

## **PUBLIC COMMENT: GINKGO PETRIFIED FOREST STATE PARK AND WANAPUM RECREATION AREA**

Ginkgo State Park CAMP Alternative Concepts



To Ginkgo Petrified State Park Planning Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Alternative Concepts for Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park of Washington, in this second stage of the CAMP process. Our family is comprised of conservationists, naturalists, hunters, fishers and horticulturalists – Overall, passionate visitors of the Park. We care deeply about the integrity of this landscape and are invested in fostering respect for and stewardship of it for generations to come.

We appreciate the diligence of the Park's staff and we will do whatever we can to support them. The comments submitted for inclusion in the CAMPS process are grounded in experience, practicality, a deep love and respect for the flora and fauna found at Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park as well as our relationships with others in the Park community and their knowledge use of the parks.

Each of the Alternatives presented in the Concepts has positive elements we hope to see applied to the ultimate management plan. We're aligned with Washington State Park's Mission to *connect all Washingtonians to their diverse natural and cultural heritage* in this precious landscape. We appreciate how the park is currently used and that people from all walks of life are welcome.

### **WANAPUM RECREATION AREA**

We're in support of Alternative Three offering an expanded footprint to this camping area, allowing for more access to water and trail-based recreation. We believe this area as a camping site is also important to climbers who enjoy Frenchman's Coulee, across the river. As populations increase and outdoor enthusiasts seek places to experience what they love, it seems suitable to expand camp-grounds already well-loved and used.

### **TRAILSIDE MUSEUM**

We appreciate aspects of the Expanded Recreation Theme of Alternative Two, and Trail Emphasis Theme of Alternative Three. For instance, protecting the structures at the Trailside Museum under the *Heritage* land classification, and *Resource Recreation* classification along the petrified wood trail, allows for "future expansion and renovation." This is a benefit to future park planning, for as population and ultimately visitors increase, there may be a need to reprogram the user experience while retaining the robust history. Additionally, development of trail systems, including interpretive trail for ADA access as illustrated in Alternative Three, is a major plus!

## GINKGO NORTH

We support the continuation of monitored/ controlled access via sign-in and publicly-attainable code at the locked gate off of Recreation Drive. Alternatives Two and Three both appear to be in support of this; we appreciate that Alternative Three highlights the continuation of vehicular access as it is currently managed. With ease and enjoyment of Park use for a variety of means including vehicle access, the Discover Pass will remain a significant source of revenue for agency operations.

We believe that locked gates and monitoring of pass-through vehicles is important for the safety of visitors and for the landscape. The park, while mysteriously beautiful, can also be dangerous. Predator animals (rattlesnakes, cougars, bears, etc.), primitive road conditions, and weather extremes in any season (heavy rains, extreme heat/fires, snowfall, etc.) are reasons enough to account for individuals entering the territory – particularly those with less experience.

We're also proponents that it's *important* for people to have positive, memorable experiences in the park. Thus, all citizens should feel welcome, regardless of their age or physical ability. Recent improvements of signage and ease of use of the gates command attention and respect (Thank you, Parks!) Additionally, keeping the pass-through roads of the park primitive minimizes traffic. At the entry off of Recreation drive, we believe the reader-board, sign-in sheets, phone number to call for combo, and new gates, creates an atmosphere of accountability of the user. We wonder if the combo being changed more frequently would infuse users with a sense of greater supervision, which is a positive. We trust Park leadership and other invested folks understand that accessing this area of the park via bike, horseback, or simply on foot, is not an option to everyone. For those who pass-through by vehicle, the Park's current measures appear to be successful in commanding sufficient respect to the landscape.

Supporting, organizing, and participating in volunteer groups to be on-the-ground advocates to provide clean up, maintenance, etc., would be welcomed by the community. As Washington Parks encourages *support for one another to translate mission into reality*, we encourage the notion that many hands make light work. We try, as we're able, to clean the roadsides of invasive weeds species and trash every time we pass through. We'd like to nurture ideas of volunteering and help facilitate such efforts.

We've enhanced our lives through practicing preservation and conservation of these lands under planning review. In order to successfully do so for generations to come, access by way of foot, bike, horse, or motorized vehicle must continue to be permitted. Like you, we know the unique landscape of the Ginkgo Petrified Forest is precious. Seeing is believing, and it must be believed-in to be stewarded and sustained. Thus, it is incumbent on us all to sustain access through responsible and inclusive means.

Our sincere thanks to Parks Department Staff for the opportunity to comment. Best wishes to the Parks for success in this effort in the coming New Year.

