



The Moose Call

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

February 2010

President's Message

by Cris M. Currie

The combined Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park and Advisory Committee met four times in 2009. Most of the work consisted of responding to additional concerns and questions that Parks Commission staff had over the proposed trail and accommodations plans. Staff then prepared the proposed Master Facilities and Development Plan as a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and planned to have it approved by the Commission at its October meeting in Spokane. This plan was to include all future development in the Park except for the alpine ski area. However, numerous issues arose during the public comment periods forcing staff to postpone Commission approval until at least June of 2010.

Most notably at the October Commission meeting, we received the 2008 Volunteer Group of the Year Award for our trail planning work, while Mt. Spokane State Park received the Centennial Quality Award.

In June, Friends Group volunteers assisted Park Manager Steve Christensen in flagging trail reroutes on Mt. Kit Carson and a new trail on the west side of the Park. Group members also assisted in siting the location for a proposed yurt, and assessing a

proposed new winter access trail for snowmobiling.

This was the tenth consecutive year that volunteers have pulled Spotted Knapweed on Ragged Ridge. The population of plants continues to decline and the project requires less time every summer.

Early in the year, we met with leaders of a group wanting to establish a mountain biking concession between Spirit Lake, ID and the Park to attract more tourism to North Idaho. Plans were considered favorably and route is expected to open in June of 2011.

We also welcomed Cindy Whaley, a Spokane attorney, as the state's newest Parks Commissioner. With the recent retiring of Clyde Anderson, it was critical that the Spokane area regain representation on the Commission since major decisions regarding Mt. Spokane's future still need to be finalized.

And finally a reminder to all Moose Call readers: **Please send us your e-mail address** so we can mail your newsletter electronically. We are a very small organization with an equally small budget, so every dollar we can save on operating costs will benefit the Park. You can send your e-mail address to me at criscurrie@igc.org. Thank you!

Implementing the Master Plan

After fourteen years of planning the future of Mt. Spokane State Park, we are finally at the point where we can begin to implement some of these plans. However, implementation requires funding and volunteers, and that is the subject of most of this newsletter. Our goal for this year is to organize six trail work parties and raise about \$15,000.00.

Project One is to re-route Trail 140 from Smith Gap to the Mt. Spokane summit. This trail was formerly known as Trail 115 and Trail 135. The lower half is a badly eroded fall line trail originally built strictly as a fire road. The upper portion is likewise very steep and badly eroded in places due to its rocky soils and heavy use as currently the only single track trail from the summit. This is about 1.75 miles of trail reconstruction. Over the next several years, many more miles of trail will need to be built to fulfill the vision of our trail plan.

To accomplish this work, the Friends Group has decided to start building long term relationships with the Washington Trails Association, REI, Conservation Northwest, the International Mountain Biking Association, the Spokane Mountaineers and others to organize regular trail work parties on the mountain. In the past, most major trail work has been done by prison crews, paid by the state. Consideration has also been given to purchasing a trail building machine, but the advantages of volunteer crews are many.



Volunteer Liz Boyden using a clinometer to lay out a new trail

First, effective trail work involves large numbers of people, and the more people we can involve, the more we enhance the public's appreciation for the Park through direct involvement with improving its facilities. Increased stewardship typically follows enhanced appreciation, as use of the Park continues to grow. Friends Group membership should also increase as people gravitate toward like-minded people and look for ways to contribute and learn more. Ultimately we might even see a reduction in the amount of maintenance required by staff. One more important advantage of volunteer crews is that very little outside funding is required to use them.

Project Two is the construction of a shelter for snowshoers that will double as a summer overnight rental. The Friends Group thinks that a 20' yurt will be the most comfortable and cost effective option for meeting this need. Snowshoeing at the Park is growing more and more popular every year, yet there are minimal facilities to accommodate and encourage it.

Four years ago, snowshoeing trails were designated and a brochure and map were produced by the Friends in an effort to encourage snowshoeing on trails that were not being groomed for other activities. The Selkirk Lodge provides warm shelter and restroom facilities for nordic skiers and snowmobilers, but other than a designated parking lot, no similar facilities exist for snowshoers.

The need is for a centrally located comfortable shelter where visitors can eat lunch, socialize, share adventures, get information, and relax for short periods in a peaceful winter environment. Such a place would substantially increase the appeal of snowshoeing for the hundreds of people who have come to rely on Mt. Spokane as a nearby and very affordable place of refuge and renewal.

The yurt will be located at the intersection of Trail 110 and the Kit Carson Loop Road. This location is right in the heart of one of the most accessible and majestic cedar-hemlock forests in the region, yet it is less than a 10 minute walk from the paved road and parking lot. The site is also along the edge of Burping Brook and has been a developed picnic area for many years.

From here, hikers and snowshoers can explore Trail 110 up to Mt. Kit Carson, Day Mountain or the CCC cabin area, or Trails 100 and 130 up to Bald Knob and the summit, or the much easier Loop Road out to Smith Gap and Hay Ridge, or they can go gently downhill to the park entrance. The site is over a mile from the groomed snowmobile trail and far enough from the paved road to minimize traffic noise, yet it is easily accessed by park maintenance vehicles in the summer.



A Pacific Yurt

For summer use, the yurt is expected to be nearly as popular as the fire lookout on Quartz Mountain, which books for its entire season in just a couple of days every March 1 and rents for a modest nightly fee. The much shorter hike to the yurt will appeal to older people and families with smaller children who are physically unable to backpack the 2.25 miles to the lookout. It will also offer a completely different, but no less magnificent environment in which to relax. The

opportunity to stay in a yurt is still unusual and pleasing enough that many people will make a reservation for that experience alone. Plus, because of the lower elevation, the yurt will have a longer rental season.

Modern yurts are updated versions of the round tents used by Central Asian nomads for centuries, and they are already in use at five Washington State Parks. Yurts are designed so that rafters push inward on a compression ring at the top and outward on a tension cable around the wall. This prevents the rafters from moving outward by allowing roof loads to be transferred down the rafters to the cable. The roof is pitched and slick so snow slides off easily, piling high around the outside wall and providing more insulation.

Yurts typically in use in the Pacific Northwest (including those at Washington State Parks) are made by Pacific Yurts, Inc. of Cottage Grove, OR (www.yurts.com). They use a flame retardant vinyl top cover with electronically bonded seams that are impervious to moisture. The side cover is polyester with an interior wood lattice. Windows are of clear zippered vinyl and come with screens. There is a clear acrylic dome with an optional opener and screen for additional ventilation. They also come with a locking pre-hung wood door.

The yurt will be pitched on a platform, made with tongue and groove flooring for the inside, and a plank deck outside, large enough to accommodate a few chairs and a picnic table. A wood stove will provide the heat, and bunks will sleep five. Drinking water is available in Burping Brook for those with their own filters, and bottled water can also be made available by park staff. A vault toilet is already at the site.

The Friends think the entire project can be done for about \$15,000.00 and want to raise these funds in time to construct the yurt for next winter.



How You Can Help!

If you would like to volunteer for a trail crew or to help with the yurt project, contact Holly Weiler by e-mail at hmweiler@yahoo.com.

If you would like to contribute money for the yurt, please make your check to:

The Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park
and send it to:

Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park
621 W. Mallon, Suite 607
Spokane, WA 99201

All contributions are tax deductible.
Thank you!!

Attention Photographers!

We are looking for photos of people enjoying the trails at Mt. Spokane to use in our fundraising efforts. Please e-mail them to Stephanie Hughes at sumoman@comcast.net. Thank you!

Thanks to our Volunteers

Board members include: Mark Augenstine, Anita Boyden, Marilyn Brennan, Mike Brixey, Ken Carmichael, Cris Currie, Robin DeRuwe, Rob Lindsay, George Momany, Lew Persons, Barbee Scheibner, Aaron Spurway, Shelley Tschida, and Holly Weiler. Other volunteers include: Brad McQuarrie, Sam Deal, Chris Bachman, Stephanie Hughes, Tom Frost, Joni Sasich, and Sicco Rood.

Website News

Check out our newly redesigned website at www.mountspokane.org. This is the place where you can download lots of great trail maps, the complete draft trail plan with all of its maps, and lots of other fun stuff!



Mt. Tahoma Trail Assoc. Yurt at Mt. Rainier