



# *The Moose Call*

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

*February 2018*

*Www.MountSpokane.org*

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### **From the President**

by Cris M. Currie

After 17 years of dedicated service, Steve Christensen retired last June as park manager and Diana Dupuis became the area manager over Mt. Spokane, Riverside, Crawford, and the Centennial Trail State Parks. Jerry Johnson is now operations manager. So the year was largely one of saying goodbyes and meeting and orienting new rangers and other staff. I provided three six hour park driving tours for new staff and our new board member. Friends Group members also participated in several staff meetings to review the Group's operating plan and discuss management issues of concern. Members led two orientation hikes with new staff, as well as two hikes with Spokane Parks and Recreation. Friends Group volunteers scoped several new trail projects on multiple field trips to assist with the permitting process.

A Velo Northwest All-Gravity Series mountain bike race was held on a trial basis at Mt. Spokane in June. Organizers and staff considered the race a success despite being unable to use Upper Trail 140 due to lingering snow. Evergreen East's work on Lower Trail 290 was approved and the trail opened for its first season of biking. Heavy snowloads over the winter crushed the end of one of the logs in the front wall of Cook's woodshed, causing the wall to bulge out. Temporary

supports were added in preparation for further repair and restoration work by the Friends Group this summer. Drain pipes were also added around the perimeter to help keep snow melt away from the stone foundation.

Two long term projects were reviewed by the Friends Group Board during the year. The Mountain Education and Recreation Center (MERC) is being designed as a replacement for the Selkirk Lodge in the Nordic area. Initial plans were discussed and commented on, and less grandiose proposals are being developed by the planners. The park's shop compound will be moved higher up the park road once funding becomes available. Friends Group members submitted comments at a public meeting called by Commission staff to present the plans.

Friends Group volunteers also helped lead the annual First Day Hikes to the snowshoe hut and the Mt. Spokane summit. Park staff provided additional assistance this year which improved many aspects of the popular event.

In addition to the new staff, the Friends Group welcomed Jeff Gibson as a new board member. Both Bob Zeller and James Harrison resigned from the board. Holly Weiler was elected Secretary, Cris Currie was re-elected president, Ken Carmichael was re-elected vice-president, and Anita Boyden was re-elected Treasurer.

## **Welcome Diana!**

Ranger Diana Dupuis was formerly a college professor in anthropology, before she joined the Washington State Parks about 10 years ago. She quickly moved into management of the Winter Recreation Program and then became the



Park Manager Diana Dupuis

Operations Manager in Olympia. She made the purposeful decision to return to field work and accepted the park manager position at Riverside about two years ago. She is now the area manager for Riverside, Mount Spokane, the Centennial Trail, and Crawford State Parks, representing about one fifth of the total area managed by the agency. Eastern Washington was the last part of the state to switch to the area management system, designed to better protect parks from future budget cuts. Six full time rangers in addition to Jerry Johnson will be splitting their time between Riverside and Mt. Spokane, which should provide better staff coverage for the mountain. Additionally, Danny Murphy will be assisting with volunteer management and Lara Gricar will help with events, publicity, meeting scheduling, and keeping projects on track.



Lara Gricar and Danny Murphy on Mt. Kit Carson

## **Ragged Ridge**

During the early fall of 2016, park staff took the mini-excavator out to the east and southern boundaries of the Ragged Ridge Natural Area Preserve to construct barriers to ATV access. ATVs have been accessing the ridge illegally for many years from a southern route and recently created an additional route on the eastern side, trampling fragile plants, introducing noxious weeds, and causing severe erosion of the fragile soils. The barriers appear to be working well. Last summer was the first year that no evidence of ATV trespassing had been observed by volunteers monitoring the situation. In addition, less than a dozen knapweed plants were found on the entire ridge in July and none were found in September. This represents a substantial reduction from the year before, and means that after 17 years, the project may be close to being successfully completed.

## **New Nordic Area Signs**

Last summer, the Friends Group also organized a project to erect 162 new trail signs in the Nordic ski area, replacing all of the old signs, and marking all of the previously unmarked junctions. The new aluminum signs are essentially the same as the old ones except that they are now color

coded to trail difficulty and most are accompanied by directional arrows. The Spokane Nordic Ski Association split the cost with the Friends Group and also helped put them up. The project was organized by Cris Currie, with Steve Christensen, Sam Schlieder, Tim Ray, Scott Redman, Brad Thiessen, and Randy Greyerbiehl helping with the installation.



Steve Christensen, Sam Schlieder, and Brad Thiessen install new trail signs.

The new signs should help both winter and summer users of the area to avoid getting lost or coming back on an unplanned route.

### **Parks & Rec Hikes Expanded**

Last winter, the Friends Group signed an agreement with the Spokane Parks & Recreation Department to provide a park interpreter on some of its weekend group snowshoe hikes in the park. The interpreter is paid \$10 per participant, with the funds going to the Friends Group. Last year, we helped with four snowshoe hikes, and last summer the program expanded with two summer hikes. The first one took participants to the three summits as described in the guidebook, but with the option of having the van drive those who had

run out of energy on Mt. Kit Carson and Day Mountain to the Mt. Spokane summit. The other went to the fire lookout on Quartz Mountain and to Horse and Shadow Mountains. Nearly all of the hikers had either never snowshoed before or had never hiked in the park before, and really benefitted from a guided introduction.

### **First Day Hikes**

The annual First Day Hike on January 1 was also very successful at Mt. Spokane this year. Lara Gricar and Holly Weiler led snowshoers to the snowshoe hut, and Ranger Chris McKinney and Cris Currie led a group to the Mt. Spokane summit. REI helped out with treats for both hikes and each group had about 30 participants. The weather was excellent and everyone had a great time.

### **New Chapter in History of Skiing**

On August 1, 2017, the Mt. Spokane Ski and Snowboard Park finally got the green light from the state courts to proceed with its expansion plan, and work to clear the new runs started the next day. Most of the new runs were cut before the end of the year while work to install the new chairlift and cut the last run is planned for this summer. The complete history of the ski area expansion, as well as the full history of skiing in the Spokane area since its beginnings in 1913, is chronicled in a new book by Cris Currie that will be published early this spring. Here is an excerpt from the foreword:

“A significant portion of this book is devoted to the recent expansion of the park’s alpine ski area with the hope that my experience might contribute to healing the needlessly bitter divisiveness that the expansion stimulated within the community of Spokane. It is through increased understanding that most conflict is resolved, and so by delving into the history, I hope to create an opportunity for greater understanding and possible reconciliation.



This book is truly another labor of love in a long succession of such labors that others have made on behalf of Mount Spokane. As with my first book referenced above, all proceeds from its sale will go to fund the projects of the Friends of Mt. Spokane State Park, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the responsible use and preservation of the park. The book covers a fascinating aspect of Pacific Northwest history that illuminates how, despite the near constant jockeying for power and influence, government and private entities can come together in a successful partnership for the benefit of the larger community. So even if the reader is not a skier, it should be of interest, because none of us can afford to give up on government!"



New run #3, September, 2017

Most of the cut trees will be left on the ground to rot and return to the soil. Some logs will be cut for firewood, others will be burned, chipped or used for stream crossings, and the few that are big enough will likely be cut into lumber for park projects. The new runs have already provided some excellent skiing, but, at this point in the process, they are not particularly a pretty sight without snow. That should change over the next several years as new plants begin to fill in.

## Plenty of Firewood

Nordic club members were greeted with an inch of snow on October 14, during their annual fall firewood splitting day. There are still plenty of fallen trees from recent wind storms, so volunteers are cutting and splitting as much as possible for the Selkirk Lodge and the NOVA Hut for winter skiers. Several really large logs were also picked up to feed the portable saw mill at the downhill ski area to make more rough cut lumber for park projects.



Volunteers split and haul firewood.

## Volunteers Needed

The Friends Group is looking for a volunteer steward for the snowshoe hut. This would be someone who enjoys going to the hut regularly and would do routine maintenance chores such as cleaning the woodstove, sweeping the floor, collecting and splitting firewood and filling the boxes, and keeping the vault toilet and deck clear of snow. Anyone interested should contact Cris at [criscurrie22@gmail.com](mailto:criscurrie22@gmail.com).

For other volunteer opportunities, be sure to check the Washington Trails Association website at [www.wta.org/volunteer](http://www.wta.org/volunteer) and go to the Eastern Washington region for work parties at Mt. Spokane. You can also check at [www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com](http://www.mountspokanetrails.wordpress.com). Visit the Friends Group website at [www.mountspokane.org](http://www.mountspokane.org) for all things Mt. Spokane. Remember to renew your Discover Pass, and get out and enjoy your park!