

The Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mt Ranch Master Planning Project



Creating a vision for the future
February 2003

Time well spent

Washington State Parks needs your help! Agency staff have embarked upon a public planning process to guide future development and management of the Dalles Mountain Ranch property and Horsethief Lake State Park. To make sure that our planning reflects what is important to you, we ask that you look through this document, give it some thought, and let us know how we can make these parklands relevant to you.

What's in this document

This document first provides a brief history of the parks and outlines the individual steps in the current master planning process. Then, it describes several possible scenarios, or *planning directions*, the agency has crafted to provide structure and direct the public participation process. Finally, for those interested in providing feedback, it describes how to contact us, how we will use the information you provide, and ultimately how final plan decisions will be made and by whom.

The visible timescape

Encapsulating the rich history of Dalles Mountain Ranch and Horsethief Lake State Park in a few short pages couldn't possibly do justice to these amazing places. Everywhere one turns, visible features of the landscape tell the story of significant eras and events in the region's natural and cultural history. Some stories relate natural phenomena on a fantastic scale while others tell of an ancient and prosperous native civilization. Still others attest to the courage and fortitude of early explorers and pioneers.



Dalles Mountain Ranch and Horsethief Lake State Park have been shaped over the millennia by the Grand Ronde lava flows, eroding action of the Columbia River, and colossal ice age floods. About 15,000 years ago, advancing glaciers formed ice dams on the Clark Fork River (Montana) creating an expansive inland lake. Lake Missoula covered large areas of what is now western Montana. As the pressure of rising water increased, the ice dams burst, unleashing a torrent equal to ten times the combined flow of all the earth's rivers. The rush of water scoured its way across northern Idaho, into

eastern Washington, along the path of the Columbia River, and finally emptied into the Pacific Ocean. Turbulent water on an incomprehensible scale removed cubic miles of earth. Damming and flooding occurred repeatedly before the glaciers finally retreated to the north, leaving distinguishing marks on the landscape. Recognizable are the channeled scablands and the coulees in the Columbia basin and exposed the basalt cliffs in the Columbia River Gorge. In the Dalles Mountain – Horsethief Lake area, one can clearly see a transition between the water scoured cliffs at lower elevations and the more gently rolling unaffected Columbia Hills above.

Estimates of the earliest human occupation of North America remain vigorously debated within the archaeological community. Physical evidence suggests that the earliest human habitation of North America began sometime around 12,000 years ago as the result of a slow expansion and migration of

people from the Asian continent across the Bering Land Bridge. However, many archaeologists now believe that a range of 15,000 – 20,000 years ago is more likely. By contrast, the Native American perspective on this subject differs sharply. The traditional tribal belief is that ancestors did not arrive from somewhere else, but rather have always been here.

Regardless, it is safe to say that Native American tribes lived and maintained a rich cultural tradition in the area of Dalles Mountain Ranch and Horsethief Lake prior to European contact. Areas above the now flooded Fivemile Rapids were the site of a large extended village that served as a major gathering and trading center for tribes from the inland northwest and from the west side of the Cascade Mountains. As with any major settlement, signs of human activity are clearly visible on the landscape. Most noticeable are features where earth and rock were used in the construction of dwellings and rock walls for hunting purposes. Perhaps the most well know signs are the numerous petroglyphs and pictographs on the basalt walls throughout the Horsethief Lake area. Below the surface lie archaeological remains of this once vast and prosperous cultural and economic center.



Tsagaglalal (She Who Watches) Rock Petroglyph



Fivemile Rapids with future Horsethief Lake beyond ,
ca. 1890s, Oregon State Archives, record #?

The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-06 brought American westward expansion and settlement to the region. While no physical evidence of the expedition's passage remain at the park, the signs of white settlement that resulted now dominate the landscape. Journals of Lewis and Clark speak of where the River is compressed into a narrow channel that, prior to dam construction, was referred to as the Fivemile rapids or Long Narrows. These rapids began at the site of present day Horsethief Lake.

The period following the Lewis and Clark Expedition until the 1850s saw expanded sea and land-based fur trading activities between Indians and American, British, and other companies. Increased contact between Indians and non-Indians during this time greatly accelerated disease and death within the Indian population. Anthropologists have estimated that perhaps 50% of the Columbia Plateau Indian population succumbed to disease introduced by European explorers and traders between 1805 and 1870. One can only assume a similar, if not greater, death rate in a trading center like the Long Narrows.

In 1820, the first in a series of federal land acts began to entice pioneers from the Midwest to settle the Northwest. However, it wasn't until later in the 1840s and 1850s that use of the Oregon Trail and settlement of the Oregon Territory began in earnest.

During the 1850s, following division of the Oregon Territory between Britain and the United States, the United States government signed a series of treaties with northwest Indian tribes. These treaties removed tribal title to the land and compelled Indian relocation to a number of reservations in exchange for various reserved rights. Disagreement over treaty provisions, delays in ratification, language barriers and a host of other factors contributed to a series of military



Commonly believed military road grade near SR-14

actions by American soldiers and settler militias against resisting tribes. Several military forts including Ft. Walla Walla, Ft. Dalles, and Ft. Simcoe were established in the region to wage the infamous “Indian Wars.” Segments of military roadways constructed to link these forts remain visible at Dalles Mountain and serve as poignant reminders of this traumatic period in Northwest history.



Lucas timber culture near the east park boundary

Records indicate that William T. Murphy of Polk County, Oregon was the first non-Indian settler to what was to become Dalles Mountain Ranch. Mr. Murphy’s 1866 certificate, granted under the authority of the Congressional Act of 1820, included 220 acres near the river, about midway between the east and west park boundary. A steady procession of homesteading continued for the next seventy years under authority of numerous land acts until all of what is now parkland transferred from public to private ownership. Numerous subtle signs from this period remain as visible landscape features. Most apparent are the original fence lines separating the homesteads, changes to vegetation as a result of grazing activities, and remnants of original structures and gravesites. Perhaps the most intriguing features are stands of deciduous trees planted by homesteaders to satisfy requirements of the 1873 Timber Culture Act. Homesteaders were granted an additional 160 acres of land if at least forty (later ten) were planted with trees. Touted as means to bring rain to the plains, two such stands remain at the site of the Brune and Lucas homesteads.

The seventy years of original homesteading also saw significant changes to transportation in and along the Columbia River. At the turn of the century, Paul Mohr completed an ambitious project to link steamboat travel below Fivemile Rapids and above Celilo Falls by rail. Although bankruptcy precluded its operation, the rail bed forms an unmistakable feature south of SR-14. Rail lines would come to dominate passenger service through the Gorge with completion of the Spokane Portland & Seattle Railroad in 1913. In 1915, completion of the now submerged Celilo Canal eliminated the Celilo Falls – Fivemile Rapids barrier to water travel. Completion of the North Bank Highway (SR-14) in 1919 and construction of the Dalles Dam and flooding of the Gorge in 1953 would ultimately leave the most enduring visual changes to the landscape in and around the Dalles Mountain – Horsethief Lake areas.

Since original settlement by William Murphy, ranching activity has been the dominant use of Dalles Mountain. However, the uncertainties of ranching and the economic woes of the Depression meant that many small homestead ranches could no longer sustain their owners. Consequently, an era of land consolidation followed. At Dalles Mountain, the John Crawford family emerged as the principal landowners absorbing many of the original homesteads. Alas, even John's widow and son Malcolm Crawford succumbed to the financial realities of the Depression, losing the ranch to a wealthy doctor, John Reuter, through foreclosure in 1935. John Reuter continued to operate and add properties to the ranch, eventually leaving over 6,000 acres to his son and daughter upon his death in 1954. The Reuter heirs also eventually fell on hard times leading to the sale of the ranch to the Yakima Valley ranchers Pat and Darlene Bleakney in 1975.

The Bleakneys operated the ranch for eighteen years until retirement beckoned. Recognizing the ranch's extraordinary natural and cultural resource value, the Bleakneys approached the State of Washington in an effort to see their beloved ranch put into the public domain. Through a complex transaction, the ranch was sold to the Department of Natural Resources in 1993. About 2,900 acres, including the upper slopes of Stacker Butte ultimately became the Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve and was set aside to protect rare plant communities. The balance of the ranch, about 3,100 acres, including most of the structures and ranch house, was deeded to Washington State Parks for operation as a park. Relatively little has changed at the Dalles Mountain Ranch property since it came into public ownership and public use of the area has remained intentionally modest.

With the construction of the Dalles Dam and flooding of the Columbia River in 1953 came the inception of Horsethief Lake State Park. The Army Corps of Engineers, in an effort to offset recreational losses associated with dam construction and flooding, developed the Horsethief Lake area in the early 1960's. State Parks has leased the site, adding some additional property, from 1964 until present. The developed area of the park includes a modest fourteen-site campground, formal picnic area with parking and restrooms, two boat launches, staff residence, and administrative area.

The challenge

The challenge facing the planning process is to establish a long-term vision for the park that: 1) is responsive to the needs and desires of the public, 2) appropriately balances recreational use and development with the protection of park resources, 3) is actively supported by park stakeholders, and 4) is feasible given the agency's financial limitations.

Planning of the type now under way – especially during periods of economic uncertainty – allows the agency to:

- Meet its current obligation to steward natural and cultural resources for future generations (stewardship won't wait for better budgets)
- Focus on providing opportunities that are seen as essential to the park's constituency
- Work confidently towards a shared vision even though progress might initially be slow

The planning sequence

In November 2001, agency staff held an initial public workshop to gain some insight into issues facing the park and, in very general terms, what features are important to park stakeholders. Since that time, staff has crafted a set of park objectives and five planning directions to help structure

public input (see planning directions, page 6). Based on the reaction of park stakeholders, staff will then blend the various planning directions into a preliminary concept plan that incorporates the desires of park stakeholders and is feasible for the agency and the broader community to implement. Another public workshop will then be held to review the preliminary plan. Ultimately, a final recommendation will be put before the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission for consideration and adoption. Staff intends to continue actively soliciting input from park stakeholders during each phase of the planning process.

Planning and management objectives

During initial planning, agency staff developed a collection of specific objectives. The following objectives will form the foundation for decisions about developing park facilities and managing park resources as planning proceeds.

Natural Resources

- Identify, assess, monitor, protect, and restore plant and animal communities associated with grasslands, oak woodland, and spring-fed riparian areas, and the ecological functions they perform.
- Identify, assess, monitor, and protect natural geologic and hydrologic features associated with the area's numerous springs, seasonal and year-round streams, basalt outcroppings, the Columbia River, and the ecological and cultural functions they perform.
- Ensure that future park development and management decisions recognize the importance of maintaining continuity of the biological, geological, and hydrological features that link the Columbia River to the crest of the Columbia Hills.

Cultural Resources

- Identify, assess, monitor, and protect cultural properties associated with Native American rock art, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional cultural practice sites.
- Identify, assess, monitor, protect cultural features associated with nineteenth century Lewis and Clark exploration, federal land acts, and American westward expansion, and the area's military, transportation, agricultural, hydro-electric, commercial, and settlement history.
- Collect and record oral history, folklore, and artifacts related to the park and its cultural role in the Columbia Hills and Columbia River Gorge area.
- Ensure that park development and management decisions recognize changes in human dependence on, and interaction with, the park's natural landscape and how this has manifested itself on the area's physical appearance over time (also known as a "timescape").

Recreational Resources

- Provide an array of compatible, high-quality day-use and overnight recreational opportunities that are inspired by, and in harmony with, the park's natural and cultural features.

Interpretation and Environmental Education

- Combine the skills and resources of agency staff with other organizations and individuals to develop and maintain environmental education and interpretive facilities and programs that establish the park as a regional focal point for cultural and natural resource-related learning.
- Utilize interpretation and visitor education as essential approaches to managing visitor impacts on the park's natural and cultural resources.

Community Partnerships

- Recognize the social and economic importance of the park to the Columbia River Gorge region.
- Actively solicit citizen participation and partner with interested stakeholder groups to develop and implement park programs that are truly models for others to follow.
- Participate in other regional and community planning efforts as advocates for the park, its resources, and its visitors.
- Engage and actively support a volunteer corps of park neighbors, recreational users, resource stewards, and other interested organizations or individuals, to assist in park development and operation.

Fire

- Actively partner with local fire districts, DNR, and adjacent property owners in developing and maintaining cooperative fire prevention and suppression plans.
- Consider the prescriptive use of fire and other natural process as appropriate to further conservation of natural plant communities.

Administrative Facilities and Infrastructure

- Rehabilitate, maintain, and where appropriate, develop durable, functional, and attractive administrative facilities and infrastructure to maximize operational and cost efficiency, as well as attract and retain high-quality park employees.
- To the extent possible, facilities and infrastructure necessary for park operation and administration should be visually subordinate to surrounding natural and cultural features.

Concessions and Park Enterprise

- Promote park visitor services through public/private partnerships and other entrepreneurial programs that are clearly compatible with other park management objectives.
- Allow for revenue generating, non-recreational uses of park lands only if proposed uses provide a demonstrable, broader, public benefit and do not compromise the agency's ability to meet other park management objectives.

Long-Term Boundary

- Establish a long-term park boundary that, from a landscape perspective, identifies lands that are appropriate to support the significant recreation and resource stewardship functions of the park.
- Identify agency-owned properties that are not essential to park functions and therefore appropriate for disposal.

Planning directions

The foregoing park objectives provide broad parameters within which planning decisions will be made. But, what happens when these ideals conflict or are in direct competition with one another? And, how can we translate them into development plans and management actions? To help answer these questions, agency staff has developed a planning technique that enables participants to identify potential conflicts and make conscious choices about which objectives should take priority in various areas of the park.

The technique involves developing distinct *planning directions* for park development and management. Each direction strongly emphasizes a major aspect of the agency's mission, sometimes taking it to its

logical extreme. The planning directions developed for the Dalles Mountain – Horsethief Lake State Park Area include:

- Emphasize protecting the park’s natural features and systems
- Emphasize protecting the area’s historic and cultural heritage
- Emphasize interpreting the park’s natural and cultural treasures
- Emphasize developing the park’s recreational potential
- Other suggested possibilities

By considering what the park might look like if each planning direction were uniformly applied throughout, new possibilities emerge as to the park’s ultimate potential. Then, assuming no individual direction is universally desirable across the entire landscape, the next step is to determine which ideas in the five planning directions are most appropriate for each area within the park. This allows planning to emphasize resource protection in some areas, recreational opportunity in others, and so on.

We ask that you study the individual planning directions below – again not to choose just one - to find the individual elements in each that appeal to you. Then let us know what you think (see contact information on page 15). We are also interested in hearing new ideas we have not considered yet. From your responses, agency staff will then blend the preferred elements together into a single, unified whole that minimizes potential conflicts between objectives and makes sense for overall administration and management of the park area.

□ **Emphasize protecting the park’s natural features and systems**



This planning direction elevates protection and restoration of natural resources and biological functions to the highest priority of the park (Figure 1). In this case, “development” actually means removing some existing recreational facilities and keeping the developed footprint of any new facilities as small as practical. Recreational support facilities are constructed in previously disturbed areas, make use of existing structures, and are designed to channel use away from sensitive features. As a rule, this direction only permits recreational uses to the extent that they do not significantly interfere with the area’s natural processes and functions. For example, interpretive facilities and programs are provided away from any sensitive features and in centralized locations to minimize the risk of any damage.

Illustrative aspects of this planning direction include:

- Natural plant and animal populations are protected or even restored – especially if threatened or endangered and where beneficial to the adjacent Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve
- Riparian areas are protected and restored (e.g., livestock watering developments removed from springs)
- Haying is preferred to grazing for purposes of fire risk reduction and maintenance of the rural landscapes

- Prescribed burns or other management prescriptions that mimic natural disturbances are considered as a means to manage native vegetation
- Properties adjacent to the park containing biologically significant features are sought for acquisition or cooperative management – especially where they extend from private property into park lands
- An Interpretive/Research Center is established to support natural resource research and provide interpretation of significant natural features in the Columbia Gorge region.

□ **Emphasize protecting the park’s historic and cultural heritage**



This planning direction embraces many of the same resource protection concepts suggested in the previous direction. However, instead of natural features, protection and appropriate treatment of significant historic and cultural features and landscapes form the primary drivers in this direction (Figure 2). The park in essence becomes a cultural resource showcase, providing a model of how important features can be protected for the enrichment of future generations. This scheme permits recreational uses only if directly related to enhancing the enjoyment and understanding of the park’s significant cultural history. Recreational support facilities are specially sited and designed to minimize any potential intrusions into culturally significant landscapes.

Illustrative aspects of this planning direction include:

- Access to sensitive historic sites, archaeological sites, petroglyphs, and other vulnerable cultural resources is generally limited to guided interpretive tours or other staffed educational programs
- The majority of interpretive opportunities are provided in centralized locations, not at actual sites
- Contract grazing and grazing leases are considered as means to maintain the historic, rural character of the Dalles Mountain landscape
- An Agricultural Heritage Center is established at the main ranch area to support agriculture-related research activities and provide interpretive opportunities
- An additional Heritage Center established to support research and provide interpretation related to native American archaeology and other culturally significant sites in the Columbia Gorge region

□ **Emphasize interpreting the park’s natural and cultural treasures**



Creating a link between a visitor’s personal experience and the park’s impressive array of natural and cultural features shapes this planning direction (Figure 3). Learning through experience and active participation are central principles in effective educational programming. Consequently, this direction places interpretive facilities in close proximity to important natural and cultural features to maximize contact between people and the educational subject matter. The park becomes a network of interpretive sites with several major “centers” providing the bulk of live programming and directing

visitors to additional site-specific learning opportunities throughout the park. Interpretive facilities

are extensive in both number and sophistication. In short, this scheme seeks to establish Dalles Mountain Ranch/Horsethief Lake State Park as a primary destination for resource-related learning in the Columbia Gorge region.

Illustrative aspects of this planning direction include:

- Three major interpretive centers constructed each with a specific focus: Native American cultural history, pioneer settlement/agricultural history; and natural history
- Horsethief Lake day-use area converted to an outdoor interpretive center
- RV campsites at Horsethief Lake replaced with replica Indian plank houses as noted in Lewis and Clark journals
- Rural character of agriculture fields maintained through contract haying/grazing with interpretative demonstrations provided as a part of contracts
- Guided interpretive equestrian tours provided via concession
- Wetlands and Indian hunting blinds properties sought for acquisition

□ **Emphasize developing the park's recreational potential**



This planning direction seeks to explore a wide range of recreational opportunities the park might ultimately provide (Figure 4). Plain and simple, FUN drives this scheme. The park seeks to provide a full range of overnight accommodations, including expanded camping at the Horsethief area, a hostel at the ranch area, and bed & breakfast at the ranch house. Recreational activities at the Dalles Mountain Ranch are supported through a central “welcome center” that provides information/orientation services, equipment rental,

guided tours, and small gift shop/cafe. An additional small concession is developed in the Horsethief Lake area to serve camping, boating, and fishing. This planning direction also proposes construction of an extensive network of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails to provide maximum access to the park's beautiful rural and natural landscapes.

Illustrative aspects of this planning direction include:

- Major hiking, biking, and equestrian trailhead developed at the Crawford Oaks area along SR-14
- Horsethief Lake campground expanded to 50 RV accessible sites, most with utilities
- Group camping opportunity added at Horsethief Lake area
- Area adjacent to Brune Homestead developed as formal day-use area accessible by car
- Trail links between the park and other regionally significant recreation areas sought
- Paragliding, kayaking, fishing, and other guided adventure recreation opportunities provided via concessions

□ **Other suggested possibilities**

A few possibilities suggested by stakeholders don't readily fit into the above planning directions, but are still viable considerations. First, some have suggested that the highest and best use of the Dalles Mountain Ranch property is private ranching and not parkland at all. Agency staff has heard some stakeholders say that the economic benefits that this agriculturally productive land could provide the local area strongly outweigh any recreational benefits and tourism income that park development

might offer. Others have suggested that trading the Dalles Mountain Ranch property for one that could provide more conventional types of recreational opportunities might make more sense for the region. That is, keep productive lands in ranching and acquire lands more suited for recreation as parks. These are legitimate concerns and staff will continue to consider surplus or trade of park properties as planning continues.

Additionally, agency staff is considering whether seeking/accepting management responsibility for the Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve (NAP) might be in the interest of the public. Currently, staff out of the regional DNR office in Ellensburg, manage the Columbia Hills NAP along with several other NAPs in southeast Washington. Accepting management responsibility for the NAP could achieve significant economies while also providing on-site staff and enhanced protection of the site. State Parks already manages seven other NAPs throughout the state and has the organizational capacity to manage this site as well. The agency will continue to explore the possibility with the public and DNR staff.

Finally, several stakeholders have suggested that the agency consider renaming Horsethief Lake State Park. Additionally, the Dalles Mountain Ranch property is currently without an official name. This has led many to consider what to call the park now that it has expanded from 338-acre park around Horsethief Lake to one over 3,200 acres that includes the Dalles Mountain property. Most have agreed that the park should have a single name, but few agree on what that should be. As planning progresses, staff will develop a list of possible names and continue to seek public input on naming. Staff intends to bring a final name recommendation to the State Parks and Recreation Commission for a decision as part of this planning project.

Figure 1: Emphasize protecting the park's natural features and systems

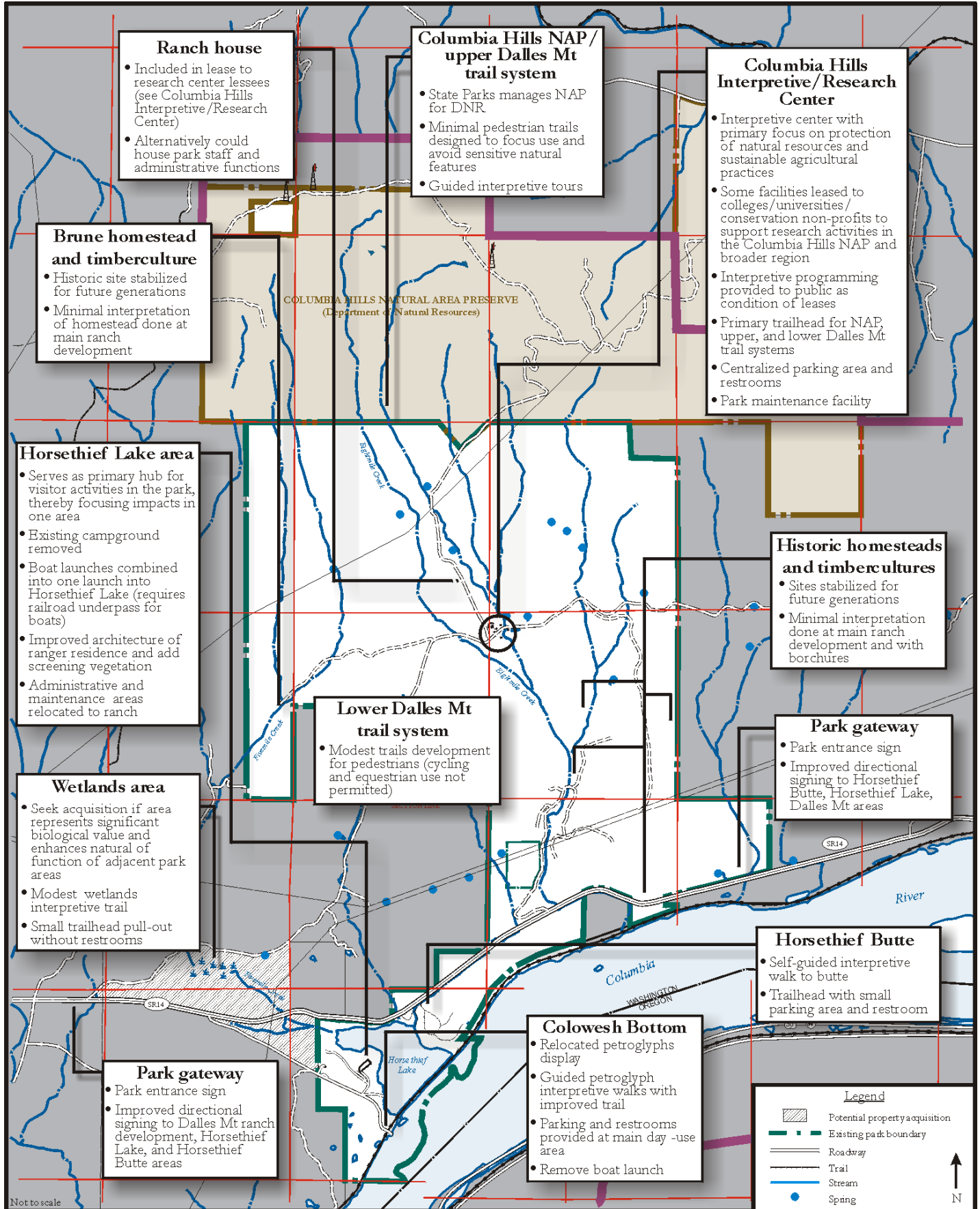


Figure 2: Emphasize protecting the park's historic and cultural heritage

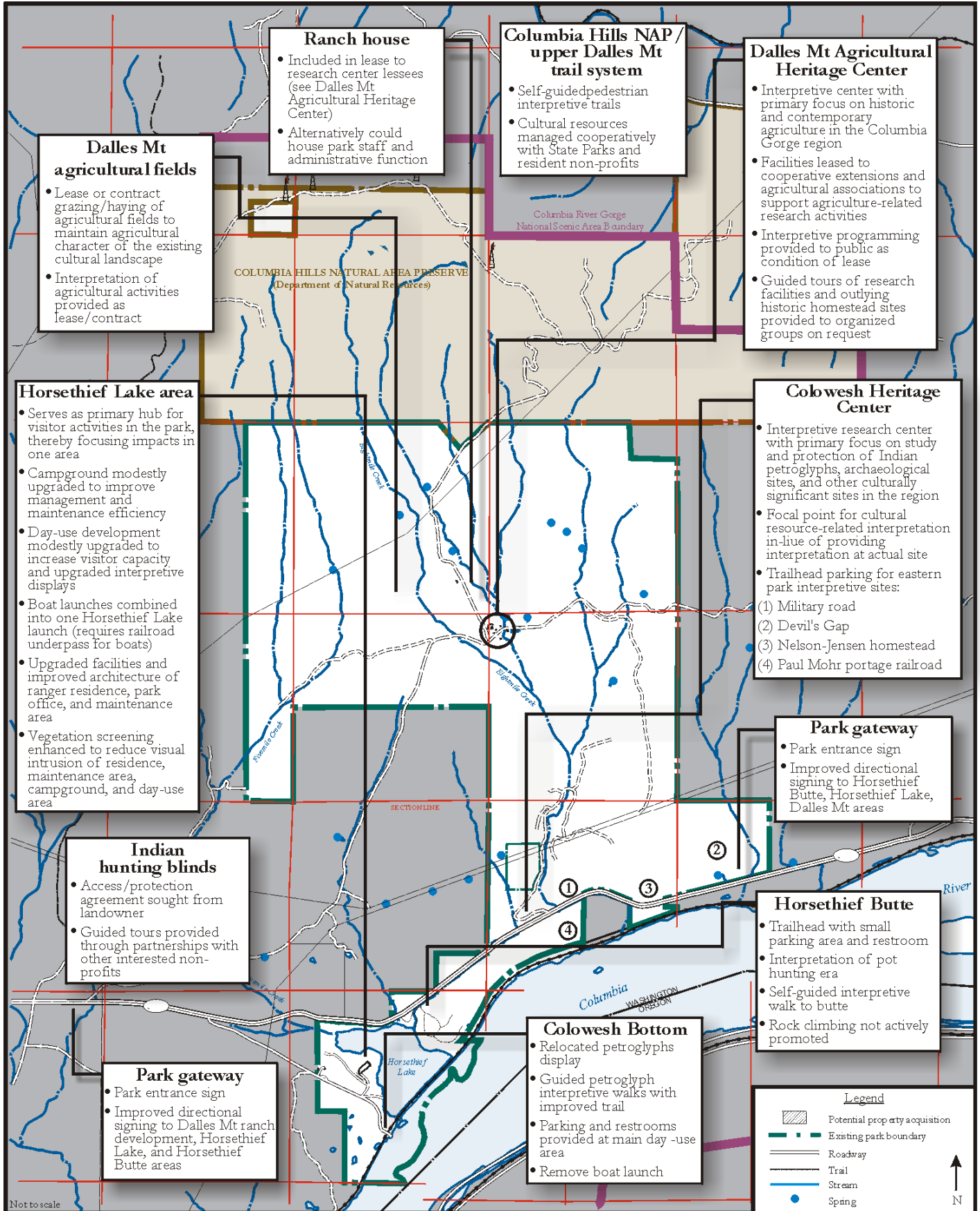


Figure 3: Emphasize interpreting the park's natural and cultural treasures

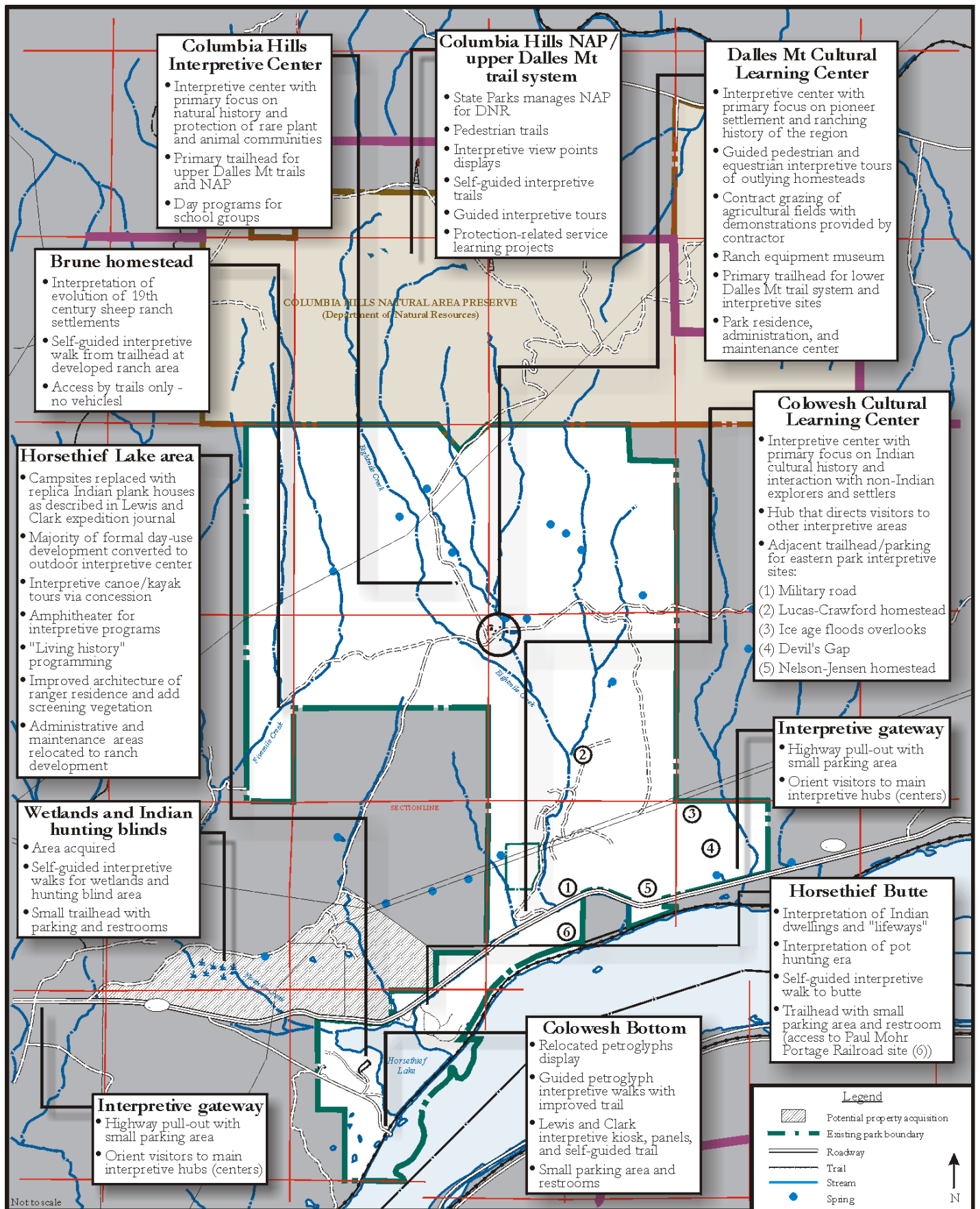
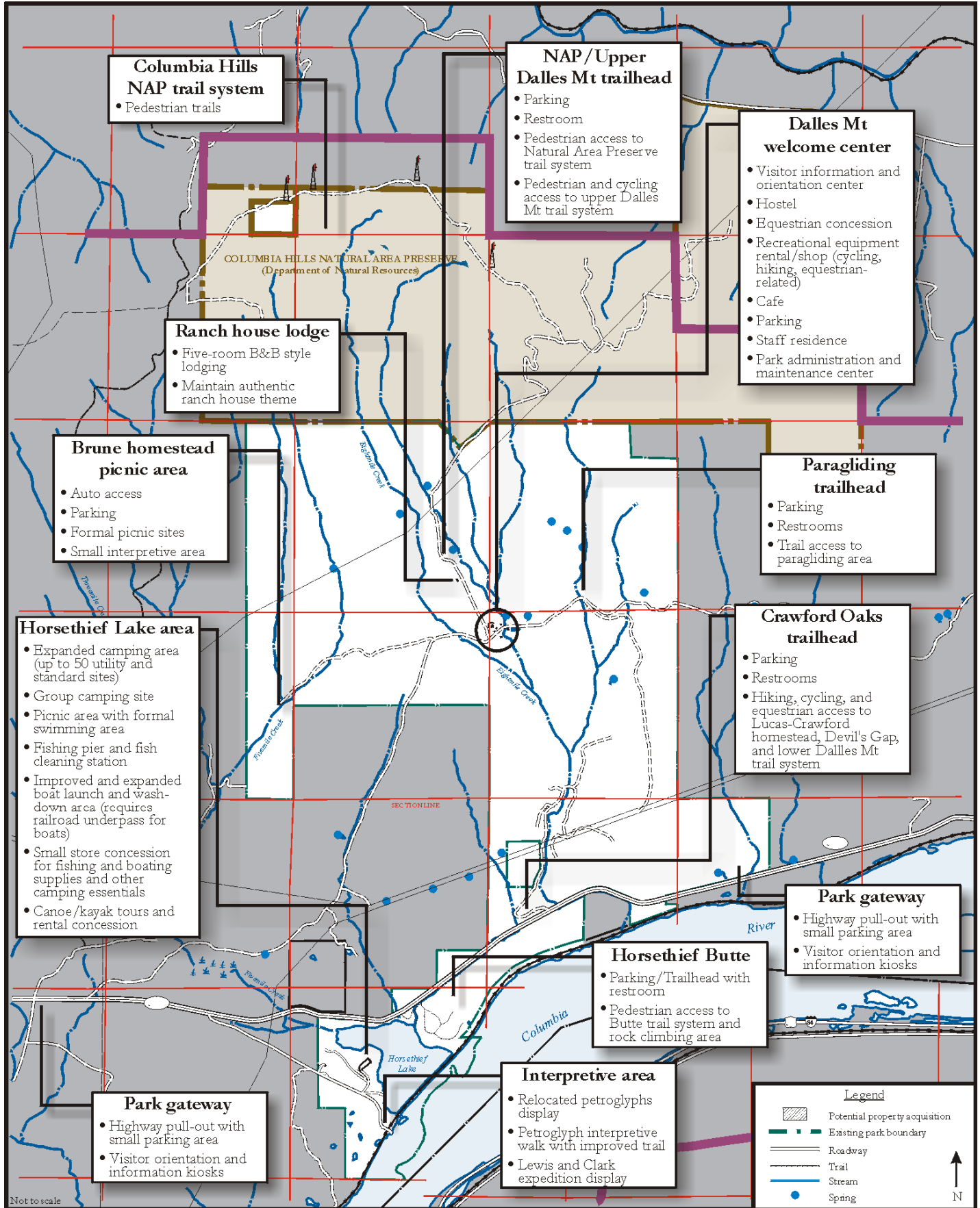


Figure 4: Emphasize developing the park's recreational opportunities



Let us know what you think

No doubt, some of what you've seen has either captured your imagination or perhaps even upset you. Please be aware that what may seem like a great idea to you might seem entirely inappropriate to others. The agency's task is to get as much public input as possible and carefully weigh this to determine what the public truly wants and what also makes good sense for administration of the park.

There are several ways for you to give us your thoughts or to get more information. You may direct written correspondence to Peter Herzog, the project's principal planner, c/o Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission P.O. Box 42668 Olympia, WA 98504-2668; e-mail Peter.Herzog@Parks.Wa.Gov ; or call him at (360) 902-8652. You may also contact the agency's Eastern Regional Headquarters at (509) 662-0420 or drop by the park office at Horsethief Lake. Project staff can arrange to give a short presentation to your organization and receive input on the spot. Agency staff will schedule additional public workshops to gain input during future steps in the planning process. If you would like to be notified of these meetings, contact us and we'll put you on our park mailing list. Workshops will generally be held in the Klickitat County area and will be announced in local newspapers.

Next steps and final decision making

Over the next few months, the agency will be soliciting public input on the planning directions described above. Staff will then prepare a preliminary concept plan that arranges the preferred aspects of the planning directions into a unified whole and solicit further public input. Finally, a recommended concept plan will be put before the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the agency's seven-member policy board, for final action and adoption at one of its regularly scheduled meetings. Commission meetings are open to the public and comment on agenda items is always encouraged. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review also forms an integral part of the planning process and as such, environmental documentation will be completed and made available for public comment.

We hope you find this process interesting and that you choose to become an active participant. This is your park! With your help Dalles Mountain Ranch and Horsethief Lake State Park will become a lasting legacy for our grandchildren and a treasure of which we can all be proud.