprehensive trail plan before.

So far, the group has outlined the plan's scope and put together a trail inventory. Over the next year, the group will be discussing each trail in detail with regard to its current use, potential use, its current and potential user conflict, its condition, what improvements are needed, whether restrictions are necessary, how impact monitoring will occur, how the trail is accessed, how it is identified and signed, how it connects with other trails both inside and outside the park, how regular maintenance will occur, and whether the trail should be maintained as is, rerouted, or eliminated. There will also be discussion around where new trails might go. Of course, the ultimate proposal will need to be consistent with all previously approved Commission policies which govern trail use and development, especially the Park's land classification system.

State park planning is a very open process. Anyone with ideas regarding current and future trail use and development at and around Mt. Spokane is welcome to participate. No plan will be finalized by the Commission until after a full public review process has been completed. Please contact the Friends Group if you would like to attend any of its meetings. You can mail in your ideas or contact the group's president by e-mail at criscurrie@igc.org. You can also contact the Park by e-mail at mount.spokane@parks.wa.gov.

Free Park Passes

Any volunteer who can document at least 20 hours of approved work for the Park is qualified to obtain a free Mt. Spokane State Park entry pass that is good for one year. Once the volunteer completes 40 hours of work, a statewide park pass can be obtained at no charge. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Steve Christensen, the park manager, at 238-4258.

Current Advisors

The current members of the Advisory Committee/Friends Group Board are: **Mark Augenstine, Anita Boyden, Mike Brixey, Ken Carmichael, Cris Currie, Tom Frost, Dean Kiefer, Jeff Gibson, Barbee Scheibner, Aaron Spurway, and Shelley Tschida.** Ex-officio members are **Aaron Trainor, Brad McQuarrie, and Sam Deal.** **Craig Bierly** has been assisting with the trail planning and **Karen Covelli** is assisting the history committee.

Ragged Ridge

Volunteers **Bill Birk, Nora Searing, and Cris Currie** completed the fifth consecutive year of Spotted Knapweed control on Ragged Ridge, the Natural Area Preserve within Mt. Spokane State Park. The crew walks the

entire ridge trail each June to spray the new sprouts of this noxious weed and then returns at least two more times to pull the survivors. The project will continue until the plant is eradicated from the natural area.

Park Improvements

A number of additional park improvements were completed over the last year and a half by park staff. New water wells were drilled for the alpine ski area, the ranger residences, shop and the Selkirk Lodge. Ceiling insulation was installed in the NOVA Hut. The NOVA Hut and Selkirk Lodge had their exterior walls stained. An unsightly surplus materials pile near the park entrance was removed. And the camp sites on Bald Knob were renovated. The Park also acquired a new tractor and mowing machine and an ATV for maintenance work.

New Park Ranger

With the departure of Ranger Patrick Henry to Field Springs State Park, Jerry Johnson was hired in January, 2005 as a Ranger 3. Jerry has been with Washington State Parks for 20 years and he enjoys horse back riding, camping, and skiing. His extended family all lives in Spokane, and he is also the father of six teen age children. Welcome Jerry! Clayne Perrins is continuing this year as a ranger-in-training.

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! All contributions are tax deductible

Date: _____

Name: _____

I would like to volunteer: _____ hrs

Address: _____

I have enclosed: \$ _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail to: The Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park, 621 W. Mallon, Suite 509, Spokane, WA 99201

Thank you!

Message phone: (509) 467-9343

Web site: www.mtspokane.org