



# *The Moose Call*

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

*February 2013*

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## **From the President**

by Cris M. Currie

It was another busy year for the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park and Advisory Committee. Massive budget cuts swept the state park system at the beginning of the year and Mt. Spokane lost one ranger and one maintenance person. This resulted in a call by Park Manager Steve Christensen for more help from volunteers. The Friends Group responded in three ways. First, members began to participate on an All Trails Council which will assist with allocating funds from the Winter Recreation Advisory Committee and respond to requests and comments from the public involving snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Secondly, the Friends provided a Volunteer Coordinator, Holly Weiler, to the park who worked 2 days per week during the summer to coordinate and supervise trail maintenance work, cleanup projects, and rogue trail monitoring and restoration. And third, work was initiated to create a more effective and user friendly way for park visitors to leave comments regarding their park experience and receive responses that do not require staff time.

The Friends Group worked with the Washington Trails Association for the second year to repair problem trails. Wet areas at the west end of Trail 100 and on upper Trail 140 were greatly improved, and a couple of hundred feet of Trail 130 just above the Upper Kit Carson Loop Road was rerouted to

bypass a wet area and improve the junction at the Loop Road. Park staff widened many of the nordic ski area trails in preparation for a new and much bigger groomer for the 2012-13 season. And permits were secured for the re-routing of upper Trail 140 off the Mt. Spokane summit and Trail 160 up Mt. Kit Carson. These projects should be completed in 2013. Friends pulled knapweed on Ragged Ridge for the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, and for the first time, pulled the weed from around the NOVA Hut and in other parts of the park.

While we were unable to actually begin construction on the snowshoe hut in 2012, we *were* able to complete the very time consuming permit process and get the building site cleared. The site had to be changed due to concerns over diseased trees, and the hut will now be built at Smith Gap. Two volunteers are ready to lead the construction effort this summer.

We also ran into snags finishing the GIS park mapping project. Corrupted data proved too much for volunteers to correct, so a GIS professional at Spokane County was hired and costs were split between the Friends Group and the state. We are now working with another volunteer to do the cartography needed for the park guidebook. A new pictorial history of the park was published this year by Duane Becker, and we hope to do some joint marketing once our guidebook is published.

Most of the Advisory Committee meeting time for 2012 was devoted to

revising the park's trail plan that was approved August, 2010. The group worked with the local mountain biking club on a plan to both improve park trails for biking and create safer conditions for other trail users. After much discussion, the group reached consensus and submitted its recommendations to Olympia staff at the end of December.

And finally, the Friends Group was very excited to start working with Eric Sawyer, CEO of the Spokane Regional Sports Commission and former member of the Advisory Committee, and Jim van Loben Sels, General Manager of Arbor Crest Winery, who joined the Washington State Parks Foundation board as the first representatives from Eastern Washington.

### **Trail Plan Amended**

Over the last 20 years, change at Mt. Spokane State Park has seemed almost imperceptibly slow, but that pace has dramatically picked up over the last two years as long term planning projects near completion. Even the master trail plan produced by the Mt. Spokane Advisory Committee and approved by the Parks Commission in August, 2010, is already in need of major revisions, largely due to changes in recreational use brought about by mountain bikes.

Olympia and local Parks staff, the Advisory Committee, and the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance have been working hard over the last two years to create a plan for improving opportunities for mountain biking at Mt. Spokane while protecting the delicate natural resources and ensuring the safety of other trail users. As recommended by the Advisory Committee, the plan calls for increasing the separation between users of high speed, downhill bikes and other trail users. The Committee recommends accomplishing this in a couple of stages.

First, while all trails would remain multi-use, Trail 140, from the summit to the

Bear Creek Lodge boundary will be designated as the primary downhill bike route until a more suitable route can be built. To make it even more attractive to the gravity riders, two uphill sections in the current trail will be rerouted this summer so that the entire trail will be downhill, except for one short section near the bottom. The run is entirely single track except for a half mile of fire road south of Smith Gap. So with much more single track and continuous downhill than any other route in the park, it is expected that Trail 140 will become the run of choice for high speed riders, leaving Trails 110 and 100 for slower riders and other trail users. Warnings regarding the need to expect downhill bike traffic will be placed along Trail 140, but cyclists will still be required to yield to other users according to the yield triangle.



Stage 2 involves creating an even more attractive option for the gravity riders that further separates them from other users. During the summer of 2014, construction is planned for Trail 290 in the alpine ski area from the summit to the bottom of the B-29 ski run (Trail 130). It will be designed and largely built by those who will use it. From Trail 130, the route will utilize existing Trail 132 to connect to Trails 120 and 122 to the park entrance trailhead. The short uphill sections and the steep downhill sections of these fire roads will be rerouted with single track trail and features for extra challenge. Trail 290 will be exclusively for downhill

riding, and downhill riders will have the right-of-way on the rest of the route.

Finally, in order to complete an alternative summit route for equestrians and hikers, the Committee recommends building Trail 138 between the campground and the summit. This trail would connect to Trails 130 and 131 for a route to/from the Lower Selkirk parking area and downhill biking would be prohibited.

### **Nordic Area Expands**

This season, the nordic ski area at Mt. Spokane expanded again, adding about 15km to the groomed trail system for a total of about 51km or 32 miles. The Inland Empire Paper Company (IEPCO) tentatively closed its properties to snowmobiling in 2010. Since that closure is continuing, the company allowed park staff to groom three additional roads for skiing that were formerly groomed for snowmobiling. The timing of this move was perfect, since it coincided with the



George Momany and new groomer

purchase of a brand new nordic groomer that has twice the power and is wider than the old groomer. It's now possible to groom a much larger area in less time than it took to groom the main trails. Purchased with Sno-Park funds, this new \$300,000 machine is a Prinoth BR 350 with a 355 hp Caterpillar turbo diesel engine. It is also expected to



Paul Buckland getting award

have fewer breakdowns and be easier to repair when it does break down than the old groomer, which the park will continue to use as well.

On December 22, 2012, the Spokane Nordic Ski Education Foundation held a ceremony at the Selkirk Lodge to officially open the new trails, display the new groomer, and honor Paul Buckland, the IEPCO Forest Resource Manager who has been in the tough position of making the recommendations regarding recreational use to company owners.

The nordic expansion began during the spring and summer of 2007, when Advisory Committee members Cris Currie, Lew Persons, Mark Augenstine, and George Momany began meeting with Park Manager Steve Christensen, snowmobile groomer Bruce Garber, and Paul Buckland to craft an expansion plan that would not sacrifice total snowmobile trail mileage. Ultimately, one of the options researched and mapped by Cris was chosen. As a result, IEPCO built two new connecting roads that completed new loops for the snowmobilers, leaving the road called M-17, and the trails now called Moose Meadows, Ridge Run, The Wall, Paper Trail, and Buck Land, for nordic skiing. Money for the expansion was very quickly raised by Spokane Nordic and the trails were groomed for the 2007–08 season.

## New Directors

Three new directors were elected to the Advisory Committee/Friends Group Board in January. They are Darrell Soyars, Les Weatherhead, and John Henry.

Darrell has lived in Spokane for three years and is the Manager of Environmental Compliance at Avista. His professional and recreational skills were honed at his previous home of 15 years in the Reno/Lake Tahoe area where he worked for Sierra-Pacific. He is a hiker, biker, rock climber, skier, canoeist, and an “anything outdoor” enthusiast. He states that his “wide variety of experience has given me a good understanding of the delicate balance that must exist between all of the user groups to preserve the experiences we all seek to have in the park.”

Les is a trial lawyer for Witherspoon Kelley Davenport & Toole and is a regular alpine skier at Mt. Spokane. He has specialized in land use issues representing both business and governmental interests.

John is the current president of Evergreen East, the Spokane chapter of the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance. He is a facilities engineer at Eastern Washington University. He is not only an avid mountain biker, but he has experience leading a wide variety of outdoor trips for the university and also enjoys nordic and alpine skiing and snowshoeing at Mt. Spokane.

Re-elected to the board this year were Mark Augenstine, Ray Downard, George Momany, Shelley Tschida, and Holly Weiler. Continuing directors are Anita Boyden, Ken Carmichael, Cris Currie, Mike Close, Robin DeRuwe, Rob Lindsay, and Barbee Scheibner. Ex-officio members are Sam Deal, Brad McQuarrie, and Steve Christensen. The board extends sincere thanks to Mike Brixey and Chris Bachman who recently finished their years of service.

Many thanks to our other volunteers and donors including: Stephanie Hughes, Jason Kenley, Cindy Whaley, Aaron

Spurway, Duane Crockett, Duane Becker, Debra & Bruce Howard, John Baumann, Jeanie Wagenman, Parviz Partovi, Jane Baker, Lynn Smith, Deidre & Cameron Allen, John & Megan Roland, Robin & Scott Redman, and the Johnston-Fix Foundation!



Be sure to visit our website at [www.mountspokane.org](http://www.mountspokane.org). There you can get up-to-date parking permit information made easy, detailed trail maps, reservation information for the fire lookout, past newsletters, historical information, park bird and butterfly lists, snowshoeing and snowmobiling brochures, park photos, and the amended trail plan proposal. You can even make tax deductible contributions to the Friends Group with your credit card!

Watch for our new comment system where you will be able to register a comment (or heaven forbid, a complaint) about your experience in the park. We want to hear from you!!

If you would like to volunteer to help build the new snowshoeing hut this summer, or join a trail crew, or participate in some other project, contact our volunteer coordinator, Holly Weiler at [hmweiler@yahoo.com](mailto:hmweiler@yahoo.com).

Join John Baumann on Saturday, July 13, 2013 from 10:30-4:30 for a fascinating butterfly tour of Mt. Kit Carson. Meet at the Upper Loop Rd parking area and bring lunch and binoculars. Learn more than you ever imagined about these little creatures! More details at [www.mountspokane.org](http://www.mountspokane.org).