

**Washington State Parks**  
**WINTER RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**2023 Winter Meeting**  
**January 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**Minutes**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

John Baranowski (Chair, Area 5)  
Peter Valaas (Area 2)  
Jim Rhodes (Area 1)  
VACANT (Area 6)  
Bob Seelye (Motorized)  
Tim Miller- (Motorized)  
Michael Burns - (Vice Chair, Area 3)  
Emilie Blevins (Area 4)  
Joe Chavez (DNR)  
Tony Leonetti (WDFW)  
Rob Jones (Association of Counties)

**Washington State Parks Staff:**

Corey Tolar (Manager, Winter Recreation Program)  
Jason Goldstein (Winter Recreation Program)  
Travis Larson (Winter Recreation)  
Travis Travis (Winter Recreation)

**Guests**

Karen Behm, CCWRC  
Kevin Davis, State Parks  
Michael Farley, State Parks  
Kyle McCrohen, Cascade Backcountry Alliance  
Jerry Drescher, Cascade Backcountry Alliance  
Joy Cordell, CCWRA  
Patty Garvey-Darda, USFS  
Peter Larned, USFS  
Debbie Kelly, Okawen NF  
Keith M., Crew Lead  
Nick Whitman, LandTek  
Michael Johnston, NWSDA  
Jason Holmes, WASA  
Gregory Scruggs, Seattle Times  
Sheldon, CCWRA  
Joe McNulty, Interested Party  
Rune Harkestad, Konsbergers

## Saturday January 28, 2023, Agenda

Item	Summary	Action
<b>Welcome, Introductions, and House Keeping, New Member Introductions</b>	John Baranowski welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.	No Action
<b>Review Agenda</b>	John moved onto reviewing the agenda and no changes were requested.	No Action
<b>Review and Approve Summer Meeting Minutes</b>	John asked if any committee members had any additions to the meeting minutes. Emilie Blevins requested a name correction. <b>John Burns motioned to approve the minutes.</b> <b>Michael Burns seconded the motion.</b> <b>John called for a vote.</b> <b>Motion passed unanimously.</b>	<b>Motion Passed</b>
<b>Committee Members Area Reports</b>	John moved on to committee member reports starting with Michael Burns.  <b>Michael Burns, Area 3</b> Reported fantastic early snow. Commented on club supplemented grooming saying the program folks outstanding and citing good collaboration between groomers on the motorized and non-motorized side. Grooming is taking place five to six nights a week. He had no negative comments mentioned good cross agency collaboration. There was a lost implement for grooming, but the issue was resolved.  <b>Emilie Blevins, Area 4</b> Reported good early season snow, with grooming starting in early December occurring once a week or once every other week. Folks in the area are still struggling with knowing the most up to date grooming conditions but the best way to get the word out has been word of mouth and the groomers social media. There has been increased interest and better information dissemination for new potential users.  <b>Peter Valaas, Area 2</b> Reported grooming began in early December and that Lake Wenatchee was the gold standard for grooming. They are looking forward on how to implement trail improvements to reduce canopy (regrading). Stated that ski trails are made in the summer. Trails are great and they hope to make them better. The ice rink moved, and the freeze spot has been an issue. There has also been an increase in snowshoe use.  <b>John Baranowski, Area 5</b> Reported great snow fall early on. They lost and replaced a recreation manager mid-November and a long-term groomer left. They acquired two new groomers and are slightly behind due to neither being chain saw qualified. In sports they call this a building year.	Information Only

<p><b>Groomer Reports</b></p>	<p>John moved on to grooming reports.</p> <p><b>Nick Witman, LandTek</b>  Reported that they started early but that conditions are warming and causing snowpack to thaw. Grooming occurring six days a week and plowing as needed. The increased budget for Cabin Creek helped with the early snow. Agreed that good trails built in summer, but that maintenance could have been improved.</p> <p>Area 2 and 5 put emphasis that trails are maintained and established before the winter season. Area 3 discussed how Mt. Spokane accomplished this and called on clubs for increased collaboration and participation pre-season.</p> <p>Volunteers at Cabin Creek did a lot in the summer season to help with tree removal. There was a request for a trail walk through with the summer crew and groomer to increase collaboration on trail maintenance. There was a call to get smarter about joint effort.</p> <p>Clubs asked about liability and chainsaw certifications. There was a call to follow Forest Service guidelines for given areas. Brushing with brush cutter may be a good alternative to help fill the gap.</p> <p>The United States Forest Service (USFS) is getting a lot of help from user groups off the books, and they are trying to capture it in their numbers. Caution was given with clearing areas that are not appropriate. No-access roads shouldn't be brushed or cleared as this might give the wrong idea of summer recreationalist for unauthorized use.</p> <p>The partnership between LandTek and the USFS was commended, and collaboration is hopeful as USFS positions open.</p> <p><b>Conditions at 5-mile Salmon LeSac</b>  Average use due partially to snow conditions, gas prices, etc. Grooming started a week early.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> What do groomers need for a schedule?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> We make all decisions based on guest or user inputs. Grooming shouldn't necessarily be done based on conditions. We deliver what the users/guests want.</p> <p>Last year there was trouble obtaining groomers/plowers. This is due to multiple variables. There must be contractors who have the ability and technology to do the job. Sanitation can also be a problem. It's harder to find contractors in the mountains to be locked in for 5-year contract (hard with fuel cost, labor increases, and budget allotment). Many times, the contractors could be operating at a loss.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Can we switch to 2-year contracts?</p>	<p>Information Only</p>
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	<p>There are pros and cons but there is a significant increase in workload and potential higher rises in contracting rates. The 5-year contract is currently the standard.</p> <p><b>DNR update:</b> 92 road Sno-park. (Funding from WRAC and DNR) At this location there are three levels of Sno-parks. The upper level is disused with a plan to reopen. The connector road clearing/brushing will continue next season. A gate was installed to allow for the snow groomer and to prevent unauthorized motorized vehicles. This allows for better access to a popular destination.</p>	
<p><b>Break</b></p>		
<p><b>New Facilities</b></p>	<p>Annette Lake Sno-park is new this year and so far, has good use.</p> <p>There is a new ice-skating rink by Lake Wenatchee acquired with a 5,000 grant. They need equipment but the weather is not great.</p> <p>Easton Reload is no longer temporary and new snowshoe trails were developed last winter. There is currently a free guided snowshoe tour on Fridays and Sundays from an interpretive ranger Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park. This is a great location to develop more back country routes.</p> <p>29 Pines Sno-park. We are in their long-term planning but is not currently open.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Is there a retirement process for existing Sno-parks?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Will be continuing to evaluate this after the season. The questions we ask are: Is attendance up? Does the grooming/SR budget merit continue access?</p> <p><b>Concern:</b> If you lose a Sno-park you'll never get it back</p>	<p>Information Only</p>
<p><b>GPS Unit Updates</b></p>	<p><b>Jason Goldstein, State Parks</b> reported that the State Parks Winter Recreation program is in year six of a contract with AtlasTrax using GPS tracking on groomers. The contract was originally for five years but was extended and new GPS units were rolled out. These were received late this season and came with some technical issues.</p> <p>This program increases the validation of logs and accountability of grooming contracts because it provides live tracking data without input from the contractors. It is currently available in most places but there are still issues in certain areas. The data provided by the GPS units has been utilized in the past to create an interactive map for public consumption, however, the GIS department at State Parks is limited and was taken down for the duration of the season.</p> <p>A pilot project being considered is Nordic Pulse. There is</p>	<p>Information Only</p>

	<p>currently a trial occurring at five locations such as Mt. Spokane and Cabin Creek.</p> <p><b>Area 3:</b> We have it, and it is incredible. Mt. Spokane paid for their portion of the trial and asked for clubs to give initial reports for further consideration.</p>	
<p><b>Avalanche Safety Stations</b></p>	<p><b>Jason Holmes, Area 5 (Motorized)</b> Reported on the importance of transceiver check stations and that he can acquire up to 15 stations from the vendor at 1,500 per station. Transceivers are about the size of a cell phone, have different modes and typically cost \$300 plus.</p> <p>Further discussed that transceivers in the back country can help search parties find individuals. The check stations give real-time feedback to check if outdoor enthusiasts have their transceiver with them or if their transceiver is on. This is a great way of helping folks remember to bring and power on their devices to stay safe in the back country. It is also an unfortunate truth that with accidents, awareness increases. This was a call raise awareness before accidents occur.</p> <p>Kittitas S&amp;R have deployed some transceiver check stations and have had great success and positive support with them. Since implementation, 3,300 people stopped to use them. He also made a call to reach out to clubs to increase funds and to determine where best to put them. The clubs in attendance seemed interested in helping.</p> <p>A big struggle is how to reach the snowshoe/nonmotorized folks. The question was asked whether these stations are targeted to any specific group? Jason replied that they are beneficial for all winter outdoor enthusiasts.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Do these stations work with Recco?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> These stations may not work with Recco and are primarily designed for transceivers.</p> <p>Call to follow up during budget meeting.</p>	<p>Information Only</p>
<p><b>CCWRC</b></p>	<p>This is a coalition of clubs for information sharing. It was stated that the clubs are an important resource for doing trail work. It started in 2007 for increased coordination, communication, and education.</p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.snowrec.org">www.snowrec.org</a></p> <p>A variety of land managers were discussed. Many Sno-parks traverse USFS, State Parks, TNC, other private property.</p> <p>It will cost 26 million to fix the Gold Creek bridge. A grant applied for. This would not mean Sno-Park closures during the 10 years this would take to complete.</p> <p>Erling Stordahl discussed Ski for Light (skiing for the blind).</p> <p>A USFS representative discussed the overcrossing and undercrossing for wildlife. Animals won't use the crossings if</p>	

	<p>humans do and that it is important to maintain this crossing for its intended purpose.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> What will happen with Cabin Creek parking lot?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> It will become part of the freeway but an alternate with equivalent parking will be made available.</p>	
<b>Cabin Creek Update</b>	<p>Thanks for given for the increased budget. It was a good year with early snow. Volunteers have been out helping with tree removal, many by hand, to aid in the grooming process.</p>	Information Only
<b>Lunch</b>		Information Only
<b>Budget Status (Repairs)</b>	<p>It was stated that the WRAC is in good shape on the budget, with only minor repairs so far this season.</p>	Information Only
<b>Sno-Park Permit Sales Numbers</b>	<p><b>Travis Larson, Washington State Parks</b></p> <p>Online sales are down 200 from last year at 4,823. Daily permits are up by 1,100 at 6,077. Combined non-motorized and special groomed permits are up by 100 at 3,818. Vender sales will be available later in the season. Overall, it is looking good with a total of 876,000 (20,000 up).</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Will the kiosks be part of the future strategy?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> These are on the rise, especially in high traffic areas. Some are solar powered and some work off cellular networks.</p> <p>Compliance in Gold Creek has been an issue. And the proposed strategy to address it is increased patrols, education, and increased ticketing.</p> <p>Consideration was requested to switch to person-based permits instead of vehicle-based permits citing recreation immunity and lack of enforcement. It was suggested that enforcement would come from other skiers. This will be taken under advisement.</p>	Information Only
<b>LE Rescue &amp; Avalanche Class</b>	<p>Last winter a snowmobile and avalanche safety course were proposed, and 12 persons have since been certified to offer teach the course. It was stated that it paid for itself and as a result, it was offered again this year and opened to law enforcement agencies.</p>	Information Only
<b>Open Discussion/Public Comments</b>	<p>The USFS has a list of introductory snowshoe places available on their website.</p> <p>There was a request for Sno-Park at the PCT trailhead. It's an opportunity with logistic issues but will be followed up on.</p> <p>The CCWR association talked about user advocacy and</p>	Information Only

	<p>funding opportunities. They also talked about setting up a certification day and continued volunteer efforts to remove down trees. Lastly, they talked about identifying danger trees and the need for a coordinated effort with USFS for removal.</p> <p>There was an issue raised regarding fat tire bikes on non-multiuse trails and accessibility. Technically all trails are multiuse, but better communication judiciously applied may help reduce this conflict. Progress is being seen in the I-90 corridor in terms of increasing etiquette awareness.</p> <p>There was a request for the Sno-park user base not to be subcategorized by location city vs rural.</p> <p>An issue was raised concerning Sno-parks being used as rest stops and causing waste and congestion issues.</p> <p>Re-graveling the Crystal Springs Sno-park was funded but not executed this summer but will be addressed this coming summer. This was in part due to the early snow.</p> <p>An issue was raised regarding motorized patrons blocking areas behind trailers preventing other patrons from loading/unloading their snowmobiles. A request was made for signage to prevent sled trailers from being blocked from loading.</p>	
<b>Terms/Elections</b>	<p>Mike Burns was nominated as chair. This nomination was seconded. Mike declined and nominated John Baranowski. This nomination was seconded.</p> <p>John Baranowski was re-elected as chair.</p> <p>John nominated Mike as vice chair, The nomination was seconded.</p> <p>Mike Burns re-elected as vice-chair.</p>	<p>John Baranowski Re-Elected as Chair</p> <p><b>Mike Burns Re-Elected Vice Chair</b></p>
<b>Next Meeting, Date, Time, Location</b>		<p><b>Summer meeting to be held August 11-12 in Wenatchee, WA. Arrangements to be made by Staff.</b></p>
<b>Adjourn</b>	John closed the meeting and thanked everyone.	