

# Mount Spokane State Park Interpretive Plan



October 2009

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*Winter skiers gathered at the original Caretaker's Lodge.*

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# Section 1

## Plan Overview

### Introduction

Mount Spokane is more than a mountain—it's a destination. Its sub-alpine environments have attracted humans for centuries. Many have come in the pursuit of mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. Over the decades, several generations have left their mark on this landscape in the form of travel routes, structures and memorable events.

This document builds upon previous efforts to organize and support the development of interpretive opportunities within Mount Spokane State Park. The focus of this plan is to establish a logical network of interpretive opportunities with distinct interpretive concepts capable of connecting visitors with the diverse natural and human heritage of this 13,200-acre state park. This plan is a roadmap for the incremental development of site-specific interpretive media and programming.



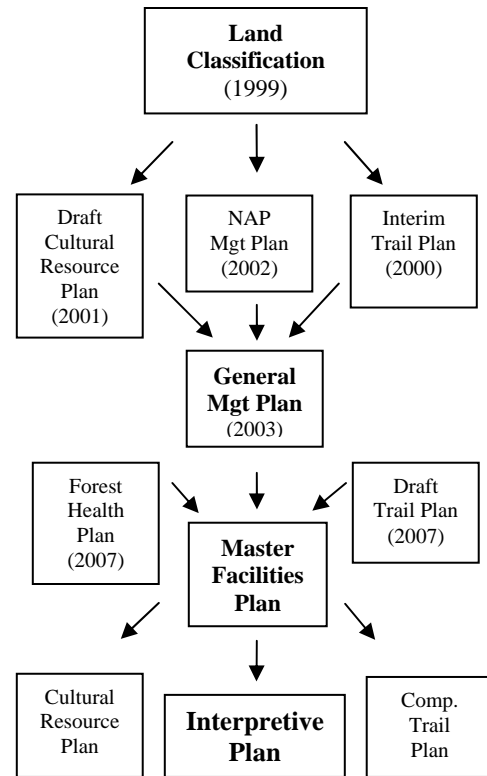
*Aerial view of Mount Spokane looking northeast circa 1935 (Oestreicher Collection, WSPRC).*

## Summary of Planning Process

This *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan* has benefited from several previous park planning efforts, including focused natural, cultural and trail planning processes. This planning document supports current park-wide facilities planning efforts as an appendix to the park's *Master Facilities Plan*.

This park-level interpretive plan begins by outlining a range of interpretive objectives. It then provides a brief audience analysis of known visitor use patterns. Next, the plan offers a proposed network for the organization of interpretive opportunities, followed by recommendations for interpretive themes, programs and projects. Finally, the plan closes with suggested steps towards phased implementation.

## Chronology of Park Planning Events



*Aerial view of Mount Spokane summit prior to development of Bald Knob and east slope ski facilities (Oestreicher Collection, WSPRC).*

## Section 2

# Interpretive Objectives

The interpretive objectives of this plan are based on existing park management goals and are intended to fulfill the park's vision:

*As Washington's largest state park at the footstep of a major urban area, Mount Spokane State Park offers easy access to a wide spectrum of outdoor recreational pursuits while preserving vast and varied natural forests, gentle alpine meadows, wildlife habitat areas, and dozens of clear running streams.*

*Winter, summer, active, and tranquil recreational activities can be pursued in dramatic, beautiful and diverse environments, surrounded by native plants and animals, and supplied with recreational facilities that are both true to the cultural heritage of the park and up to modern standards of comfort and quality. Through a combination of user education, volunteer support, appropriate use control and other integrated management techniques, these recreational pursuits complement each other, enhancing the options and experience for all while protecting the park's environment.*

*(Mount Spokane State Park Management Plan, 2003)*

## Park Management Goals

A general goal of interpretation is to provide opportunities that both enhance recreational experiences and supply information necessary to foster appreciation and thereby responsible resource stewardship. In 2003, a series of management objectives were adopted as part of the Mount Spokane State Park Management Plan. The following general management objectives support the interpretive goal, while recognizing their adaptability to specific park management and stewardship needs.



*Dedication of Mount Spokane State Park, July 23, 1927. County Trustee Louis Davenport handing the deed to 280 acres, including the summit of the mountain, to Clark Savidge, Chairman of the State Parks Committee. At right is O. W. Young, Spokane County Commissioner (The Spokesman Review, July 24, 1927).*



## Natural Resources

Enhance visitor appreciation and stewardship of the park's natural resources by:

- Enhancing visitor understanding of the series of geologic events that led to the formation of the Mount Spokane landscape, and processes still shaping it today.
- Identifying hydrologic features of the park; including the significance of sub-alpine springs, and the connection of the park's multiple watersheds to the Spokane-Rathdrum Aquifer.
- Increasing visitor knowledge of the interrelated biological features, processes, and species found within the southern Selkirk Mountain Range.
- Increasing visitor understanding of the impacts of visitor use patterns, especially trail use, on resources and inhabitants.
- Enhancing visitor understanding of the role of fire in the succession of forest and meadow environments; and the purpose of planned forest health treatments in the park.
- Providing interpretation in Natural Forest Areas and the Natural Area Preserve.

## Cultural Resources

Enhance visitor appreciation and stewardship of the park's cultural resources by:

- Relating historical events, structures and features to visitors to allow the unknown to become known.
- Conveying to visitors the significance of Mount Spokane in the traditional life ways of native cultures.
- Increasing visitor understanding of the unique aspects and challenges of everyday life Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees and fire watchers encountered in a sub-alpine environment.
- Increasing visitor comprehension of the park's Great Depression-era work relief programs and related CCC history, and place it within a broader historical context.
- Enhancing visitor understanding of the influence and heritage of organized ski clubs on the development of historic and modern facilities within the park.
- Enhance visitor awareness of the value and purpose of historic preservation.



*Looking southeast at Ragged Ridge, a 624-acre Natural Area Preserve established within the park in 1985.*

## Recreation

Enhance recreational facilities and experiences by:

- Developing year round interpretive opportunities, including the expanded use of existing park facilities to reach a broader range of visitors.
- Contributing to the implementation of the parks' Comprehensive Trail Plan and related signing and orientation functions.
- Developing standards for consistent interpretive signing and publications related to the park.
- Providing a spectrum of barrier free (ADA approved) interpretive opportunities for as many visitors as practicable.
- Identifying and promoting sustainable use practices, such a recycling—waste management and trail stewardship.

## Interpretation and Environmental Education

Develop services capable of providing positive, memorable experiences by:

- Developing easily accessible, digital-based orientation and interpretive media.
- Developing self-guided interpretive opportunities to serve a wide spectrum of park users.
- Identifying a network of watershed-based field sites suitable for use as outdoor classrooms and related interactive learning activities.
- Identifying potential partnerships in interpretation to enhance the interpretive services provided to the public.
- Providing permanent, seasonal, and volunteer staff with professional customer service and interpretive training.
- Ensuring orientation and interpretive materials are suited for site conditions, and replaced when their quality or effectiveness negatively affects function.



*Snowmobile riding is a popular park activity. Effective winter trail orientation is vital to safe trail conditions.*



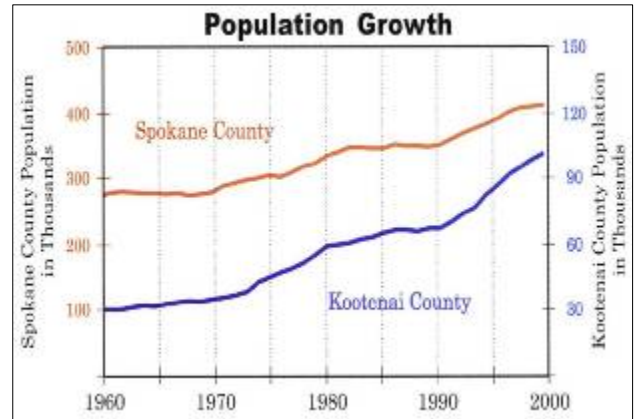
*Local skiers enjoying winter views from the Sun Ball atop Mount Spokane. The Sun Ball was erected along the summit's south overlook on Father's Day in 1932 as part of the George Washington Bicentennial Commemoration (born in 1732). It was removed around 1950 due to vandalism (Oestreicher Collection, WSPRC).*

## Section 3

# Audience Analysis

## Regional Context

Mount Spokane State Park draws visitors from throughout eastern Washington, northern Idaho and beyond. The park is generally accessible within an hour's drive from the cities of Spokane and Coeur d'Alene. Combined, these two urban areas include a population base of just over 700,000 (see **Figure 3.1**). This trend can be expected to continue with future population growth in the Spokane-Kootenai County area projected to grow in the next 20 years. This increase in population density and related demand for outdoor recreation opportunities could indicate potential changes to declining trends in park usage over the past 15 years.



**Figure 3.1- Spokane-Kootenai County area population growth from 1960-2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).**

## Existing Visitor Use Patterns

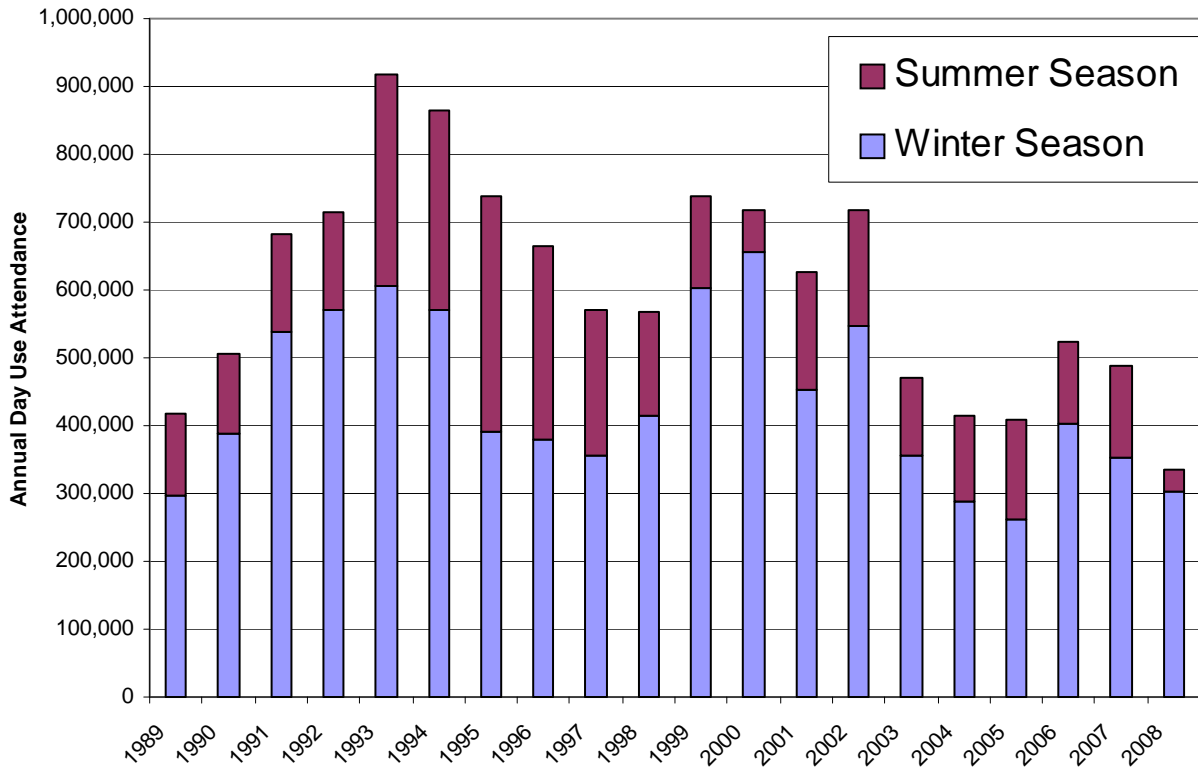
Based on the past 20 years of visitor attendance data, the average day use attendance for the park is approximately 620,385 (see **Figure 3.2**). The primary activity occurring within the park is the operation of alpine skiing facilities and related winter trail use. The dominant use season is between December and March, when reliable snowfall draws visitors to this iconic winter playground (see **Figure 3.3**). During the remaining months of the year the park is active with a variety of more traditional state park uses, including hiking, bicycling, auto touring and wildlife viewing. The development history of facilities within the park reflects this distinct seasonal pattern, with few facilities receiving year round use.

## Visitor Profile

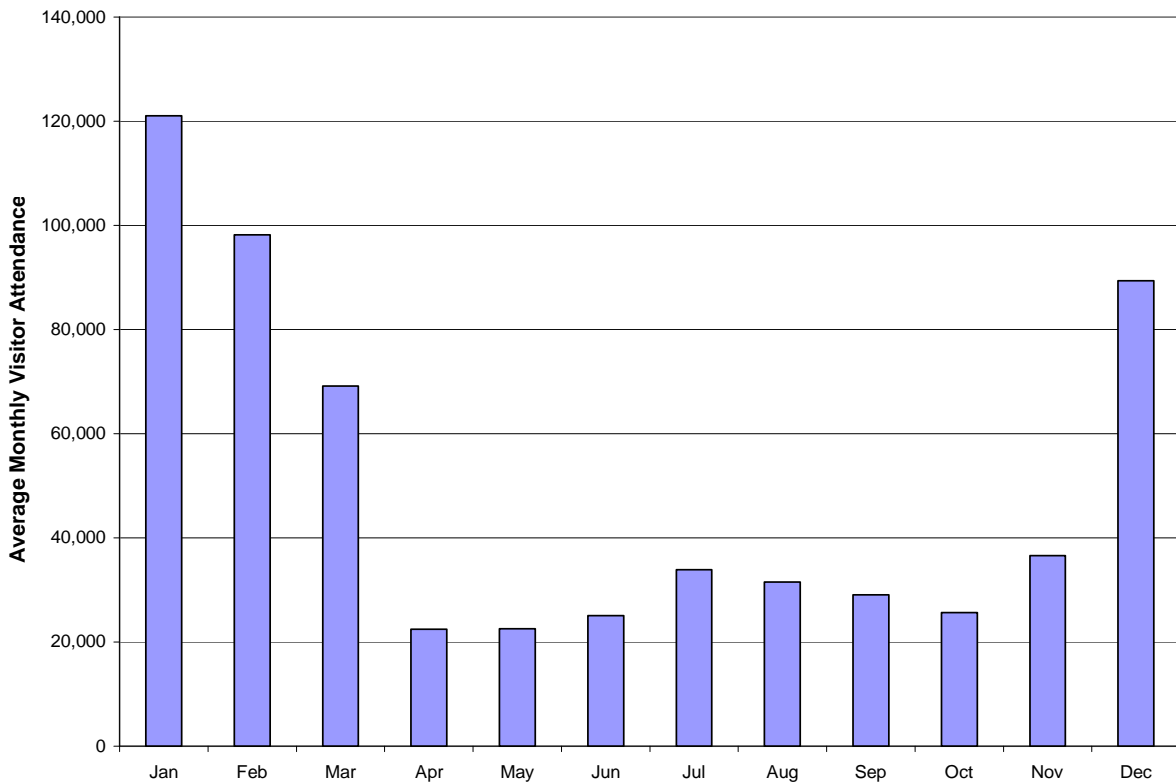
In general, identifiable recreational patterns within the park include:

- Visitors seeking access to *specific environments*, such as: sub-alpine forests and meadows, snow fields, panoramic vistas, and areas providing solitude.
- Visitors seeking facilities to participate in *specific activities* such as: skiing, hiking, snowmobiling, camping, and horse riding.

In most cases, an identifiable user group can be associated with each primary park use or activity. Following is a brief outline of specific uses organized by the dominant season in which they occur:



**Figure 3.2 - Mount Spokane State Park 20-Year Annual Attendance Trend (1989-2008)**



**Figure 3.3 - Mount Spokane State Park Average Attendance by Month (1989-2008)**

### **Winter Season (December --March)**

- Snowmobiling
- Cross-country (Nordic) skiing
- Downhill skiing
- Snowboarding
- Snowshoeing
- Dog sledding

### **Non-Winter Season (April -- November)**

- Backcountry hiking
- Mountain biking (all terrain)
- Road biking (paved terrain)
- Horse riding
- Auto touring of historic sites/vistas
- Group day use/weddings
- Camping

### **Year Round**

- Outdoor photography
- Wildlife viewing/nature observation
- Picnicking/passive recreation

The majority of existing park user groups are seeking activity based opportunities. Strategies for interpretation should recognize this pattern in the selection of media used for orientation—a common need of all users seeking specific use facilities.

## **Potential User Groups**

As part of this planning effort, an examination of interpretive resources and potential user groups was conducted. Based on the broad spectrum of park resources, several opportunities to entice visitors seeking access to specific environments and activities exist. In addition, many existing users are likely interested in a spectrum of uses. The primary objective of this discussion is to identify opportunities to diversify interpretive opportunities and enhance repeat visitation.

Therefore, the following potential target user groups should be considered within the context of existing and future use patterns:

- Family-oriented outdoor learners
- Curriculum-oriented outdoor learners (school districts, private/home groups)
- Individual learners
- Organized groups (elder hostels, resource-based tour operations, clubs)
- Natural and cultural history enthusiasts
- International and out of region visitors

## **Visitor Expectations**

Visitor seeking interpretive opportunities possess some basic expectations.

### **Memorable Experiences**

An important expectation visitors have is for their visit to be memorable. The effectiveness and quality of interpretive opportunities influences how memorable the experience will be to a visitor.

### **Access**

Visitors of all ages and abilities expect to be able to access most park facilities. These include: restrooms, trails accessible to wheelchairs and strollers, and adequate roads and parking facilities to accommodate visitors with varying degrees of mobility. Visitors with difficulty accessing park facilities may be discouraged from returning to the park.

### **Consistency**

To efficiently orient themselves to interpretive opportunities within the park environment, and specifically the trail network, visitors need to receive consistent information in the form of brochures, signs, and staff contacts. Repeat visitors will expect information to be current and consistent with information received in the past

## Current Limits to Visitors

### Developing Memorable Experiences

Perhaps the most effective, or memorable, form of interpretation is visitor contact. At current staffing levels, developing and ultimately providing memorable interpretive experiences is a constant challenge. Future sections in this plan provide recommendations on how to make interpretive opportunities positive and memorable for visitors using a variety of methods—including opportunities to provide live programming and guided interpretive opportunities.

### Access

Universally accessible trails and facilities within the park are currently limited. Another function of this plan is to identify areas where accessible visitor services and interpretation could occur, in an effort to improve accessibility over time.

### Consistency

Various levels of park facility and trail orientation exist—some with differing levels of accuracy. Through cooperative efforts with the Friends of Mount Spokane, and other user groups who have contributed to enhancing visitor access to park information, the current opportunity to standardize orientation materials should be captured. The renumbering of trails within the network is a current example of a response to this need.



*Interpretive programming and the vast panoramic views from the Vista House overlook are only accessible to visitors who can navigate uneven terrain to reach the site.*

## Section 4

# Proposed Network of Interpretive Opportunities

## Levels of the Interpretive Network

In order to strategically organize interpretive opportunities within a logical network, a four-level interpretive network is proposed. Details related to media recommendations for each network level can be found in Section 5 – Interpretive Recommendations.

- Level 1 – Enticement
- Level 2 – On-Site Orientation
- Level 3 – Interpretive Hubs
- Level 4 – Interpretive Story Points

### Level 1--Enticement

The primary objective of Level 1 media is to entice potential and repeat visitors to seek interpretive opportunities. The following media are currently used, or could be used, to entice visitation:

- Webpage Enhancements
- Park Profile -- Digital Video Production
- Multi-Format Park Brochures
- User Group/Issue-Focused Media
- Downloadable Audio and Video Programs
- Outdoor Learning Information Guides

### Level 2--On-Site Orientation

Level 2 media is focused on providing on-site orientation to visitors as they arrive and explore specific areas of the park. The primary aim is to effectively circulate visitors to the next level in the network, interpretive hubs. The following orientation media is currently used, or could be used, to enhance orientation and visitor circulation:

- Directional and Wayfinding Signs
- Information Board Design
- Park and Interpretive Network Mapping
- Summit Road Sign Plan
- Trail Network Sign Plan

### Level 3--Interpretive Hubs

The third level, interpretive hubs, provide general orientation to park facilities and services, as well as focused orientation to story points and broad interpretation of resources within the hub vicinity. Interpretive hubs are organized in a simple hierarchy comprised of primary and, where appropriate, secondary hubs. Primary hubs are interpretive destinations within primary circulation routes of the park. Secondary hubs are often located outside primary circulation routes or lack accessible facilities, such as sufficient parking and restrooms.

See **Figure 4.1** for a map conveying the proposed park-wide interpretive hub network.



## Primary Hubs

- Hub #1--Park Gateway
- Hub #2--Mount Spokane Summit
- Hub #3--Trail Network
- Hub #4--Historic Cook's Auto Road
- Hub #5--Mount Spokane Ski Lodge #2

## Secondary Hubs

### Related to Hub #2:

- Vista House
- South Overlook
- Paradise Camp Wayside
- CCC Camp Francis Cook
- Bald Knob Day Use Area

### Related to Hub #3:

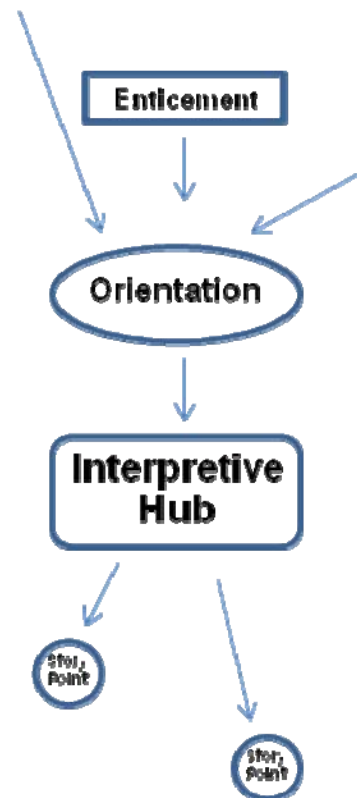
- Nordic (NOVA) Warming Hut
- Quartz Mountain Fire Lookout

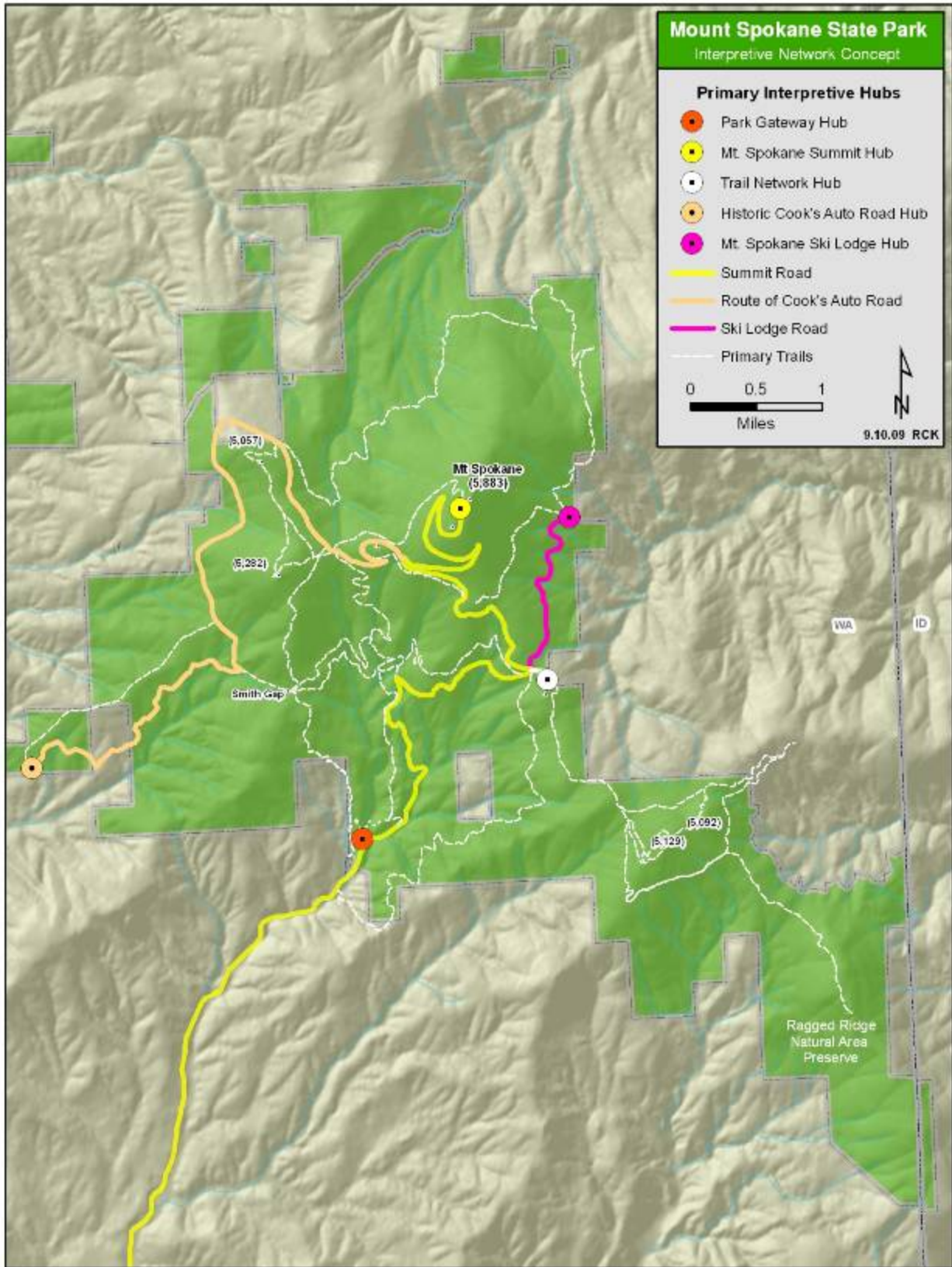
## Level 4—Interpretive Story Points

Story points, the fourth level of the interpretive network, are locations where interpretive messages allow visitors to interact with concepts, resources and landscapes.

Within the park there are several interpretive story points organized by the interpretive hub to which they seem most clearly related. For specific story point locations and descriptions refer to **Figures 5.2 through 5.10** found in Section 5 of this document.

### Simplified Network of Interpretive Elements





**Figure 4.1 – Mount Spokane State Park Interpretive Network Concept Map.**

## Section 5

# Interpretive Recommendations

This section outlines general and site specific recommendations to enhance the interpretive network of opportunities within Mount Spokane State Park. Interpretive hubs within the network should provide multiple functions, including general and focused visitor orientation and thematic interpretation. Where appropriate, conceptual interpretive themes are presented to illustrate potential interpretive messages related to specific features or locations within the proposed interpretive network.

## Recommendations for Enticing Visitors

### **Webpage Enhancements**

The Internet is a valuable resource for pre-visit enticement and orientation. It is a very common media used for trip destination and activity planning. Enhancement and routine updating of content stored on the park webpage is an important step to increasing the accessibility of the interpretive network. Furthermore, the webpage platform is a vital tool necessary to provide related enticement and orientation strategies, such as downloadable maps, brochures, and audio and video files. Coordination with the agency Public Affairs and Information Management offices is required to implement this element.

### **Park Profile -- Digital Video Production**

The agency is currently exploring opportunities to develop and support digital video files to enhance the marketing of our state park system. The unique visual landscape and resources of Mount Spokane are well suited for this form of marketing. The development of a 60-second digital video clip

should be pursued in coordination with the agency Public Affairs Office. The video clip could be utilized as a marketing tool on the agency website, as well as appropriate web links such as Washington State Tourism and other approved partnership websites.

### **Multi-Format Park Brochure**

The design and publication of general park information brochures should be developed and made available in digital and printed formats to enhance distribution networks and reduce the need for agency printing. Digital format brochures can be made available through the agency web page, as well as appropriate partners and marketing networks.

### **User Group/Issue-Focused Media**

Opportunities exist to develop a variety of digital and printed media to entice and orient targeted user groups, as well as to address specific park management issues. Media content should be thematic and developed in coordination with appropriate user groups or resource specialist. The use of thematic maps to convey specific use trails and descriptions should also be considered in this format.

### **Downloadable Audio and Video Programs**

The use of digital audio and video media as an enticement and orientation tool has increased steadily in the last decade. Currently, the Spokane Visitor's Bureau maintains a web-based platform to access podcasts and other audio files related to local tourist destinations. Partnership opportunities should be explored to develop a pilot program to establish and market the use of virtual self-guided interpretive and/or outdoor learning stations in a downloadable, digital format.

### **Outdoor Learning Information Packets**

Researched information identifying outdoor learning opportunities within the park is currently not available. The development of pre-visit and post-visit information should be developed for organized groups and others seeking place-based learning opportunities. Due to the variety of park resources and potential educational groups, an assessment of targeted user group needs is recommended prior to development. Local school districts and related educational specialists should be consulted in the development.

## **Recommendations for Orienting Visitors**

### **Uniform Directional and Wayfinding Signs**

A park-wide sign plan is currently in place; however, opportunities to enhance interpretive wayfinding exist. Therefore, evaluation and updates to this plan are recommended as the development of interpretive hubs and related park facility developments occur. Future improvements to the sign plan network will be consistent with agency and Washington Department of Transportation design guidelines, where applicable.

### **Information Board Design**

The layout of park information should be visually attractive and effective. Visitors should recognize information boards as a family of organized information. Currently, park information boards are well organized and located at most major trailheads and facilities. Design and development of a standard information board layout is recommended to enhance existing conditions. The use of building materials, paint colors, and font style, size and color should be standardized, as well as the space allocation of management messages, orientation media and interpretive information.

### **Park and Interpretive Network Mapping**

Multiple versions of a park map are currently circulated and posted—with varying degrees of information. This mapping enhancement project would involve:

- The development of park map standards that clearly identify public access roads, facilities, trails, and accessible sites.
- The identification of the park-wide interpretive network, including hubs and significant story point features or resources.
- Reproduction at various map scales based on intended use and layout standards.
- Production of a map series that provides downloadable, large-scale orientation to the entire park trail system. The series could be developed in phases with printed versions available as a series package or on CD.



*Information board at Trail #110 trailhead.*

### **Summit Road Sign Plan**

During snow free periods of the year, multiple opportunities for interpretation exist along the automobile route to the summit. A corridor sign plan is recommended to subtly enhance visitor experience and orientation to park features. This concept could be expanded to include the Ski Lodge road corridor and programmatic activities such as radio broadcast and digital audio tours.

Interpretation along the corridor is addressed later in this section. The proposed corridor sign plan would include three basic elements:

- Signing of auto and trail gateways, waysides, and viewpoints
- Signing of 3, 4 and 5,000-ft elevations
- Signing of creek crossings and springs

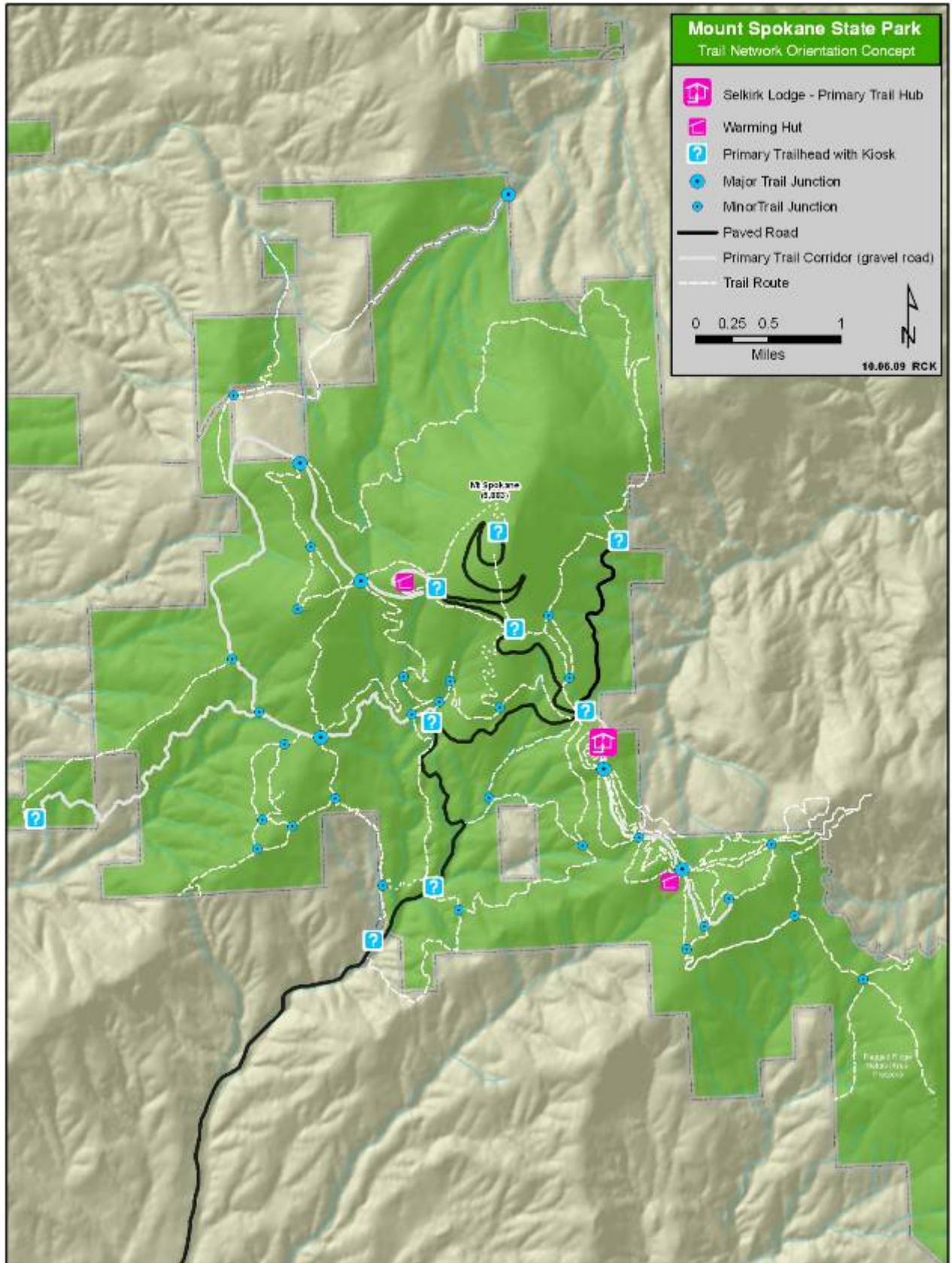
### **Trail Network Orientation Sign Plan**

Implementation of signing prescriptions within the *Comprehensive Trail Plan* is recommended to enhance the interpretive network. For specific location of primary and secondary trail network orientation needs see **Figure 5.1**

The selection of signing materials should consider the range of summer and winter site conditions. Durable materials such as routed wood and aluminum are preferred. Another consideration is the cost of reproduction. To ensure the replacement of vandalized or damaged signs in a timely manner, the cost of sign replacement should be included in the scope of routine park maintenance needs and resulting operation budgets.



*Revision of the trail identification system will require user notification and replacement of existing signs.*



**Figure 5.1 – General Trail Network Orientation Concept Map**

# Recommendations for Interpretive Hub and Story Point Development

The following recommendations are to be used in the scoping, design and development of future interpretive hubs and related programs, projects and outreach services. In addition, concept interpretive themes are presented to illustrate potential interpretive messages related to specific interpretive hubs and story points.

## Burping Brook Gateway (Hub #1)

Currently, the park administration complex is located near the confluence of Burping Brook with Deadman Creek. This hub serves as the gateway to the park and a primary location for visitor contact. Facility development plans call for the relocation of the maintenance and staff residence functions. The existing residence is scheduled for conversion to the park office. An outdoor park orientation and interpretive hub is recommended to serve this critical gateway function year round. The hub site should be located in close proximity to parking and provide effective orientation to:

- nearby multi-use trails, including equestrian, hiking and snowmobile routes.
- visitors seeking auto access to the summit, the trail network and alpine ski lodges.

Situated at the mouth of Burping Brook, the site also has potential to serve as a centralized hub for outdoor learning. The entire 1,240-acre Burping Brook watershed, a sub-basin of Deadman Creek, is located on state park land (see **Figure 5.2**). This situation is unique as it provides opportunities to build a network of watershed-based outdoor classroom and monitoring sites to provide students with technical learning opportunities. Due to limited winter access conditions, the

observation and monitoring of spring runoff and related riparian habitats should be targeted. There are 14 school districts located in Spokane County alone. Opportunities to partner with multiple K-12 districts, regional colleges, and other organized groups to facilitate curriculum-based activities should also be explored. Specifically, curriculum related to earth and water systems, forest ecology, aquatic and wetland biology and observation skills.

### *Related Hub #1 Interpretive Themes*

- Welcome to Mount Spokane, home of the largest state park in Washington State.
- Mount Spokane is a park created mainly from private and public land donations.
- Mount Spokane is part of the Selkirk Range and the highest peak in Spokane County.
- The Burping Brook watershed drains the southern slopes of Mount Spokane, Beauty Mountain and Mount Kit Carson.
- Visitors to the park continue to benefit from the work relief programs of the Great Depression.
- On foot you can explore the park's Natural Forest Areas and Natural Area Preserve.



*The existing park residence has the potential to serve as a year round gateway orientation center.*

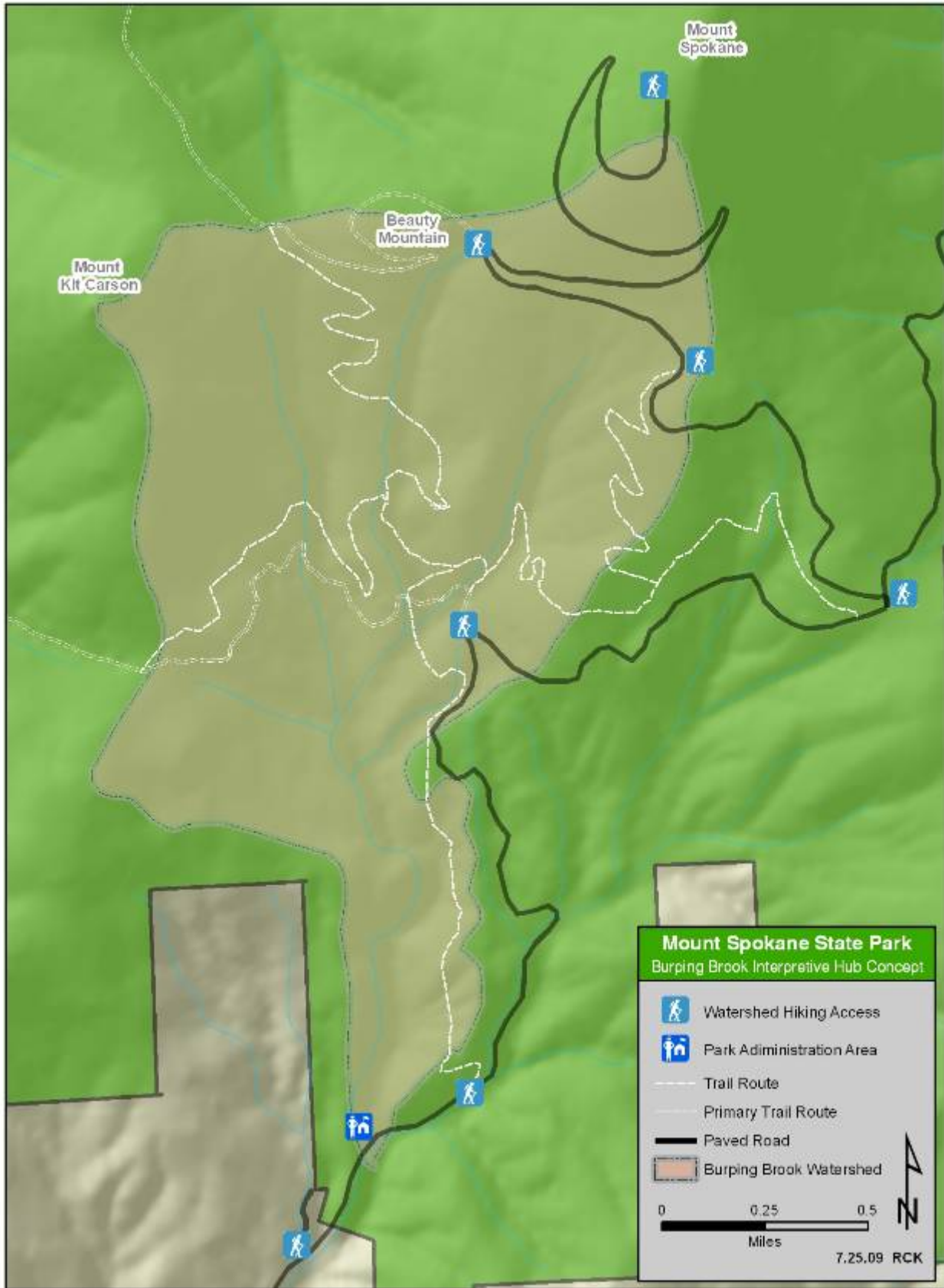


Figure 5.2 - Burping Brook Interpretive Hub Concept Map



## Hub-Related Story Point Sites

The following story points are located within the vicinity of the existing park gateway.

### Spokane Ski Club Lodge

The most notable remaining evidence of the former ski club lodge, located near Camp Fossean, is a tall fireplace stack. An earlier location for the lodge is believed to have been in the vicinity of Bald Knob. Early photographs of the lodge are available within the Leo Oestreicher collection.

#### *Related Themes:*

- Members of the Spokane Ski Club played an important role in shaping the vision of

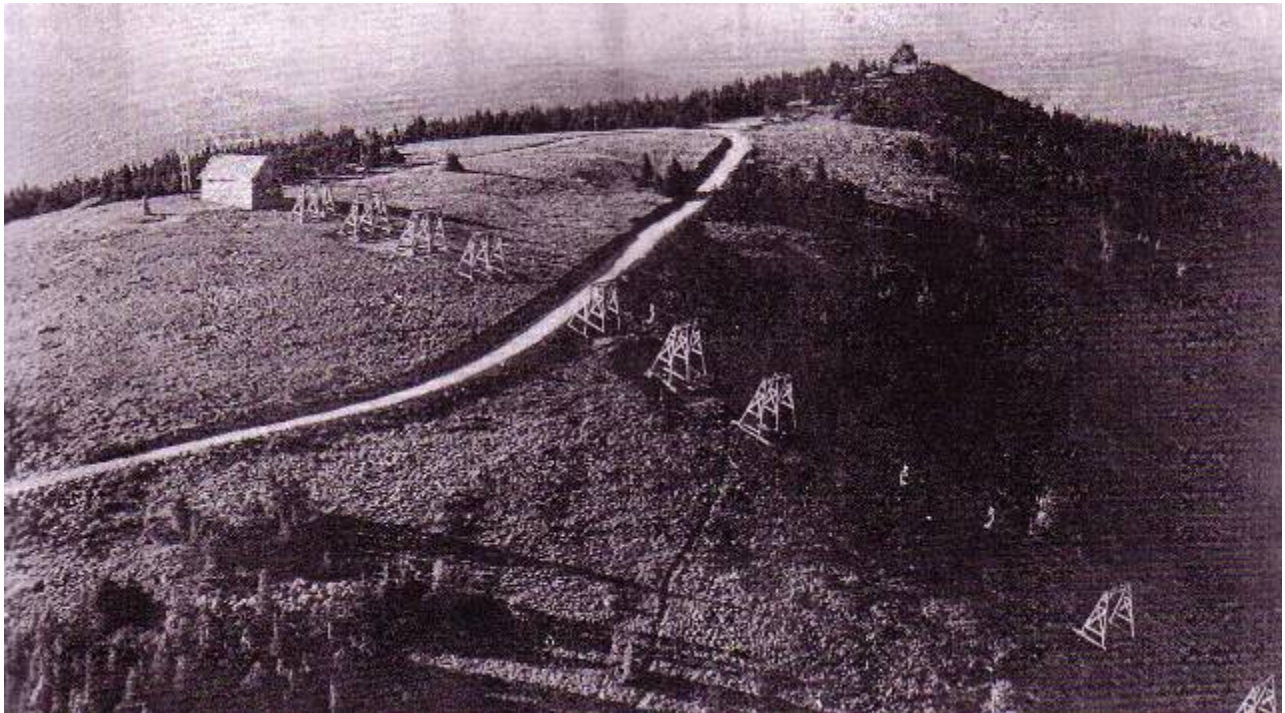
Mount Spokane as a destination for winter recreation.

- The Spokane Ski Club was one of the first ski clubs organized in the Pacific Northwest in 1931.

### Camp Fossean

This mid-20th century Boy Scout camp was named after Neal Fossean, former Spokane mayor and Boy Scout supporter. Remnants of the camp remain on private land within the park long-term boundary.

*Related Theme:* The Boy Scouts participated in many early park dedication ceremonies and development projects.



*Spokane Ski Club chair lift up the east slope of Mount Spokane, circa 1947. With assistance from the local Riblet Aerial Tramway Company, an ore bucket mining tram was converted to what is believed to be the world's first double chair lift. Due to high operation costs, the lift was closed in 1949, having only operated three seasons. No evidence of the chair lift structure once located between the sun ball and the Scouts of America monument is noticeable today (image from Stricker, 1975).*