



# *The Moose Call*

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

*February 2017*

*Www.MountSpokane.org*

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## **From the President**

by Cris M. Currie

Despite a disrupted volunteer work season due to the park's badly needed road construction between July 11 and October 8, a great deal of work got done in 2016. On a cold Memorial Day weekend, Ashton Finnoe finished his Eagle Scout project installing a custom made set of steel stairs to the old fire lookout atop the Vista House. The labor and all materials were donated, and work can now begin to create a fire lookout museum in the space.

The November 17, 2015 windstorm that hit Spokane County left a huge mess around the entire park and especially the CCC Cabin. Fortunately the cabin remained intact, but Friends Group volunteers and staff spent three days in June cutting up the huge downed trees. Later, snowmobile club volunteers cut and stacked about half of the pile into firewood which filled the new woodshed just constructed by another Eagle Scout. Two new Heritage Area interpretive signs were produced and installed in the CCC Cabin by Friends Group volunteers and Olympia staff. Park staff and Washington Conservation Corps volunteers finished re-chinking and staining the cabin and staff also replaced the cedar shakes on the roof in addition to repairing the chimney and inserting a bigger wood stove into the original fireplace. The Friends Group contributed \$1000 to that project. Work was also started to pull decades worth of grass and weeds from the

stone walkways and walls and to generally clean up the surrounding area in preparation for creating a walk-in campground in the old CCC camp area. The roof reconstruction was finished on the Cook's Woodshed but additional work was deferred until the next summer. However, WTA volunteers Randy Greyerbiehl and Alex Perdian and I built an ADA access trail to the rear entrance of the snowshoe hut at Smith Gap.

Volunteers also assisted in blocking illegal ATV access trails in the Ragged Ridge Natural Area Preserve. Representatives from the Spokane Tribe gave a presentation to the Friends Group Board on the cultural significance of the mountain to the Tribe and agreed to assist in creating some additional interpretive signs for the park. That work is continuing.

The Friends Group also edited and reprinted a second run of 2500 of its color park brochures for free distribution, and over 150 park guidebooks were sold during the year. I led two full day driving tours behind the gates in the park for Board members so that they might become more familiar with relatively unknown areas in the park. I also conducted two skiing history tours as part of the research for my upcoming book on the history of skiing around Spokane. A park tour was also provided for Melissa Carpenter, Governor Inslee's Spokane representative.

Sadly, the Board as well as the entire Spokane community, suddenly lost a much beloved leader in May to cancer: Attorney Leslie Weatherhead. The Friends Group was blessed to have briefly benefitted from his many talents as a Board

member. Fortunately attorney John Nelson, the current director of the Mt. Spokane Ski Patrol, stepped up to fill his position. In other changes, Dean Meakin, current Washington State Snowmobile Association president, replaced Mark Augenstine as the motorized winter recreation representative.

## Trail 104 Repair

by Holly Weiler

Each winter Washington Trails Association crew leaders meet with land managers around our local area to identify priority projects for the upcoming trail work season. For 2016 at Mount Spokane, that priority project was Trail 104. This is the short connector trail that starts at the Lower Mount Kit Carson Loop Road near the intersection with Trail 110 and heads up a short, steep hill to tie into Trail 100. It's a popular trail that has a history of erosion issues due to the steepness of the grade.

In order to help prevent erosion and make trails sustainable, trails that ascend a slope should average approximately 10% grade. When measured with a clinometer (a tool for determining trail grade), parts of trail 104 were at 20% and even 30% slope.



There were also exposed tree roots at the upper end of the trail segment, with measured drop-offs of up to 19". For this project, we focused on short trail realignments in some areas in order to reduce the grade. At the top of the climb, a realignment wasn't possible, so we instead installed crib steps. We built the crib

steps to standards established by the US Forest Service as appropriate for multi-use trails, including both equestrian and mountain bike travel.



We devoted a total of fourteen volunteer days and 1,077.5 volunteer hours to this project in the summer of 2016. Our volunteer days were made a little more difficult due to the need to work around the road resurfacing project. We needed to adjust our normal volunteer hours, and the crew leaders ended up on the wrong side of a travel window more than once! It was our easiest work site in terms of access to the project location, as we were able to park our cars at the bottom of Trail 104, and we had both a picnic table for lunch breaks and easy access to the vault toilet (our volunteers are used to no bathroom access, so this was quite nice). However, we needed to move heavy wooden beams and a massive pile of gravel to the site of the crib steps, work that was all accomplished by hand. One of our volunteers thought of ingenious methods for helping us move these heavy objects, constructing a beam-transporter hand cart (maneuvered by three volunteers working together) and neck yokes that allowed each volunteer to carry two buckets of gravel at a time. Even though it was less than .25 mile from the bottom of the trail to the top, GPS showed that volunteers hiked up to six miles each day while transporting the loads of materials up the hill!

If this sounds like a fun project, there will be time to get involved in 2017! We have a little finishing work at the top of the project site, and

we also intend to replace some old failed structures at the bottom of trail 104, where a retaining wall is currently crumbling. Watch for work to begin sometime in May 2017. Register at [wta.org/volunteer](http://wta.org/volunteer) or look for these opportunities to be posted to the Friends of Mount Spokane volunteer site: [www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com](http://www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com).

### **Curbing Illegal Park Uses**

Managing the park to keep visitors from engaging in illegal activities has been an ongoing challenge for park staff. The Friends Group has been assisting staff in two of those areas: eliminating access by ATVs to the Ragged Ridge Natural Area Preserve, and the operation of snowmobiles outside of the designated areas.

A new 4 wheel ATV trail was discovered by hikers last summer going straight up the fall line to the top of Ragged Ridge and starting from an abandoned logging road on Inland Empire Paper Company property. By the time it was discovered, severe erosion had already occurred. Other areas on the ridge top also had new ATV tracks killing the native grasses and eroding the fragile soils.



In the fall, volunteers pulled fallen trees and branches across the trail and park staff used the mini-excavator to dig holes across the access road. Volunteers will continue their efforts to

monitor the situation and to continue pulling the invasive spotted knapweed from along the ridge trail.

The earliest known complaint about snowmobilers causing damage and intolerable noise in the park was a letter to park manager Alan Lakoduk from Will Murray, president of the Spokane Mountaineers in 1969. This was shortly after snowmobiling was permitted in designated areas at Mt. Spokane by the Parks Commission in 1966, but the designated areas were not specified until 2000, at the request of the Friends Group. Last winter, snowmobile tracks were found over the top of the newly restored Cook's cabin woodshed three times. This prompted a renewed effort to restrict snowmobile use to the designated areas, and this year the Friends Group invested in additional signs for the kiosks adjacent to the groomed snowmobile trails.



The hope is that the enlarged Friends brochure and map and the additional Stay On Trail signs will be just as informative as they are hard to miss.

### **Friends With City Parks & Rec.**

Development of an adaptive Nordic skiing program was given a boost at a November 5 event sponsored by the Spokane Nordic Ski Association. Also as a result of that event, Ryan Griffith, Director of the Spokane Parks and Recreation Department, signed an agreement



with the Friends Group to provide paid interpretive guides for scheduled Parks & Rec. activities in the park. The hope is that the program will expand from the current guided introductory snowshoe hikes to more advanced tours in wilder sections of the park. This winter, Cris Currie and Holly Weiler have accompanied groups of 10-15 participants and 2-4 guides to provide additional park information and outdoor advice on several of the Department's snowshoe outings.

### Quotable Quotes

“If bread is the first necessity of life, recreation is a close second.” –Edward Bellamy, 19<sup>th</sup> century American socialist and author of Looking Backward.

“Nobody frowns in a state park.” –Washington Governor Jay Inslee, 9/13/16.

### First Day at Mt. Spokane

First Day Hikes is a program sponsored by state parks around the country that encourages people to start off the new year with some outdoor fun and exercise. This was the fourth year that the Friends Group has participated by leading snowshoe hikes. Last year's conditions could not have been more perfect, but this year things were a bit more challenging. Nevertheless, 15 hardy snowshoers followed their leader to the summit of Mt. Spokane and a separate group of 10 were guided to the snowshoe hut at Smith Gap. Temperatures were in the teens, it was snowing hard, and the wind was 20-30 mph.



While the wind was not a big issue down in the trees, above Bald Knob on the south face, it was blizzard conditions. The Vista House with its roaring fire and hot soup for sale was a most welcome site! With very poor visibility, getting back down was the final challenge, made relatively easy by again following the leader.

### New Interpretive Signs

During 2014, the Friends Group and Olympia staff Ryan Karlson and Sam Wotipka worked together to produce four new cultural resources interpretive signs for the park. Two were installed in 2015 at the Cook's Cabin site, and two were installed last July in the CCC Cabin. These last two describe the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Mt. Spokane and explain how the existing log cabin came to be.



Along with the new woodshed just outside the cabin that will help keep the inside of the cabin much cleaner, our hope is that a visit to the heritage area will be more enjoyable for everyone.

For volunteer opportunities, be sure to check [www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com](http://www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com), or contact [criscurrie22@gmail.com](mailto:criscurrie22@gmail.com). Visit the Friends Group website at [www.mountspokane.org](http://www.mountspokane.org) for all things Mt. Spokane and to make donations to the Friends Group. Don't forget to renew your Discover Pass, and get out and enjoy your park!