

Palouse Falls/Lyons Ferry Email Comments December 2016 to March 2018

- Were any visitor trail safety improvements made at Palouse Falls State Park in the last year? Warning markers, handouts, parking lot signage??? Actual physical safety enhancements? It sounds like another fatality occurred at the park yesterday. So tragic. I'm at a loss to understand why Washington State Parks isn't willing to make some simple and low cost improvements at the park to improve visitor safety. This is the second fatality at the park in less than 13 months.
- As you know, in September of 2015 Fire Commissioner Roach notified legislative staff of State Parks "neglect" to protect visitors at Palouse Falls State Park (11 airlifts in 2015). - Two visitor fatalities since this contact!

"In 2016, the fencing was removed. A parks spokesperson said after consulting with first responders and the state attorney general's office, they decided the signs were better." - KREM2 CBS

In my opinion, the warning signs installed by parks are ineffective and should become part of a much larger visitor safety effort.

"The more visitors you have, the more apt you are to have an increase in accident or injury," explained Sims. - I agree with this quote if safety isn't managed. No safety management and twice as many visitors would probably double the number in incidents. Please speak with a safety professional to understand the potential for rapid rewards of a focused safety effort ... Even with an increase in visitation, you could see a reduction in injuries if you commit to SAFETY! I see so many (low cost) opportunities to reduce the serious injury incidence rate at Palouse Falls.

I'd noticed earlier this spring that warning signs agreed to during the multi-agency meetings had fallen into a state of disrepair. I didn't become aware of this problem during park visits. I noticed photos of signs when reviewing social media. Photo below by adventureofsair shows the northernmost (of four signs installed north of the parking lot) panel laying on the ground. This panel may have been thrown into the canyon by now? The photo was posted on May 6th. I visited the park yesterday and looked north to the area this panel had been installed and didn't see it. I'd suggest this panel be replaced ASAP since this was part of an agreement with the Fire District.



Photo above taken yesterday. This is the eastern sign panel (shown on ground).

Please consider an immediate repair at this location. This is the panel installation closest to the site of recent fatality.



Panel shown above (2016 photo) was installed in a poor location. Visitors looking into canyon at falls when they climb to this point. They're not reading sign to their left ... Watch them and you'll see. Consider relocation of sign?



The last of the four signs (north of parking lot) was installed to the west of paths the majority of visitors use to access the rim. Visit the park this weekend a watch how few visitors approach this sign when leaving the parking area.

“It’s a balancing act between public safety and public access,” Sims said. “It is and will be an ongoing dialogue.” - Spokesman Review

If I were to submit 10-15 straightforward questions related to visitor safety at Palouse Falls State Park ... would you be willing to answer them? ... or direct me to someone that would be able to? I don't have time to waste so please let me know if I'm wasting my time trying to communicate with you.

The reason I've sent you recent emails asking about the status of safety enhancements at Palouse Falls is because Randy Cline (Assigned to Palouse Falls CAMP study) and Daniel Farber have directed me down this path.

From Daniel Farber: Randy, (redacted) has worked closely with Ryan Karlson in the past, developing materials for Ice Age Floods story telling. He's got some skills and local knowledge that may prove useful as you do your planning process. Let the connections begin!

From Randy Kline: *I am cc'ing Audra Sims who is the Area Manager for the area that includes Palouse Falls. She'll be able to provide additional information regarding the items above. Thanks for reaching out again and for your patience.*

Since the red signs are the current visitor safety program at Palouse Falls State Park ... Would you allow my wife and I to repair the eastern sign (near the site of the fatality) if we're able to get out to the park in the next week? Super easy fix with nuts and bolts.



I submitted this image to Parks last year ... Consider moving the four signs (after repairing two of them) ... Into a line where visitors leave parking lot via multiple trails. Easy to monitor condition of signs and all visitors entering this area will have an opportunity to see them AND the big red sign will create less of visual disturbance to those enjoying view and taking photos on rim.

Thank you for your time. Please consider responding to my visitor safety questions and concerns

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- In 2016, Daniel Farber suggested that I share concerns about Palouse Falls visitor safety and vandalism with you if CAMP process was approved for Palouse Falls. After I received confirmation that you would be responsible for the project ... We spoke on the phone and I let you know that I'd submitted many comments/suggestions to Washington State Parks. I shared dozens of photos and comments with you and received a reply stating the material had been reviewed.

Why were my comments (and comments submitted by others after the park closure) not included in the first phase of the CAMP process?

What were the competing priorities that have shut down CAMP process at Palouse Falls?

What resources are needed to resume CAMP process at Palouse Falls?

Thanks for your time!

- I still look forward to your update next week and appreciate response to my email.

During lunch I was reading today's Tri-City Herald and was disappointed to read that Washington State Parks is actively promoting winter hiking (for the general public) at Palouse Falls State Park (Image attached).

I realize the photo the Herald ran today is one of mine ... Sent to them before I was aware of any safety concerns at the park.

Last winter your Communications group was spreading the word that hikers shouldn't be leaving the developed area. They committed to doing outreach to those promoting hikes outside the developed area ... As far as I know - that hasn't happened. I'm 100% in favor of hiking at the park ... I just want people to know the specific hazards and frequency of accidents/rescues. I haven't been out the the park recently ... Maybe new signs and other safety measures have been installed?

"After-hike refreshments and prizes will be provided by Washington State Parks" ... Why continue to promote hiking out there especially when conditions can be so poor (January)? Encouraging six-year-old hikers to venture beyond the fencing on snow and ice is a bad idea in my opinion. I'm guessing the two-mile hike will involve walking on trails that were gated and described as "Hazardous & Unauthorized" by Washington State Parks during the closure earlier this year? Now Parks is handing out prizes to folks that use these same trails???

Looking forward to an encouraging update next week.

Sorry for frustrated tone of this email when you're the one working to fix things out there.

...the first show-
...in the West
...That and who on
...Monday with
...concept
...of the photo was
...to a usual

**HALLA COUNTY
TO BAN MEDICAL
BETTING**

Halla County com-
missioners voted to
ban on Feb. 15
any form of medical
betting. The ban
will take effect
on Jan. 1. The ban
applies to all
medical betting
operations within
the county.

RING IN THE NEW YEAR

Get outside with First Day hiking, biking

BY ANNETTE CARY
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You can start off the new year by reconnecting with nature on a "First Day Hike" or "First Day Bike" on Jan. 1.

Washington State Parks is moving its Discover Pass requirement at all state parks on Jan. 1. You can visit on your own or show up for any of the multiple organized hikes and other events at state parks.

If you want to stay closer to home, the Tri-City Greenway organization plans a hike in Richland near the Yakima River.

Planned hikes and bike rides include:

- The Tri-City Greenway organization will lead a four-mile hike through W.E. Johnson Park.
- Meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot at the park's north entrance. Turn south off Van Gieson Street at Woods Nursery and drive about two blocks to the end of Hall Road.
- Hike the Columbia Plateau State Park Trail east of Burbank and enjoy Snake River views, while learning about plants, animals, geology and leave-no-trace principles.
- The brisk, two-hour round-trip ride is planned by Washington State Parks for people at least 10 years old and requires hybrids or mountain bikes. Difficulty is rated as "moderate."
- No support services will be provided. Bring binoculars and a bike repair kit and leave pets at home.
- After-hike refreshments and prizes are planned.
- Meet at the Ice Harbor Dam Trailhead at 10 a.m.
- A two-mile hike at Palouse Falls State Park near Starbuck will be highlighted with views of the falls and geological evidence of Ice Age floods. An optional climb for additional views is available.
- Wear hiking boots or shoes and leave strollers and pets at home. Children as young as 6 are welcome. The difficulty is rated as "moderate." After-hike refreshments and prizes are planned by Washington State Parks.
- Meet at noon at the park's lower parking lot at the overlook near the bathroom. Parking is limited.
- If you don't mind a bit of a drive to get to the trailhead from the Tri-Cities, you can hike through the ancient fossil bed of the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park near Vantage.
- The three-mile hike will cover two dozen petrified logs and also erratics, or large boulders, left by the Ice Age floods. Dogs on a leash are welcome, and there is no minimum age for hikers. Difficulty is rated as "moderate."
- Windy weather is expected.
- Meet at 1 p.m. at the Ginkgo Petrified Forest Interpretive Trails parking lot. The trail does not start at the interpretive center. To find the correct parking lot, take Exit 136 for Huntzinger Road from Interstate 90. Turn left and go 2.5 miles.
- For more information about these and other First Day state park hikes and bike rides, go to bit.ly/2hE1Ehz.

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A hiker looks at Palouse Falls from the bottom during a winter hike. A two-mile First Day hike at Palouse Falls State Park near Starbuck will be highlighted with views of the falls and geological evidence of Ice Age floods.

- Part of your plan should be to embrace UAVs, not be afraid of them. You have a sign at Palouse Falls stating "no drones". That's only for landing and launching. I can fly over and take pics, following FFA rules, all day long. Also, there's a fun pic of an AIRPLANE flying over the falls appearing in the Tri-City Herald today. What is THAT! Anyway. Good luck.
- We would love to see more camping opportunities taken into consideration.. thanks
- Hello Washington State Parks, I am writing you concerning your management planning for Palouse Falls. I would like to strongly urge you not to restrict hiking around Palouse Falls. Hikers should be allowed and encouraged to hike down to the falls. While this is a somewhat difficult trail, the experience of hiking this trail is amazing. As you make your management plan, I strongly urge you to use a 'light touch' and not overly restrict access to the area.
- I was unaware of this study until today, when I stumbled onto a photo of the falls in the Feb 14th edition of the Tri-City Herald. My involvement in the Palouse Falls park goes back to the early 1980's attempt by the Franklin County PUD to build a hydroelectric diversion project at the falls. I led the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society's successful campaign to halt this project which would have essentially destroyed the falls as a natural waterfall and desecrate it's Native American cultural and religious values. I know almost nothing about the current planning process but would very much like to participate. I would like more information on the planning process, what has happened and what is the remaining timeline. What i have found on

your website does not go into enough detail The Audubon Society recommends that the park be managed to protect and enhance the shrub-steppe and riparian wildlife habitat, respect and provide information on the historical and cultural values particularly those of the Native Americans, and protect the water flows of the Palouse River from excessive withdrawals. We are concerned about public safety and encourage improvements in this regard. These comments are general and after receiving more information on the process and resources - i would like to submit more detailed comments. I look forward to assisting in preserving this beautiful park and magnificent falls for future generations. When i started this process in 1980, I was a father with four children, i am now a great grandfather with 20 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren - those future generations come around faster than you think. I am so thankful this park and waterfall are still here for everyone's great grandchildren and beyond.

- Would like to see: 1. A trail connecting Palouse Falls & Lyons Ferry State Parks, with eventual connections to other regional trails networks. 2. A trail connecting Lewis & Clark State Park, with the regional trails network currently being planned, perhaps a trail along the railroad RoW. 3. Better development of trails to various features at Palouse Falls State Park. 4. Interpretative signage at Lyons Ferry State Park regarding the Marmes Man.
- I am very concerned about the future of Palouse Falls Park. It is being loved to death. My recommendations: Change to limited access. Discontinue camping on-site. Severely limit hiking away from the view area. Develop a visitor center at HWY 261 with parking. Access to the falls then only by shuttle bus.
- I read about your meetings looking for input on the state parks here in Columbia County. My suggestion is common sense. Along Highway 12 there are only two restroom stops for public use. Dodge junction and Alpowa summit that I'm aware of. Why can't the DOT budget a little dough to keep the wayside at L&C open for public restroom use? I suppose you could still monitor the camping at night, but for the most part the restroom could be of service.
- After having visited Lyons Ferry State Park and ridden past (on SR 261) Palouse Falls State Park on 22 April 2017, I have questions and further comments. There was a long line of vehicles queued up on SR 261 waiting to get in to Palouse Falls State Park.

I. Was there a special event at Palouse Falls State Park on 22 April 2017, or did that vehicle queue represent increased demand?

II. What was the reason for waiving the fee for Lyons Ferry State Park on 22 April 2017?

If you are unable to answer the above questions, I would appreciate your forwarding this message to someone who can address these questions.

Further comments for park planning

1. Someone spent quite a bit of money years ago to erect a cable to attach to the historic ferryboat at Lyons Ferry State Park, yet the boat itself has been allowed to deteriorate so much that it is no longer attached to that cable. Needs include:

a. Preservation and restoration of the historic ferryboat;

b. Improved wayfinding and interpretive signage to and pertaining to the operation and history of the ferryboat;

2. Improvements to access to Palouse Falls State Park--including possible peak-period shuttle service--in order to handle increased demand without overrunning the site and narrow access road with excessive automobile traffic.