

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Interpretive Policy (50-10-1)
Adopted November 19, 2010

A. PURPOSE

Providing interpretive opportunities for the citizens of Washington and their guests is a long-standing activity of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission). The scope and function of interpretation has evolved substantially with the expansion of the state park system, exponential growth in visitation and technology advancements witnessed over the last 97 years. This policy aims to organize and redefine the statewide role of interpretation in the state park system as it prepares for a second century of service.

Furthermore, this policy will enable the Commission to better utilize interpretation as a resource management tool to support the ongoing stewardship of the outstanding, yet vulnerable natural, cultural, historical and scenic resources entrusted within its care. This policy applies to all agency employees, volunteers, and contractors engaged in the development, implementation, and evaluation of interpretive services.

B. REFERENCES

1. RCW 79A.05.305 Declaration of policy—Lands for public purposes
2. RCW 79A.05.335 Environmental interpretation—Authority of Commission
3. RCW 79A.05.340 Environmental interpretation—Scope of activities
4. RCW 79A.05.345 Environmental interpretation—Assistance from other organizations
5. WAC 352-16-010 (1) Naming and classification of state park areas
6. WAC 352-16-020 Land classification system
7. WAC 352-32-010 Definitions; “Environmental interpretation”
8. WAC 392-410-115 (6) Mandatory areas of study in the common school
9. Commission Policy 50-62-1 Historic Sites;
10. Commission Policy 65-95-1 Environmental Interpretation Program Policy;
11. Centennial 2013 Vision and Plan;
12. 2006—Cooperative Partnership Agreement between the Washington State Historical Society and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

C. DEFINITIONS

1. **Collections:** The collected objects cared for by the Commission or another institution or organization.

2. **Curriculum-Based Learning:** Programs and activities designed to facilitate mandatory areas of study at all grade levels, including instruction about conservation, natural resources, and the environment in an interdisciplinary manner with an emphasis on solving problems of human adaptation to the environment [see WAC 392-410-115 (6)].

3. **Environmental Interpretation:** The provision of services, materials, publications and/or facilities, including environmental learning centers (ELC), for other than basic access to parks and individual camping, picnicking, and boating in parks, that enhance public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural heritage through agency directed or self-learning activities [see WAC 352-32-010].
4. **Heritage Site:** A designated location, structure, or assemblage of resources within a state park area possessing significant natural, cultural, historical or scenic attributes that are preserved and interpreted for the education and enjoyment of the public.
5. **Interpretation:** A mission-based communication process that creates opportunities for visitors to connect emotionally and intellectually with the world around them in meaningful ways.
6. **Interpretive Center:** A designated site or structure administered by State Parks specifically to interpret a significant element of Washington's heritage to the public. The significance of historic properties, events and/or natural features, extant or vanished, within the general proximity of an Interpretive Center transcends local interest and is of statewide or national significance.
7. **Interpretive Services:** A range of program activities aimed to communicate messages to wide and varied audiences in order to enhance visitor experience and stewardship of state park resources using *guided* and *self-guided* methodologies and media technologies.
 - a. **Guided:** One person or persons providing interpretation to another person or group of people. Examples include informal visitor contacts (roving) and formal programming, such as campfire talks, guided hikes and tours, and curriculum-based learning programs and activities.
 - b. **Self-Guided:** Interpretive media that does not require a person to deliver messages. Examples include indoor and outdoor exhibits, brochures, audio/video programs and digital media (world wide web content).
8. **Object:** A material thing possessing functional, aesthetic, cultural, symbolic, and/or scientific value, usually movable by nature or design. Objects include prehistoric and historic objects, artifacts, works of art, archival material, and natural history specimens that are part of a museum-type collection.

9. **State Park Area:** All areas dedicated for public park purposes, excluding separately located administrative areas, and under the ownership and/or management of the Washington state parks and recreation commission [see WAC 352-16-010 (1)].
10. **Stewardship:** The care of state park lands including conservation of natural features and systems, preservation of historical and cultural sites and resources, and thoughtful management that encourages their meaningful and sustainable recreational and educational use and enjoyment.

D. POLICY

1. The Commission utilizes interpretation as an essential resource management tool to foster public awareness and stewardship of state park lands and the inherent natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources entrusted within its care.
2. Every state park serves a function within a statewide network of interpretive opportunities. All developed state parks provide appropriate self-guided and/or guided interpretive services to enhance visitor experience.
3. State park lands possess unique capacities to serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental interpretation. The Commission fosters educational opportunities statewide, including the facilitation of curriculum-based learning programs and activities.
4. The Commission is committed to preserving and interpreting Washington's diverse human and natural heritage to the public. The Commission coordinates with interested Native American tribes in the research and development of interpretation associated with topics of mutual interest to ensure that presented information is accurate and appropriate, including the display of collection objects.
5. The Commission collaborates externally with interested Native American tribes, government agencies, educational institutions, and private organizations and individuals to enhance interpretive services statewide, including the operation of designated Heritage Sites and Interpretive Centers.
6. The Commission strives to maintain relevant interpretive experiences. An Interpretive Program Strategy should be updated biennially to identify and prioritize interpretive programming and facility needs for consideration in agency budget development procedures.