

**Washington State Parks
WINTER RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Winter Meeting Minutes**

January 25, 2025
In-person at Omak w/Virtual Option

ATTENDANCE

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Lynne Oliver (Area 1, Non-Voting Member)
Peter Valaas (Vice Chair, Area 2)
Mike Burns (Area 3)
Dave Phillips (Area 6)
Glenn Warren (Motorized Rep)
Joe Chavez (DNR, Virtual)
Tony Leonetti (WDFW)

Washington State Parks Staff:

Corey Tolar (Winter Recreation Program, Manager)
Travis Larson (Winter Recreation Program)
Kari McNay (Winter Recreation Program)

Guest Attendees:

Shane Tully (CBA)
Brandon O'Rourke (CBA)
Joy Cordell (CCRA)
Jeff Clark (Non-motorized recreationist)
Walter Henze (Highlands Nordic Ski Club)
Janie Pardo (USFS- Naches RD, Virtual)
Jack Thurston (Highlands Nordic Ski Club, Virtual)
Karen Behm (CCWRC, Virtual)
Justin Davis (SMAC Non-motorized rep, Virtual)

Saturday, January 25, 2025, Agenda		
CALL TO ORDER	Peter calls the meeting to order.	No Action
INTRODUCTIONS	Peter has the committee members introduce themselves as well as the audience.	No Action
AGENDA REVIEW	Peter calls for any additions or corrections to the agenda. No additions or corrections made. No corrections made.	No Action
MINUTES REVIEW & APPROVAL	Peter calls for any corrections or updates to the 2024 Summer Budget Meeting minutes. No corrections proposed. Glenn Warren moves to approve minutes. Tony seconds. Motion passes unanimously to approve the 2024 Summer Budget Meeting minutes.	Motion passes unanimously to approve the Summer Budget Meeting Minutes.
PROGRAM MANAGER UPDATE	Corey begins program manager update. New sno-park opened at Franklin Falls, details to be discussed later in the meeting. USFS in midst of hiring freeze. Some impacts on the current season, but primary impacts are expected to be seen next season. WSPRC is moving to Ecology Building in Lacey, WA in May. Winter Rec has new Policy & Legislative affairs director, Brian Considine. Permit sales are looking good this year. Travis will discuss sales later.	Information Only
FRANKLIN FALLS UPDATE	Corey reminds the committee and audience that Asahel Curtis Sno-park was replaced by/consolidated with Franklin Falls starting this season. Corey reviews the basic layout of the sno-park, snow conditions. Notes good use so far. Notes some initial confusion from the public over how to access Franklin Falls early in season. Corey reads update from Nicholas Lichtenstadter, USFS Snoqualmie Ranger District. Plowing has done well. Use has been great but not excessive/overwhelming. Hiring freeze may lead to not hiring any seasonal employees next winter. Likely will have smaller staff next season.	Information Only

	<p>Peter asks if it is possible to install a pay station at Franklin Falls. Corey notes that discussion occurred about moving a pay station to Franklin Falls. Time and connectivity are barriers to getting a pay station.</p> <p>Travis notes the currently used combination of QR code and slips to write and display permit information.</p>	
REPAIRS UPDATE	<p>Travis notes that State Parks has invested in new equipment, will discuss that in P5/6 update.</p> <p>Noted \$5,000 in repairs so far.</p> <p>Corey notes that investments in new equipment by the committee help to cut down on repairs.</p> <p>Travis notes that between WSPRC and WRAC, 6 cats have been purchased since COVID. The committee may need to take note of this as those machines will all reach end-of-life around the same time.</p> <p>Discussion follows about how equipment repair/replacement is structured in the budget.</p> <p>Dave mentions that 2 sleds were asked for by Naches and the committee approved 1. Corey notes that the procurement process took much longer than expected.</p> <p>Janie updates the committee that Naches snowmobile has been received, and snowmobiles are working well.</p>	Information Only
CONTRACTOR/AGREEMENT/GPS UPDATES	<p>Travis reviews contracts that went out to bid.</p> <p>5-year snow removal contracts secured for Annette Lake, Crystal Springs, and White Pass (previously performed by USFS).</p> <p>Snow removal contract secured for Stemilt area.</p> <p>No known contract hiccups, all went out and were signed.</p> <hr/> <p>GPS units (Atlastrax) just went over Direct Buy threshold and will need to go out to bid next season. All contractors will need to rip out units and return at end of season.</p> <p>Peter mentions Nordic Pulse. Asks if Nordic pulse is used more widely, if we could get rid of GPS leasing.</p> <p>Travis notes that Nordic Pulse requires updates, whereas GPS units are more hands off, but that Nordic Pulse expansion is something WSPRC is looking into exploring more for upcoming seasons.</p>	Information Only

	<p>Mike asks if WSPRC has approached Nordic Pulse about a purchase contract. Corey notes that WSPRC has had conversations to gather information about this possibility.</p> <p>Mike states that heavy-use areas could strongly benefit from Nordic Pulse units. Mike and Peter show support for GPS updates.</p>	
SNO-PARK PERMIT SALES	<p>Travis pulls up permit sales data chart. Notes that sales are pulled through 1/21/25. Notes large boost in daily pass sales. Ticket writing at Gold Creek by Kittitas County Sheriff's Office possibly influenced increased sales of daily permits. Travis clarifies that Kittitas County tickets don't go into WRAC funds. Clarifies that sales reported are for online only.</p> <p>Increase in seasonal permits- highest sale of seasonal and daily categories sold since fee increase. All categories of permits are up in sales from last season.</p> <p>Seeing highest online sales in the last 4 years despite poor snow year.</p> <p>Mike asks when we receive vendor sales data. Travis notes that April/May is when those updates begin. Info will be reviewed at the Summer Budget Meeting.</p> <p>Peter notes that QR codes, online purchases all help lower barriers to sno-park access.</p>	Information Only
2-VEHICLE PERMIT REQUEST UPDATE	<p>Travis notes calls and requests showing support for 2-vehicle permit being documented. A little over 20 documented requests currently. Most documented reasons are multiple family vehicles or fuel-efficient vehicles.</p> <p>Hang tag would have to be implemented if we move to 2-vehicle permit. Some have suggested they would be willing to pay more for this permit.</p> <p>Tim notes that 2-vehicle permit was implemented many years ago. Convenient for families that have 2 cars.</p> <p>Tony states no issue from LEO perspective.</p> <p>Travis notes that this would take time to implement.</p> <p>Lynne asks for source of requests. Travis states that requests are documented from calls and emails to WSPRC.</p>	Information Only
SPECIAL GROOMED STICKER UPDATE	<p>Corey states that at 2024 Winter Meeting, WRAC voted that 4+ days of grooming constitutes special groomed status. At last winter meeting, it was decided that Loup Loup would be moved to Special Groomed status if they groom 4 days a week.</p>	Discussion Only

	<p>Will not go into effect until their Priority 5/6 funding rolls into the main budget.</p> <p>Travis notes that Loup Loup is currently only grooming 3 days per week.</p> <p>Mike states that the public is generally willing to pay more for a special groomed sticker.</p> <p>Walter Henze states that this would hit his part of Okanogan hard.</p> <p>Peter notes feedback received from couple that \$70 grooming sticker would hit local families hard. Onus is entirely on the non-profit at Ski the Loup. Their decision whether they want to increase grooming days or stay at 3. Notes that the improved grooming at 3 days/week with Piston Bully has been hugely successful for them. Suggests committee just responds to their vision for the area.</p> <p>Peter suggests that 4 days/week remain the threshold for special groomed status.</p>	
PRIORITY 5/6 UPDATES	<p>Travis notes snowmobiles purchased for both the Naches and Mt Adams areas.</p> <p>Kari explains delays in process of obtaining snowmobiles for both districts. Both ranger districts should have their equipment now.</p> <hr/> <p>Corey notes that ADA access is being worked on at Crystal Springs. Notes new access point for sit-skiers. States that things have been going well this year.</p> <p>Joy updates committee on sit-ski/ADA progress from community standpoint. When snow is low, it is more difficult to get started on trail, but no complaints have been received.</p> <p>Mike asks if there is a lodge at Crystal that sit-skiers can utilize. There is not. Mike suggests “Moby mats” be used to transport sit-skiers from the car to the trail. States these are used at Mt Spokane.</p> <hr/> <p>Peter calls for any further discussion on Priority 5/6.</p> <p>No further discussion.</p>	Information Only
BREAK	Committee breaks for 15 minutes.	No Action
COMMITTEE AREA REPORTS	<p>Lynne Oliver (Area 1, Non-Voting Member)</p> <p>Salmon Ridge has not had snow this season. Has received email from Cascade Backcountry Alliance regarding desire to put in a sno-park at Pilchuck.</p>	Information Only

	<p>CBA: A sno-park in a higher elevation near Everett may help with pass sales. Met with USFS, some concerns from Ranger District but are open to idea in the long-term.</p> <p>Mike: Where would sno-park be located?</p> <p>CBA: Sno-park would be at former ski area parking lot at Mt Pilchuck (near Granite Falls). Map shown to committee with lot and trail access. Possible snow play area. Ideal for late-season skiing.</p> <p>Peter Valaas (Area 2) Area 2 had a slow start with early snowfall and quick thaw. Higher elevation areas have had great skiing at South Summit and Echo Ridge. Notes that Lake Wenatchee has held onto snowpack. Highlands started early in November. Stemilt sno-park has been carrying out operations, good snowshoeing terrain in area.</p> <p>Mike Burns (Area 3) Geophysical and Frater Lake have been providing teaching lessons with City of Spokane this year. 12 lesson days scheduled at Mt. Spokane for this season. Mt. Spokane has been very busy. Grooming has been fantastic. Nordic Kids program starting. Junior National Qualifier scheduled in February. Community based events occurring regularly. The only challenge is parking capacity on busy days.</p> <p>Dave Phillips (Area 6) Snowpack has been good. Above average snowfall so far. Snow patterns hit farther north than normal. Have seen some fat tire bikes on snowmobile trails recently.</p> <p>Snowshoes were purchased by WSPRC for youth outreach in area. Kids had great time.</p> <p>Tony Leonetti (WDFW) 3 contracts statewide. Snow has been issue. Hit Mt Spokane occasionally, but rangers are doing a great job up there. Kittitas County Sheriff's Office has been doing a great job with tickets.</p> <p>Joe Chavez (DNR) DNR has a new commissioner. Waiting to see direction of administration following this change. DNR has published Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation Strategic Plan.</p> <p>High compliance with permits. DNR has been requesting proof of purchase, as opposed to citations. Seeing great compliance from that.</p>	

COMMUNITY UPDATES	<p>Colville NF, USFS (read by Corey Tolar) Deer Creek Nordic has had great conditions. Colville National Forest purchased 6 ft groomer, added more personnel. Frater Lake grooming going well. Plenty of snow in January. High use on weekends. Pass compliance better this year than in past, approximately 90% compliance. Geophysical Sno-park has had patchy snow.</p> <p>Mt Adams RD, USFS (read by Corey Tolar) Sporadic snow. Grooming has been 2-3x/week. Skiable trails despite irregular snow. Received pull-behind groomer in Nov, used at Pineside and Snow King. New snowmobile ready for pickup and will be used.</p> <p>Janie Pardo, Naches RD, USFS Received new snowmobile, grooming more often. Snow conditions have been abysmal. Lost experienced groomer with budget crisis. Has one groomer with a year of experience. Received extension for 2 seasonals this year, will likely not happen next year. Asks committee if there are training opportunities for Naches grooming staff.</p> <p>Mike offers to connect Naches to Mt. Spokane.</p> <p>R&R grooming on motorized side. Motorized travel was decommissioned on 1901 Road this season, which has caused some problems for groomer. Posted signage.</p> <p>Walter Henze, Highlands Nordic Ski Club Early grooming start. Groomers and volunteers doing great job keeping trees off trail. No enforcement but 100% compliance. One car found without permit but purchased permit the next day after a warning.</p> <p>Joy Cordell, CCRA Early snow, but low elevation. Thinning done at Cabin Creek but crews were out by time snow fell. Cabin Creek is very busy on weekends. Momentum Ski Club and other Seattle groups bussing into Cabin Creek. Crystal Springs has had struggles with low snow. Gold Creek has been busy. Boat Launch area received money from WRAC but has not been able to groom there due to lack of snow this season. Looking for new potential sno-park areas.</p> <p>Brandon O'Rourke, CBA Cle Elum RD has had issues with hiring. Worried about RD ability to maintain services. CBA working to manage the impact of this.</p>	Information Only
PUBLIC COMMENT	Peter calls for additional public comment.	Information Only

	<p>Karen Behm Hyak vendor sales are “on par”. Gold Creek has been full. Approximately 50% permit compliance at Gold Creek when she checked.</p> <p>Lake Easton State Park and Landtek have been keeping snow nice despite poor conditions. Dog sledders are going out of Crystal every day of the week. Salmon La Sac trail system is icy. Only groomed once. Lake Easton & Easton Reload have not had enough snow to groom.</p> <p>Travis: hiring freeze had impact on Salmon La Sac grooming.</p> <p>Joy Cordell Win with Gold Creek sno-park able to stay open. Conditional on the site being able to stay safe. Currently planned to stay open during winter for the estimated 4-year construction period.</p>	
ELECTION TERMS	<p>Corey states that some Committee members have terms that have expired or will be expiring. Agency is updating guidance on how to fill positions. Asks committee members set to expire to volunteer to stay on until</p> <p>Corey states that he reached out to Emilie last week to ask if she was willing to continue to serve as chair if nominated. Emilie stated that she would be willing to continue.</p> <p>Dave motions to nominate Emilie Blevins as chair.</p> <p>Mike seconds.</p> <p>Peter calls for further nominations or discussion.</p> <p>Peter calls for a vote.</p> <p>Motion passes unanimously.</p> <hr/> <p>Mike motions to nominate Peter Valaas as vice chair.</p> <p>Dave seconds.</p> <p>Peter accepts the nomination.</p> <p>Peter calls for a vote.</p> <p>Motion passes unanimously.</p>	<p>Motion to approve Emilie Blevins as WRAC chair passes unanimously.</p> <hr/> <p>Motion to approve Peter Valaas as WRAC Vice Chair passes unanimously.</p>
UPCOMING MEETING REVIEW	<p>Corey states that there will be a WRAC virtual meeting to keep committee up to date prior to summer budget meeting.</p>	

	<p>Corey suggests August 15th-16th or 22nd-23rd possible Summer Budget Meeting dates.</p> <p>Committee agrees to meet in Wenatchee August 15th & 16th.</p>	<p>Committee approves WRAC Summer Budget Meeting date and location.</p>
MEETING ADJOURNS	<p>Peter thanks everyone for their attendance.</p> <p>Meeting adjourns.</p>	