

Alternative approaches to resolve issues at Steamboat Rock State Park

Revised February 26, 2009

After reviewing the issues identified in stage one of the planning process, the State Parks planning team has developed the following “alternative approaches” document. This document outlines a range of alternative approaches that could be used to address each issue previously raised by the public and our planning team. We are now asking for your comments. We are hoping that the public will look at this "alternatives" document and tell us which approach they prefer for each issue.

For Steamboat Rock, the planning team has decided to take the issues raised and frame them in two alternative approaches:

1. “Natural Resource Protection and Interpretation”- a more “natural” approach that leans more towards preservation of the park’s natural environment and existing infrastructure (as opposed to promoting new development).
2. “Regional Recreation Service Center”- an approach that still protects the park’s natural environment, but places more emphasis on the park’s role as an important recreation provider in the area, and promotes more potential new development.

Note: We are not presenting proposals at this stage- just a range of possibilities for you to comment on. It is wide open at this point- nothing has been finalized! We want you to help us decide how to deal with each issue. We will then take your recommendations (and the recommendations of staff) and put together our preliminary recommendations to present to our State Parks Commission and again to the public. Once this input is gathered, we will consider further suggestions and put together our final recommendations.

You may either send comments by mail or e-mail to Tom Ernsberger (see contact information below)

Please submit comments by 4-20-09

As a reminder, the process in which you are involved is designed to comply with State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (WAC 352-11.) Your comments will help State Parks identify environmental issues to be analyzed as it considers alternatives, and will lead State Parks to determine the overall environmental impacts of its actions.

It is difficult to communicate entirely in writing and misunderstandings are easily made. If you have a question or concern, please do not hesitate to contact Tom Ernsberger at:

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Issue	Natural Approach	Recreational Approach
<p>Increase the number of campsites to make more camping available</p> <p>There is a great demand by the public for additional camping. The popularity of the park far exceeds the number of sites available. The campground is currently 95% full from Memorial Day to Labor Day</p>	<p>Proposed additional campsites are in the planning stage – this was a project started prior to the CAMP plan. The project involves 3 phases. Phase 1 elements are 26 hookups sites and 13 cabin ready sites (project includes pads and utilities for future cabins). Phase 2 elements are 31 hookup sites, 7 rustic cabins and a lakeshore trail. Phase 3 involves 12 boat moorage docks next to each campground and day use moorage near the boat launch</p>	
<p>Make more trails available and improve some of the existing ones</p> <p>People wanted more and improved trails available both as recreation and as a way of getting around the park from the campground to the day use and concession area</p> <p>More trails would reduce risk where people walking or cycling are not sharing roads with vehicles</p>	<p>Not building formal trails may lead to increased natural resource damage from the occurrence of social trails.</p> <p>Evaluate trails and access roads in Northrup Canyon to limit resource damage in wetland areas.</p>	<p>Develop additional trails and trailheads.</p> <p>More trails signs and maps</p> <p>Expand trail system on WDFW land under an agreement or boundary expansion. Damaged roads could be improved for hiking or cyclists.</p> <p>Encourage people to walk or bike to promote a more sustainable park with less vehicle use</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive trail plan</p>
<p>Build play structures in the campgrounds / build other facilities such as a swimming pool</p> <p>There was some interest in play areas in the campground for younger children or as an alternative to going to the day use area</p>	<p>Encourage use of the existing play structure and swim beach at the day use</p>	<p>Consider small play structures for younger children in the campgrounds</p> <p>The proposed lakeshore trail system will help to resolve this issue with easier access to the day use area for people walking or on bikes</p>

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<p>Develop moorage for boaters so that boats can be left in the water overnight without beaching them</p> <p>There is a big demand from users for overnight moorage</p>	<p>The project to expand the campground also includes boat moorage – a proposed lake level draw down by the BOR may impact this proposal. At this point the draw down has not been finalized and this potential change in lake level management may impact this proposal</p>	
<p>Reservation system</p> <p>People have expressed frustration at the camping reservation system and the inability to get a campsite</p>	<p>The popularity of the park makes it difficult to get a campsite, the number of sites is the limiting factor not the reservation system</p> <p>The expansion of the campground will help address this. However as one of the most popular camping parks in the state demand will continue to be higher than availability</p>	
<p>Make wireless internet available to campers</p>	<p>Commission guidelines do not support installation of wifi</p> <p>Advances in technology and cellular coverage in the Banks Lake area will allow park users to access the internet without State parks providing the service</p>	
<p>Provide TV service for campers</p>	<p>Commission guidelines do not support installation of park provided TV services</p> <p>The location of the campsites and the lack of obstructions does allow campers to use their own satellite TV equipment</p>	
<p>Improve group camp facilities</p> <p>Currently the group camp is not extensively developed. There is no shelter or electricity available</p>	<p>The current location of the group camp is scheduled to be moved in the near future</p>	
<p>Provide shade in the campground</p> <p>There were requests for more shade around campsites</p>	<p>Plant native trees, evaluate success of different trees in irrigated and natural areas</p>	<p>Plant more trees</p>

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<p>Approach to beach has sand bars</p> <p>Boaters do not like the sand bar near the shore at the South camping area</p>	<p>Do nothing</p> <p>Do not dredge or change the sand bar, it is enjoyed by many people who like to walk out on it and it also limits boat speed close to the shore where people swim</p>	<p>Dredge to allow access for boats. This could a possibility during a drawdown of the lake level</p>
<p>Provide interpretive opportunities on trails</p>	<p>Provide pamphlets that have interpretive information on the park. Provide more interpretive talks and hikes. Put up interpretive signs and notice boards for visitors</p>	
<p>Renovate restrooms / showers</p> <p>Some comments referred to the lack of availability of showers and toilets during busy times</p>	<p>Maintain buildings within current footprint</p>	<p>Collect data to evaluate actual needs before any increase in facilities – use standards for campers per shower / toilet and daily attendance numbers to calculate ratio</p>
<p>Campground layout</p> <p>Currently people walk through other peoples sites to access the waterfront</p>	<p>Develop trail access that minimizes damage to the shoreline</p>	<p>Create access that keeps sites private and allows access to the waterfront</p> <p>The proposed campground expansion plan includes trails that would provide access to the waterfront</p>
<p>Boats on beach</p> <p>Some people did not agree with boats on the beach next to the campground. The preference was for swimming access</p>	<p>Discourage boats on the beach</p>	<p>With Phase 3 of the campground expansion the boat moorage may resolve this issue.</p> <p>Develop a second small swimming area in this location with swim line and no wake buoys</p>

Issue	Natural Approach	Recreational Approach
<p>No expansion of the park</p> <p>A very limited number of people stated they were in favor of no expansion</p>	<p>Maintain at current level</p>	<p>Maintain at current level</p>
<p>Reduce the amount of irrigation</p>	<p>Allow native plants to grow (noxious weeds may become an issue)</p>	<p>Continue with lawns in developed areas</p>
<p>Larger tent pads</p> <p>Some of the tent pads are not large enough for modern tents or campers requested more tent pads per site</p>	<p>Increase tent pad size and decrease number of sites</p>	<p>Expand size or number of tent pads. Allow tents on the lawn areas</p>
<p>Add additional boat launches</p> <p>The boat launch can at times be busy and slow for launching boats and difficult to find parking</p>	<p>Maintain and improve current boat launches to improve efficiencies</p> <p>Use RCO guidelines to determine if boating capacity increase is sustainable</p>	<p>Consider adding to current number of boat launches – create multiple launches with increased parking</p> <p>Look at lake capacities for boating</p>
<p>More open lawn areas for activities</p> <p>Interest was expressed in areas for large group games / sports</p>	<p>Encourage use of existing open areas</p>	<p>Provide additional lawn areas that could be used for various activity types</p>
<p>Create a dog off leash area</p> <p>Dogs are required to be leashed at all times in state parks</p>	<p>Continue as present including educating and enforcing pet rules. South of park boundary is open to dogs</p>	<p>Create a pet off leash area in line with commission policy</p> <p>Continue with education and enforcement of pet rules</p>
<p>Move concession closer to campground</p> <p>Some people thought the concession was not in a convenient location for the campground</p>	<p>Leave at current location</p>	<p>Build a 2nd location (run by the same concessionaire) in the campground or at the entrance as part of an expanded contact station and office. The new concession could be geared more too camping equipment. The trail planned as part of the campground expansion will make access to the current store more convenient to the campground. Allow concession to have a trailer or smaller store within the camping area or at the entrance station</p>

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<p>Pave 4x4 roads to West side of park</p> <p>Most of the roads are on WDFW property</p>	<p>Leave as restricted access or close to motorized vehicles</p>	<p>Consider different types of access and recreation opportunities – vehicles, bike trails, horse trails</p> <p>Develop a memorandum of agreement with WDFW to jointly manage some trails South of the park boundary</p> <p>Pave some of the existing roads within park property</p>
<p>Covered picnic shelter area</p>	<p>Utilize an already developed area</p>	<p>Locate centrally for campgrounds or at day use area</p>
<p>Aquatic weeds</p> <p>Some comments were made regarding the amount of milfoil in the lake</p>	<p>Look at developing a plan to determine the amount of Milfoil and or other aquatics weeds.</p> <p>Develop a joint taskforce between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Ecology</p> <p>Wait until drawdown of lake and allow milfoil to freeze</p>	
<p>Recycling</p> <p>Some people requested an improved recycling program, currently only aluminum is recycled</p>	<p>Look at recycling and evaluate possible changes in locations or signage. Look at available ecology grants</p>	
<p>Geese</p> <p>Geese waste on lawns and waterfront</p>	<p>Do nothing, cheap fertilizer</p>	<p>Look at various options for reducing number of geese at park. Develop a long term management plan</p>
<p>More law enforcement of water activities</p> <p>Some people requested more enforcement of laws on the water</p>	<p>Evaluate law enforcement plan and work cooperatively with local agencies to improve the safety of visitors</p>	

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<p>Mosquitoes</p> <p>There are a considerable number of camper comments relating to mosquitoes – mostly dissatisfied with the effect upon their camping experience – a much smaller number were against the use of pesticides in the vicinity of the campgrounds</p> <p>Due to the flight range of mosquito's – up to 15 miles (Source: Stansberry, 2004, Island County Health Department) and the amount of water / wetlands within 15 miles of the park it is impossible to isolate this as a park specific problem</p>	<p>Look at biological controls to implement as part of an integrated pest management plan</p> <p>Look at biological approaches</p>	<p>Evaluate and work with Mosquito control board to develop a long term plan for the entire area</p>
<p>Northrup Canyon Road</p> <p>State parks currently plows the road into Northrup Canyon and does some basic maintenance</p>	<p>Look at County ownership and identify advantages and disadvantages of having some or all of the road vacated</p>	
<p>Trash</p> <p>Some people expressed concern about trash (especially glass) left at the beach areas around Banks Lake and on the waterfront near the campground</p>	<p>Evaluate problem and educate visitors about pack in pack out, look at having volunteer clean up days with boaters. Have hosts give out trash bags to boaters</p> <p>Work with other agencies on cleanup efforts</p>	
<p>Boat launch</p> <p>Sand on ramp</p>	<p>Caused by water current</p> <p>Remove during draw down</p>	

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More ADA access for fishing and beach	The ongoing expansion plan will include and address many ADA issues	
Create a separate part of the lake for non-motorized watercraft	This is a Bureau of Reclamation issue	
Sprinkler systems / grass at sites Requests were made for an improved sprinkler system and more grass around sites	Plant with native species and do not water	Maintain and increase lawn areas. Expand paving around sites in the heavily used areas
Boat, canoe and kayak concessionaire is needed	Promote use of non-motorized water craft	Allow for the concession of a non-motorized water craft to operate in the park
Expand the parking and unloading area for horses at Northrup Canyon	Retain at current level	Look at expansion needs. Pave or develop turn around at equestrian area. Put in more developed campsites, a shelter and a well
Horse trails at Northrup Canyon Some of the trails need repair – the horse trail system and routes need to be assessed	Allow lesser used trails to return to a natural landscape – limit use of horses to fewer trails	Repair and enhance the horse trails Develop new multi use trails Develop a comprehensive trail plan
Northrup Canyon Regional Trail, Horse trail and camping along lake from south end to north end beyond the park	Keep at current level or less to reduce impact from horses	Increase facilities and trails Expand horse riding and overnight opportunities at Northrup Canyon Create the opportunity for primitive camping within the canyon

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<p>Park office expansion to accommodate staff and increased camping capacity</p> <p>Currently 4 staff operate from one office and space is limited</p>	<p>Renovate current office – expand or convert shop to include office</p>	<p>Expand office or convert into contact station / park store and locate office in another location. Look at building a concession store and office at the entrance</p>
<p>Multiple use of Banks Lake - more intense uses, houseboats etc.,</p>	<p>Maintain current level of use</p>	<p>Work with USBR to develop more uses on Banks lake Assess safe boating capacity on the lake</p>
<p>Enforcement of alcohol and pet related issues</p>	<p>Increase education of visitors on rules relating to alcohol and pets</p> <p>Continue with enforcement of noise and alcohol issues</p>	
<p>Utilities – Replace primary power not updated</p>	<p>Update to 50 A</p>	
<p>Pave roads and parking lots</p>	<p>Reduce roads and paved surfaces to allow more natural areas</p>	<p>Resurface roads</p>
<p>New staff positions to assist with larger park - office assist, etc</p>	<p>Additional office staff will free up rangers to spend more time in the field providing resource protection and enhancement</p>	<p>Additional office staff will free up Rangers to spend more time in the field focusing on enhancing recreational activities and public safety</p>
<p>On the water enforcement (specifically Devil’s punchbowl)</p>	<p>Bureau of Reclamation issue</p>	
<p>Kitchen shelter with meeting room</p> <p>Steamboat Rock does not have a picnic shelter</p>	<p>Limit expansion of park</p>	<p>Have a reservable kitchen shelter and lawn area for family reunions, weddings and other gatherings</p>

Issue	Natural Approach	Recreational Approach
Restoration of Northrup Canyon residence as vacation housing	Do nothing	Renovate house as vacation housing – retain as hike in only
Ornamental Vegetation – long-term plan	Do nothing	Develop a comprehensive tree replacement plan
Primitive backcountry camping at Northrup Canyon	Do not allow any further impact upon the area	Allow by permit back county camping for hikers and horse riders at Northrup Canyon Lake
Erosion of ground at horse camp Blue bunch wheat grass is eroding in many areas	Do not mow Reseed	Allow grass to grow long enough to go to seed. Improve turn around and keep vehicles on paved / gravel surfaces
Preservation of historic buildings at Northrup Canyon	A plan is currently being developed by the State Parks historic preservation office	
Northrup Canyon and Osborne Bay still have roads classified as county roads. The park does most of the maintenance	Have the county vacate the roads as a formality. This will not change or impact park operations - the park already maintains these roads for winter access	
Some of the deeper wetlands in Northrup canyon were identified by the plant survey to be degraded No evidence of whether this is from when the area was homesteaded or from current use of the canyon	Look at wetland restoration and protection – this may be an option for a mitigation project location. Evaluate if protection is adequate – options for protection include education of users, fencing or rerouting of trails way from sensitive areas.	
Noxious weeds in Northrup Canyon Particularly in previously cultivated areas	Mow areas and use biological controls	Spray for noxious weeds and work on an integrated weed management plant
WSDOT has plans to modify the alignment of Northrup Canyon road with Northrup Point Road – this would involve moving the junction approximately 100 ft South	This is a project that would increase safety with a minimal relocation of the road junction and would not impact park operations	

Issue	Natural Approach	Recreational Approach
Coulee Corridor National Scenic Byway plan to install a wayside interpretive station on the pull-in ½ mile North of Northrup Point on Hwy 155		This would enhance the visitor experience and have a positive impact upon the park