The Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mt Ranch Master Planning Project

Phase III - Final Recommendations
June 2003

Approved by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
June 19, 2003
Getting down to the hard decisions

Over the past nineteen months, Washington State Parks has engaged the public in developing a master plan for Horsethief Lake State Park and the adjoining Dalles Mountain Ranch Property. To help facilitate public input, agency staff held a series of public workshops and developed several planning documents for distribution to interested individuals and organizations. Public response to our planning efforts has continued to be very encouraging.

This document and the recommendations it contains represent State Parks staff’s best effort to incorporate what we’ve heard from the public into a balanced, long-term plan that effectively protects the park’s natural and cultural treasures while also supporting a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

What’s in this document

This document focuses on final planning recommendations developed by agency staff to guide future development and management of Horsethief Lake State Park and the adjoining Dalles Mountain Ranch property. The first section provides a brief overview of the planning process. Next, a staff recommended facilities concept plan that draws together the best ideas from previous planning stages is presented. Then, land classifications (park zoning), long-term park boundaries (desired property ownership/management), and a new park name are recommended. Finally, preliminary approaches to on-going park management issues are enumerated.

Additional information on previous planning stages can be referenced at the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch project web site at http://www.parks.wa.gov/hldmrplan.asp and is available in hard copy format upon request.

The planning process

On November 8, 2001, the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch Master Plan staff planning team held its first public workshop in Goldendale, WA to familiarize participants with the project and to gain insight into what issues currently face the park and, in very general terms, what features are important to park stakeholders. Using this input, the team then crafted a set of park objectives and five alternative “planning directions” to show several ways in which the park might be developed. This information was then incorporated into a formal planning document,
distributed to park stakeholders, and presented for comment at a second public workshop on February 4, 2003, in Lyle, WA.
Drawing on public input received at the February workshop and through extensive outreach to interested individuals and organizations, the staff planning team then narrowed the five planning directions into a collection of preliminary recommendations with a few remaining options. The team then prepared a second planning document and distributed it to park stakeholders at a public workshop on March 26, 2003 - again in Lyle, WA.

After the March 26 public workshop, the staff planning team continued its outreach to interested individuals and organizations and has now drawn together what it believes are the best ideas into a collection of final staff recommendations (this document). Staff will present these recommendations for consideration and approval by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission at its scheduled June 19, 2003 meeting in Wenatchee, Washington. Interested persons are encouraged to attend this meeting and provide comment directly to the Commission on any aspect of this planning project.

**Facilities Concept Plan Recommendations**

- **Dalles Mountain Ranch Area**

  With a few exceptions, structures in the central ranch complex are considered either contributing to or primary to the historic integrity of the original Crawford ranch and surrounding cultural landscapes. Taken together the ranch, homestead sites, and agricultural fields represent an increasingly rare historic resource worthy of State and perhaps National Historic Register status. Perhaps what most sets this ranch apart from others in the region is the relatively minor degree of alteration made to its structures and landscapes over time. Although some structures - most notably the Crawford ranch house - have now fallen into disrepair, their potential historic significance was recognized early and has in most cases been left in place. In addition, because most barns and other outbuildings remained in active use, they too have survived largely intact. Contemporary structures including the Reuter ranch house and the large “new barn” are set well away, preserving the original arrangement of structures and landscape features.

**Central Development Concept**

The site’s assemblage of barns and residences provides significant adaptable indoor space for a spectrum of opportunities ranging from a few vacation rentals to a substantial educational/recreational center with accommodations to support group day-use, overnight, and even extended programs. The park’s wide range of recreational opportunities and outstanding scenic values make it a highly desirable location for development of recreational group accommodations. At the same time, the park’s collection of and proximity to nationally significant, yet largely invisible, natural and cultural features creates an ideal opportunity for development of the ranch as a resource-related educational center.
Key Considerations

Historic Preservation

As indicated above, the majority of structures in the developed ranch area are historic and the assemblage is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Rehabilitation of ranch structures to support an educational/recreational center concept appears to be possible given the size, number, and arrangement of existing structures, but additional planning will be necessary to make sure this can be done in a way that maintains historic integrity and is within reasonable financial limits.

Economic Feasibility

As part of an earlier phase in the master planning process, staff commissioned ECONorthwest to assess economic feasibility of a set of preliminary development options (Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch Master Plan: Preliminary Market Analysis, May 8, 2003). Initial analysis suggests a solid demand for the entire range of development possibilities from a few vacation rentals to a full-blown “learning center” concept. In addition, the study suggests that the supply of meeting spaces with overnight accommodations in the east Gorge is low and non-existent in high-quality settings like Dalles Mountain. Staff has identified non-profit groups willing to pay for use of an education facility, though less likely to invest in facilities up front. Finally, the study asserts that a break-even educational/recreational center may be feasible provided the agency is able to engage partners from the private and non-profit sectors, create an optimal management structure (use of agency staff, private concessions, and partner organizations), and develop successful educational and recreational programming.

Commission Environmental Learning Center (ELC) Policy

Staff anticipates that a statewide policy guiding development and management of ELCs in state parks will be completed in the near future. This policy should provide further direction as to the intended mission of these facilities and potentially clarify the agency’s financial expectations with regard to their ongoing operation (e.g. required to produce revenue over operating costs, break even, or operate with a subsidy).

Recommendations (See also Figure 1)

- Conduct additional planning to assess feasibility of adapting ranch structures to serve a range of educational and recreational functions. Range should span from vacation rentals to large-scale development of an overnight group education and recreation center.
- Pursue immediate adaptation of ranch houses for use as vacation rentals and use of other ranch structures for revenue-producing or partnerships opportunities. Uses should not however commit the agency to specific development path or otherwise limit future development options.
- Pursue measures to stabilize historic structures as necessary.
Figure 1: Staff Recommended Facilities Concept Plan

- **Trail System**: Develop a network of hiking, cycling, and equestrian trails throughout the park.
- **Develop a wide array of trail opportunities including various levels of difficulty, lengths, and use intensities.**
- **Designate trails for specific uses** to provide a full range of non-motorized trail experiences.
- **Develop a series of trail-accessed interpretive opportunities at key cultural and natural features and viewing areas.**

- **Horsethief Lake Area**
  - Expand camping area to 50-100 units standard, and primitive sites with integrated group camping opportunity.
  - Construct contact station.
  - Expand comfort station capacity and upgrade to include showers and concession space.
  - Improve architecture of residence/shop area and add screening vegetation.
  - Construct improved lake boat launch (expand launch after development of boat passage under railroad tracks to ease pressure on existing boat launch).
  - Construct interpretive amphitheater and other interpretive opportunities.

- **Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve**
  - Furnish agreement with DNR to manage the Natural Area Preserve.
  - Retain trailhead at south NAP boundary.
  - Provide pedestrian access to NAP along Stacker Butte roadway.
  - Encourage use of the area for scientific research and educational purposes.

- **Dalles Mountain Ranch Area**
  - Conduct additional planning to assess feasibility of adapting structures to serve a wider education and recreational functions. Range should open from vacation rental to large-scale development of an overnight group education and recreation center.
  - Develop immediate adaptation of ranch house for vacation rental.
  - Develop immediate use of other ranch structures for revenue-producing activities as a part of logging partnerships.
  - Stabilize historic structures as necessary.
  - Construct trailhead with parking and sanitary facilities for upper trail system.

- **Paragliding Area**
  - Improve existing parking area.
  - Upgrade information kiosk.

- **Crawford Oakes Area**
  - Construct interpretation/orientation center to orient visitors to the area interpretive and recreational opportunities (serves as the focal point for the larger network of park interpretive opportunities).
  - Develop primary shared-use pedestrian, cycling, and equestrian trailhead serving the Dalles Mountain property.
  - Construct facilities in a manner that provides a park gateway and interpretive function (see also Western Park Gateway).

- **Horsethief Butte**
  - Develop off-highway trailhead with parking and sanitary facilities.
  - Develop expanded trail system and interpretive opportunities.

- **West Park Gateway**
  - Seek small acquisition or other property agreement to develop park gateway.
  - Develop highway pull-out with small parking area and orientation kiosk.

- **Interpretive Trailhead/Display Area**
  - Relocate boat launch to Horsethief Lake and construct boat passage river under railroad tracks.
  - Block roadway north of railroad crossing and develop trailhead with parking and sanitary facilities.
  - Develop display for pictographs relocated from Dalles Dam.
  - Provide guided petroglyph interpretive walks.
  - Develop Lewis and Clark interpretive kiosk, panels, and self-guided trail.

Legend:
- Existing park boundary
- Park Roadway
- Unpaved Roadway
- Trail
- Stream
Possible Configuration of Ranch Structures for Educational Purposes
As part of the current planning process, staff has developed potential uses for ranch structures and suggested additional structures necessary to develop the ranch complex for use as an educational or recreational center. These uses are not specifically recommended at this time, but are intended to provide an example of how a center might potentially be configured.

Specific uses for the ranch structures at Dalles Mountain could ultimately include:

- Rehabilitation of historic barns and outbuildings south of Dalles Mountain Road to serve as classroom/meeting spaces, food preparation/eating area, and restrooms
- Adaptation of the Reuter ranch house to serve as lodging/dining facility
- Rehabilitation of the Crawford ranch house for lodging
- Adaptation of machine shed structure to serve as administrative/volunteer support space
- Rehabilitation of ranch shop building to serve as small ranch museum
- Adaptation of the large contemporary barn for park maintenance/administrative use and administrative space for partner organizations
- Construction of a new sensitively sited residence to house park staff

☐ Crawford Oaks Area

The Crawford Oaks area is located along the north side of SR-14, about halfway through the park. Basalt cliffs and talus surround a flat area forming a V-shaped pocket immediately north of the highway. An existing roadway (inactive county landfill access) bridges several cliff bands creating a passage from highway elevation up to the more gentle rolling hills above. Eightmile Creek winds through the site creating an impressive waterfall over the basalt cliffs and then feeding an oasis-like grove of maple and oak trees below. Portions of the area, particularly west of the creek, have been significantly disturbed through road construction and provide a good opportunity for recreational development with far less overall impact to natural and cultural resources. Additionally, the site’s topography and abundance of screening vegetation make it possible to develop facilities with relatively minimal visual impacts when viewed from surrounding areas.

Central Development Concepts
1. The site’s proximity to SR-14, central location within the park, and attractive setting make it an excellent location for development of a facility that provides a first point of visitor contact, park information, and orientation to the area’s wide assortment of recreational and interpretive opportunities (park portal or gateway).
2. The area’s location at the lowest elevation of the Dalles Mountain property and passage to the ranch areas above make it an ideal site for the park’s primary shared-use trailhead.
Key Considerations

Orientation and Interpretation Needs

Because of the park’s relatively large size, multiple access points, and somewhat confusing roadway system, a central orientation facility is necessary to direct first-time visitors to the various activity centers in the park. Scale of such a facility has not been determined and could range from a simple enclosed display area to a multi-room, full-service center (likely less than 5,000 square feet). Some of the most culturally significant features in the park are Native American archaeological sites, hunting sites, and petroglyphs. Most of these features are invisible to park visitors and should remain that way to ensure long-term protection. To provide the public with “access” to these resources, development of a centralized, yet nearby interpretive facility is necessary. Other historically significant features associated with 19th Century pioneer settlement are also largely invisible to the uninitiated eye. These include agriculture-related cultural landscape features including the agricultural fields themselves, historic military and stagecoach roadway alignments, remains of homestead sites, and small-scale features like developed springs and early fencing. Interpretation of these features is also most effectively done through an initial introduction at a central facility that in turn directs visitors to actual sites throughout the park.

Economic Feasibility of Orientation/Interpretive Facility

Interpretive centers are often costly to operate. Larger centers can sometimes offset a portion of their operating costs through food/beverage services and sale of merchandise. Preliminary economic analysis indicates that a center of the scale likely at the Crawford Oaks might generate revenue in gift shop sales, but would not receive visitation necessary to generate revenue from food sales and would probably run at a loss. Operation of a center in partnership with non-profit and/or private organizations would likely reduce costs, as would limiting the size of the structure and the extent of amenities. Although the orientation/interpretive facility would not be revenue generating, its role in enhancing the usability of the park justifies its cost.

Shared-Use Trailhead Development

Clustering a shared-use trailhead near the proposed orientation/interpretive facility would reduce potential impacts to natural and cultural features, achieve development economies, and maximize ongoing management efficiency. Siting trailheads at the low point of elevation is generally preferred by trail users and discourages potentially incompatible trail uses such as “downhill mountain biking.” Locating the trailhead in close proximity to SR-14 also minimizes vehicular use of the unpaved, County-owned Dalles Mountain Road by park visitors.

Viewshed Protection

The location of the park in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area requires that developments in key viewing areas, including SR-14 and the Columbia River, appear visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape. The area’s topography and
vegetation provide significant visual screening for potential development, but are also important natural features in their own right. These features, such as Eightmile Creek, biologically significant maple and oak trees, and riparian habitat, also require protection. The Crawford Oaks site’s natural features and proximity to SR-14 will require highly creative and sensitive architectural and landscape design in order to accommodate development of recreational facilities.

Traffic Safety

SR-14 is heavily used by commercial trucks and vehicles at high speeds. Development of the Crawford Oaks area will require design and construction of a new entrance route to the site to ensure safe access off and onto SR-14.

Recommendations

- Develop an orientation/interpretive facility at the Crawford Oaks area to orient visitors to park/region’s recreational and interpretive opportunities (serves as eastern park gateway).
- Develop primary trailhead at the Crawford Oaks area to access the park’s multi-use hiking, cycling, and equestrian trail network. This trailhead should include sanitary facilities, an orientation kiosk, and adequate parking for single vehicles and vehicle-trailer combinations.

Horsethief Lake Area

Developed areas of Horsethief Lake currently include a sixteen-site campground with a combination of utility, non-utility, and walk-in/bike-in sites. A developed day-use area is made up of a single large parking area, formal picnic area, restroom (without showers), and small interpretive display. A boat launch for Horsethief Lake includes a single ramp, parking area, and fish cleaning station. What was once a paved roadway into Collowesh Bottom now serves as a separate boat launch into the now raised Lake Celilo (Columbia River). A small administrative area, located along the park entrance roadway, includes a staff residence and shop structure - part of which serves as the park office. In addition to providing a convenient emergency contact point for park visitors, the 24-hour presence afforded by the staff residence also serves an important surveillance function to protect the park’s important cultural features.

Central Development Concepts

1. Existing high-intensity development of the Horsethief Lake area makes the site a logical choice for development of upgraded and expanded recreational facilities.
2. Concerns regarding safety of the park’s existing boat launch and unmet demand for specific types of amenities calls for wholesale redesign and development of an alternative launch site in the park.
3. The area’s nationally significant petroglyphs and other cultural features, as well as the pending return of additional petroglyphs current stored at Dalles Dam, provide tremendous opportunities for interpretation.
Key Considerations

Campground Expansion

The preliminary economic study indicates a current shortage of developed campgrounds with utility sites and showers in the east Columbia River Gorge. Upgraded facilities and the development of new recreational attractions in the park and region are expected to significantly expand campground use. Such expanded camping opportunities can be provided with minimal additional staff, resulting in significant revenue gains for the park. Finally, expanding existing recreational facilities and focusing high-intensity use and development is generally less disruptive to natural systems and cultural features.

Boat Launch Relocation

Construction of an upgraded and expanded boat launch into Horsethief Lake along with development of a boat passage under the railroad tracks into Lake Celilo appears to resolve long-standing concerns about visitor safety and protection of cultural resources while providing opportunities to satisfy unmet demand for upgraded launch facilities and ancillary amenities.

The configuration of the existing launch ramp at Lake Celilo (stretch of the Columbia River above the Dalles Dam) presents significant railroad safety concerns. Launching activity necessitates crossing of railroad tracks “at-grade” at least twice and, in the case of larger boats, three or four times and sometimes while backing up. Furthermore, the existing boat ramp is very near to numerous rare and sensitive cultural features. Relocating this use would afford increased protection from vandalism and other non-designated activities.

Additionally, while there are a number of other boat launch facilities serving Lake Celilo only the Maryhill State Park launch offers nearby showers and none provides wash down areas or access to concessions (food and beverage and fishing/camping supplies).

Administrative Facilities

The current configuration and architecture of the shop facility and residence create significant visual intrusion into the landscape as seen from SR-14 and other areas of the park. Nonetheless, the current location of the staff residence provides valuable security for park visitors and sensitive cultural resources. In addition, the shop/maintenance structures should remain near the park’s campground and day-use areas for most efficient use.

Increased levels of park day-use and camping activity associated with expanded recreational opportunities and attractions will require a greater amount of fee collection and processing of camping reservations by park staff. Use of staffed visitor contact stations significantly increase compliance with payment of fees, speeds up camper check-in, and provides a centralized administrative space for processing and securing fees collected throughout the park.
Interpretive Trailhead/Display

Regional Tribes are currently working with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the underlying owners of the Horsethief Lake property, to return petroglyphs previously removed from Petroglyph Canyon (area now submerged under Horsethief Lake) and currently stored at Dalles Dam. The new display area is located along the Lake Celilo boat launch access road near the primary assemblage of petroglyphs left in-place. Under an agreement between State Parks and area Tribes, park staff provides limited guided tours of the petroglyphs to the public on Friday's and Saturdays. Parking is now provided in an informal lot without sanitary facilities.

Relocation of the Lake Celilo boat launch allows the launch road to be terminated well away from sensitive cultural resources and provides an opportunity to develop the area exclusively for interpretive purposes. In addition to display of the relocated petroglyphs, the site could be developed as a more formal trailhead to support guided petroglyph tours as well as other self-guided interpretive opportunities in less sensitive areas nearby.

Recommendation

- Expand camping to about 50-100 utility and standard sites.
- Construct group campsite (convertible to use as overflow campsites).
- Upgrade and expand comfort station to include showers and attached concession space.
- Construct new contact station near residence/shop area.
- Improve architecture, configuration, and building materials of residence and shop/office complex and enhanced vegetation screening.
- Remove existing Lake Celilo boat launch and develop upgraded and expanded launch into Horsethief Lake concurrent with development of a boat passage under railroad tracks to Lake Celilo.
- Terminate existing river access roadway well north of railroad crossing and construct interpretive trailhead with restroom, orientation kiosk, and parking for petroglyph tours and other interpretive opportunities.
- Construct petroglyph display area for petroglyphs relocated from Dalles Dam.
- Construct amphitheater, self-guided interpretive trail, and series of interpretive kiosks and panels as determined in the park’s interpretive master plan.

Trail System and Trailheads

At present, trail activities at Horsethief Lake and the Dalles Mountain Ranch area are only marginally supported by existing facilities. Current trailhead development at the Dalles Mountain property is limited to informal parking at the ranch building cluster, the small parking area south of the Columbia Hills NAP, and at the paragliding parking area near the eastern park boundary. Pedestrian activity in
these areas is limited to roads and overland use.

The Horsethief Butte area offers a single loop trail around the Butte itself, but a visitor's only access to this opportunity is by parking along the SR-14 road shoulder.
Central Development Concepts
1. The veritable absence of existing trails provides a rare opportunity to consciously design a network of non-motorized trails that provides a wide diversity of experiences, avoids potential conflicts between use types, and also protects resources.
2. The park’s relatively large size and configuration call for development of several trailheads with a range of parking and sanitary support facilities.

Key Considerations

Trail System

The overall goal is to provide a diversity of opportunities ranging for low intensity pedestrian trails and overland experiences to higher intensity shared use hiking, cycling, and equestrian opportunities. The agency's statewide trails policy encourages development of cycling and equestrian opportunities in larger parks. Cycling and equestrian use should not necessarily be linked together on all shared-use trails. Shared pedestrian/cycling and pedestrian/equestrian opportunities should also be explored. The subtlety and diversity of park resources calls for development of formal interpretive trails (limited to pedestrian use as per agency policy).

Trail-Accessed Interpretive Opportunities

The park's diverse yet largely open landscapes and assemblage of less than obvious natural and cultural features lend themselves to wandering and discovery of the all but hidden treasures. Interpretive opportunities should keep in mind the spirit of discovery, remaining subtle and inquisitive instead of spoon feeding information to visitors.

Trailhead Location and Amenities (see also Shared-Use Trail Development, page 8)

Locating a shared-use trailhead at the Crawford Oaks area in close proximity to SR-14 will limit additional vehicular use of the unpaved Dalles Mountain roadway by the majority of trail users. Siting shared-use trailheads at the low point of elevation is generally preferred by trail users and discourages potentially incompatible trail uses such as “downhill mountain biking.” The park's large size and configuration require additional smaller trailheads to provide reasonable access to specific attractions (e.g., hunting blind site) and particular activities (e.g., paragliding area and rock climbing at Horsethief Butte). Off-highway trailhead parking is needed at Horsethief Butte area to address safety concerns. Permanent sanitary facilities are also needed at various trailheads. These may be phased in as need is demonstrated over time.

Recommendation
- Construct a network of hiking, cycling, equestrian, and interpretive trails throughout the park.
- Develop a wide array of trail opportunities including various levels of difficulty, lengths, and use intensities.
- Designate trails for specific use(s) to provide a full range of non-motorized trail experiences.
• Develop a series of trail-accessed interpretive opportunities at key cultural and natural features and viewing areas.
• Develop the park’s primary shared-use trailhead at the Crawford Oaks area.
• Improve existing and develop additional trailhead facilities at Horsethief Butte, paragliding site, north of the Reuter ranch house, Natural Area Preserve boundary, and at the wetlands/hunting blinds site.

☐ Park Gateways

The addition of the Dalles Mountain Ranch property to Horsethief Lake State Park has brought new challenges in orienting and directing park visitors to the many new opportunities the park now offers. Entering the park from the west presents a particular difficulty. By the time motorists realize they are in the park, they have already missed the turnoff to the Dalles Mountain Ranch property – that is if they knew about the area in the first place. Clearly, improving directional signing along SR-14 before the Dalles Mountain turnoff is a much-needed improvement. Park orientation improvements are also necessary to better direct visitors traveling from the east.

Central Development Concept
Lack of a single entrance to the park and confusing external roadway configuration necessitates development of prominent first points of visitor contact (gateways) where visitors can be oriented and directed to main activity areas.

Key Considerations

Highway Safety

SR-14 is a 60 MPH highway heavily used for commercial trucking. It bisects the two principal park areas: Horsethief Lake and the Dalles Mountain Ranch property. Several hills and curves also conspire to shorten sight distances along several portions of the highway as it runs through the park. Safety concerns arise when fast moving trucks are mixed with slower moving park-related traffic - principally recreational vehicles - entering and exiting the highway to and from the park. A lack of signage and resulting uncertainty by park visitors leads to frequent wrong turns, u-turns, and backtracking.

Development of well-signed highway pullouts (gateways) before or in conjunction with the first route selection point could significantly enhance highway safety by “capturing” first-time park visitors, informing them about the types of opportunities the park offers, and directing them to their chosen destination. A modest pullout should afford safe access to and from the highway, a parking area that can accommodate one or two buses in addition to several vehicles, and an orientation kiosk. A gateway should be provided for vehicles traveling both east and westbound on SR-14; however, it appears...
that the proposed orientation/interpretive facility development at Crawford Oaks could fulfill this gateway function for westbound vehicles.
Visitor Orientation

Because the park does not have a single point of entry, encompasses a large area, and includes a wide array of recreational and interpretive opportunities, it is often difficult for visitors to know where to go to find the particular types of opportunities that most interest them or the ones they have adequate time to enjoy. Providing extensive orientation at a park gateway essentially links visitors with the opportunities that best suit their individual needs, significantly enhancing their enjoyment of the park. Still, park gateways should be part of a broader network of orientation. This network should begin before visitors leave their home through information made available on-line and through brochures, link to park gateways, and finally link to on-site orientation at trailheads and other activity centers.

Recommendation

- Acquire property and construct SR-14 highway pullout west of Dalles Mountain Road intersection to orient first-time visitors to main park activity centers. This pullout should be able to accommodate vehicles, vehicle-trailer combinations, and buses.
- Construct proposed development at Crawford Oaks area in a manner that provides the same gateway function for vehicles entering the park from the east.

Land Classification Recommendations

An important part of planning for the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch area involves the zoning or classification of park lands. State Parks has developed a system of six land classifications. When assigned to a specific area within a park, each classification sets an appropriate intensity for recreational activity and development of facilities. Classifications are aligned along a spectrum ranging from low to high-intensity recreational uses and developments. By classifying park lands, the agency is able to consciously strike a balance between protecting park resources and providing an appropriate variety of recreational opportunities to park visitors.

The agency's land classification system includes six classifications: Natural Area Preserves, Natural/Natural Forest Areas, Resource Recreation Areas, Recreation Areas, and Heritage Areas. Detailed definitions of each land classification are available from the agency on request. Through critical analysis of natural and cultural resource inventories and evaluation of future recreational facilities needs, staff recommends that park lands be classified as a combination of Natural, Heritage, Recreation, and Resource Recreation Areas (Figure 2).

Staff recommends classification of areas known or likely to support rare or sensitive native plant communities as well as those providing important wildlife habitats as Natural Areas. These areas generally include wetlands, riparian areas, cliffs, talus, vernal ponds, oak groves, and sensitive native grassland associations. The Natural Area designation is intended to strongly emphasize protection and enhancement of natural plant and animal communities and identifies areas for more intensive management attention. The designation affords protection to these areas by specifically limiting
recreational use to pedestrian activities and likewise limiting development to trails and modest interpretive/directional signing.
Figure 2: Staff Recommended Land Classifications and Long-Term Park Boundary
Staff recommends classification of areas of known historical significance as well as areas intended for development of extensive interpretative facilities as Heritage Areas. These areas include the Dalles Mountain Ranch development and the site of the proposed park interpretive center at Crawford Oaks. While the Dalles Mountain Ranch development contains both historic and non-historic structures, the Heritage classification has been applied to the entire site to emphasize protection of historic resources and to support its intended use for education, interpretation, and enjoyment of the park’s cultural and natural features. The Crawford Oaks area, while considered part of the park’s broader cultural landscape, is principally recommended for Heritage classification in recognition of its intended role as an interpretive gateway to the rest of the park. This classification is intended to allow for development of the park’s interpretive center and shared-use trailhead while recognizing the importance of the site’s cultural and natural features and affording them as much protection as possible.

The park contains a nationally significant assemblage of Native American archaeological and other culturally important sites. Staff recommends protecting these resources by keeping them largely hidden, with the principal exception of in-place petroglyphs, including “she who watches.” A Heritage classification for this site appears warranted given that the location of these features is already widely known and that the site is considered, by agreement with regional Native American Tribes, appropriate for highly controlled public interpretation.

Staff recommends classifying the Horsethief Lake developed campground, day-use area, and administrative area as a Recreation Area. This classification is intended to emphasize recreational use and enjoyment of this highly developed recreational landscape. Classification in this manner also serves to focus high-intensity recreational use in an existing developed area and, indirectly, affords a higher degree of protection to other undeveloped areas of the park.

Finally, staff recommends classifying the balance of the park as Resource Recreation Area. The purpose of this mid-intensity classification is to provide higher intensity recreational opportunities (shared-use hiking, cycling, and equestrian trails), but only to the extent that the long-term integrity of natural and cultural landscape features is not compromised. This classification recognizes that the quality of natural and cultural resources is what makes these areas attractive to recreate in and consequently seeks to balance recreational use with appropriate levels of resource protection. Staff recommended Resource Recreation Areas generally include agricultural fields, timber cultures, historic homsites, as well as other historic and ethnographically significant cultural landscapes. Use and development of these areas is generally limited to shared-use hiking, cycling, and equestrian trails and supporting trailhead facilities, roadways, minor picnic sites, and interpretive facilities. Indoor opportunities are not permitted in Resource Recreation areas.

**Long-Term Park Boundary Recommendation**

Delineation of long-term park boundaries is a relatively new and often misunderstood aspect of park planning. In short, the purpose of a long-term boundary is to take a big
picture look at what lands, independent of ownership, might advance the conservation and recreation mission of the park. This process not only considers whether an adjoining property would make a suitable addition, but also considers whether agency-owned property should be retained or might appropriately be considered surplus to park needs. Including a privately owned property in a long-term boundary does not necessarily mean the agency wants to purchase it. It simply means that it would be in the park’s best interest if the property were managed/maintained in a condition that complements development and operation of the park. Any of the following possibilities could apply:

The agency might
- Seek to formalize an agreement with an adjacent property owner to advance a shared property management goal
- Solicit a conservation easement from an adjacent property owner to protect certain natural or cultural features
- Readily accept a donation of all or part of a private property
- Consider exchanging agency-owned property for a private property
- Consider purchase of a private property in fee

Through the planning process, staff has developed two starkly differing long-term boundaries for the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch area. Figure 2 represents staff’s recommended long-term boundary while Figure 3 represents an alternative that was considered but not ultimately recommended. Lighter shaded colors in the figures indicate properties that are not owned by the agency but are desirable for long-term boundary inclusion. The lighter and darker shaded areas together represent the long-term park boundary in each option.

Staff’s recommended long-term boundary was delineated under the assumption that maintaining large tracts of land in state parks ownership furthers both the conservation and recreation mission of the park by providing large-scale protection to natural and cultural resources while providing recreational opportunities of regional and statewide significance. The recommended long-term boundary seeks only minor acquisition of private property in pursuit of this mission while emphasizing property exchanges and development of on-going management agreements to simplify management and enhance visitor experience.

Specifically, lands within the recommended long-term boundary include:
- 80-acre DNR property at the east park boundary (acquisition through Trust Land Transfer Program)
- 80-acre Shriner property a.k.a. wetlands/hunting blind site (acquisition or use agreement)
- 120 acres of USFS property (management agreement)
- Private and Tribal allotment properties along north side of SR-14 and west of Horsethief Lake area (voluntary resource and viewshed protection agreements)
- Small amount of property along SR-14 west of Dalles Mountain Road to locate west park gateway (acquisition or use agreement)
Agency-owned lands not within the recommended long-term boundary include:

- Approximately 60 acres of agency-owned property south of Fivemile Creek along the western park boundary near the Brune homestead site

Additionally, staff recommends the agency seek an agreement to manage the adjacent 2,800-acre DNR Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve (NAP) for the Department of Natural Resources. Assumption of management responsibility for this property would achieve significant staffing economies (site is currently managed from DNR’s Ellensburg regional office) and enhance on-site protection of rare native plant communities and wildlife habitat.
Advantages of recommended long-term boundary:
- Protects in perpetuity historically significant, large-scale cultural landscapes associated with the Dalles Mountain Ranch
- Retains archaeological sites and historic ruins associated with the entire collection of original 19th Century homesteads ultimately incorporated into Dalles Mountain Ranch
- Conserves a widely buffered natural resource corridor extending from the Columbia River to the crest of the Columbia Hills in perpetuity
- Retains public access to one of only three paragliding sites in the Columbia River Gorge
- Retains regionally significant shared-use pedestrian, cycling, and equestrian trail opportunities
- Retains interpretive and educational opportunities associated with contemporary agricultural use of the park.

Long-Term Park Boundary Alternative

Through the planning boundary process, staff developed an alternative long-term boundary that represents a radical departure from existing land ownership, particularly at the Dalles Mountain Ranch property (Figure 3). This long-term boundary scheme assumes that retention of large tracts of agricultural fields in state ownership is not essential for long-term conservation of cultural landscapes, natural resource corridors, or to maintain a legitimate state park experience. Consequently, large portions of the property are considered surplus and made available to exchange with other properties in the region, potentially with more conventional recreational value. The alternative retains a minimalist approach to recreation and presumes that cultural and natural resource features can be adequately protected in private ownership through deed reservations and other restrictive covenants. The alternative also presumes that some amount of public access can be retained in a similar fashion.

Specifically, the alternative long-term boundary would:
- Maintain a contiguous conservation corridor from the shores of the Columbia River along Eightmile Creek to the Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve
- Protect a central core of rare native plant communities and important wildlife habitat
- Preserve at least a portion of the park’s historic homestead sites, cultural landscapes, and other cultural features
- Protect areas most likely to contain archeological sites - both Native American and pioneer settlement-related
- Provide a range of recreational opportunities comparable to that offered in staff’s recommendation

Several factors have led staff not to endorse the alternative long-term boundary scheme. First, the historic Brune homesite, consisting of a collection of building foundations, developed landscape, and a nearby timber culture, would not be retained in park ownership. Public access and protection of the site could conceivably be retained
through deed restrictions and reservations, but these restrictions are often difficult to enforce and ultimately management control would likely be lost.
Figure 3: Alternative Long-Term Park Boundary
Second, protection of the visual appearance of surplused agricultural fields might significantly change under private operation. Again, deed restrictions might limit use to agricultural purposes, but long-term management may or may not retain an historically authentic appearance thereby compromising the area’s historic integrity.

Third, it is unrealistic to expect that a comparable level of recreational access to these lands while in active agricultural production can or should be retained. Loss of park lands would limit recreational use and development - principally shared-use pedestrian, cycling, and equestrian trails - to a much smaller area, resulting in higher use densities and diminished opportunities for solitude experiences.

Finally, it is important to note that the state funding sources used to purchase Dalles Mountain Ranch (Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Protection Grant) carry with them stringent requirements directing the conditions under which lands can be “converted” to other uses. That is, any lands declared surplus to park needs would require replacement with other nearby lands of equal or greater value and with like natural habitat features. Finding available replacement lands that meet these requirements may prove difficult. Replacement of the park’s one-of-a-kind cultural features is impossible.

**Park Naming Recommendations**

The Horsethief Lake and Dalles Mountain Ranch areas pose an unusual naming challenge. The State Parks and Recreation Commission originally named the 350-acre Horsethief Lake State Park in 1964 in recognition of the park’s dominant water feature (the lake created by construction of the Dalles Dam and railroad line was originally named by Army Corps of Engineers surveyors in the early 50’s). However, with acquisition of the Dalles Mountain Ranch property in 1993, park holdings have expanded more than tenfold to encompass a contiguous block of almost 4,000 acres. To many, the name Horsethief Lake State Park no longer accurately describes the park’s geographical context nor does it adequately capture the essence of its outstanding natural or cultural features. The name Dalles Mountain Ranch also fails in these regards. The entire property is a single contiguous park, deserving of one overarching identity.

Selecting a name for a new park or re-naming an existing park is often a difficult and emotionally charged process. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, having frequently wrestled with the complexities of naming, in 1978 adopted a park naming policy. Applicable portions direct that, “In naming of sites, priority shall be given to geographic locations, historic significance or geologic features.” In 1995, the Commission adopted additional rules requiring that an official park name “...generally include in it the term ‘state park’.”

In order to adequately recognize the park’s large size, diversity of geography, previous inhabitants, and its relation to various historical persons and events, staff suggests that the park have one overall name, but that areas and facilities within the park be named as well. That is, one overarching name with separate site names within. For example,
ABC State Park - Jane Doe Area. Additionally, names of sites may reflect their dominant land classifications. For example, the ABC State Park - Jane Doe Heritage Area or ABC State Park John Doe Recreation Area.

No clear favorite park-wide name emerged from the planning process. Nor did Staff of regional Native American Tribes come to any formal naming suggestions. The table below lists a number of names suggested by planning participants and how each might fit into an overall naming structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Park Names</th>
<th>Horsethief Lake Site Names</th>
<th>Dalles Mt Ranch Site Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Klickitats State Park</td>
<td>Horsethief Lake Recreation Area</td>
<td>Crawford Ranch Heritage Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixluidix State Park</td>
<td>Collowesh Bottom Area or Spedis Area</td>
<td>Some Native American name related to the Dalles Mountain area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Hills State Park</td>
<td>Five Mile Rapids Area or Long Narrows Area or Petroglyph Canyon Area</td>
<td>Dalles Mountain Area or Klickitats Area</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Staff recommends that Horsethief Lake State Park and the adjoining Dalles Mountain Ranch property be named “Columbia Hills State Park.” This name broadly incorporates the park’s dominant geographic features (Columbia River and the hills rising from it), builds upon previous naming of the adjacent DNR Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve, has a nice ring, and leaves room for the addition of specific area/facility names without becoming overly complicated. Staff also recommends that it continue to work with regional Native American Tribes and other interested individuals to name specific areas and facilities within the park as part of future design processes and site dedications.

**Park Management Issues and Preliminary Approaches**

The table below is a listing of park management issues identified through the public planning process for the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mountain Ranch area. For each issue, the planning team has outlined a preliminary management approach describing how these issues might be addressed. This information will ultimately form the basis of the park’s management plan, but should be considered preliminary at this time and is provided here solely as supporting information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Resources</th>
<th>Preliminary Management Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection of wildlife habitat</td>
<td>East Region Stewardship and Headquarters Stewardship will work with WDFW to conduct habitat and wildlife inventories for the park. The result of the data collection will be the formulation of a habitat management plan for wildlife in the park, as well as any threatened and endangered species identified in the inventories. Management of the Rattlesnake den will occur if problems arise from the public being in the area. Management actions will be in accordance with agency policy on Nuisance Wildlife Management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of natural plant communities</td>
<td>State Parks Stewardship staff has been working with DNR Natural Heritage program to inventory and monitor sensitive plant populations at Dalles Mountain Ranch. In addition to these inventories, an inventory of critical habitat areas, and a survey of plant relationships in the park should be conducted. Park staff, Eastern Region Stewardship, and HQ stewardship will seek advice from DNR Natural Heritage Program, Native Plant Society of Washington, and other interested parties to formulate a vegetation management plan for the park. The vegetation management plan should, at a minimum, address the following topics: 1) sensitive plant species / habitat (e.g., vernal pools), 2) noxious weeds (see below), 3) critical habitat protection (including vegetation community / habitat connectivity with the DNR Columbia Hills NAP), 4) riparian area protection, and 5) identification of areas where grazing may be appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>State Parks recognizes that grazing is an important cultural aspect of the DMR area. Agency staff also recognize that grazing may, if not carefully managed, degrade the quality of the site’s natural resources. Prior to a decision to reestablish grazing at the DMR, a grazing plan will be developed that is in compliance with the agency Grazing Policy (65-87-1) and promotes the conservation and restoration of native plant communities. Interested stakeholders, including but not limited to DNR, WDFW, NRCS, WSU, local ranchers, and other interested parties, will be invited to participate in the planning process. In the development of a grazing plan, staff should consider managing the property in cooperation with local ranchers and higher education organizations for the purposes noted above. A grazing plan should also consider the significance of the area’s cultural landscapes and seek to preserve their integrity as per the agency’s Cultural Resource Management Policy (12-98-1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of noxious weeds</td>
<td>Park staff and Eastern Region Stewardship staff should coordinate with the Klickitat County Weed Board to establish an Integrated Pest Management plan for the park. Such a plan will be formulated in accordance with state laws and agency directives (99-3) associated with integrated pest management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>Maintenance and repair responsibility of boundary fencing and internal fence lines will be conducted in accordance with Commission Policy on park fencing (72-98-1). Fences within the park should be evaluated as to their cultural landscape/interpretive value, impacts to wildlife and aesthetics, and be included in the park-wide interpretive plan (see below) when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention and suppression of wildfires</td>
<td>Park staff and East Region Stewardship staff will work with DNR and local fire districts to develop a wildfire response plan for the DMR/HTL/Columbia Hills NAP area. The use of prescribed burns may be explored as part of natural vegetation management.</td>
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Cultural Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection of historic landscapes and structures</td>
<td>Agency staff intends to develop a Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mt Ranch area in concert with master planning and other more detailed planning for development of the Dalles Mountain Ranch Area. A cultural resource inventory (archeology, cultural landscapes, historic structures, and small-scale features) has already been completed for this area. Coupled with the results of park master planning this information will form the basis of the park’s cultural resource management plan. Once established, management of cultural and historic resources will follow prescriptions set forth in this plan. Until a final plan is approved, treatment of historic properties and cultural landscapes should be limited to stabilization measures only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Native American archaeological resources and cultural sites</td>
<td>As part of the Cultural Resource Management Plan for the area, treatments for the appropriate protection of archaeological resources and cultural sites will be developed in cooperation with Tribal officials. Similar to historic landscapes and structures, prior to development of a cultural resource management plan, any treatment measures should be limited to stabilization measures only. Agency staff will also continue to solicit input and cooperation during park master planning now underway and future park planning and development activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination with interested Native American Tribes</td>
<td>State Parks recognizes the cultural and spiritual importance the DMR/HTL area has to the region’s Native Americans. Agency staff will continue to solicit input and cooperation from interested Tribes during park master planning activities currently underway. Subsequent planning and development activities may require formal Tribal consultation to help guide appropriate protection of cultural and archaeological resources. Agency staff will continue to work with Tribal staff to follow accepted protocol to determine if/when such formal consultation should be undertaken. Agency staff will also seek to form on-going partnerships with Tribal staff and Tribal members to develop programs and materials for use in the park’s interpretive efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of park-related oral histories</td>
<td>As part of park-wide cultural resource management planning and interpretive planning, oral histories and stories associated with the DMR/HTL area should be collected and documented. As part of this effort, agency staff should seek an active partnership with interested Native American Tribes to ensure the accuracy of pre-European history and determine which stories are suitable for interpretation to the public.</td>
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## Recreational Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>DMR/HTL has a system of existing trails and potential for development of multiple use trails to link visitors to different resources and exceptional views throughout the park. As part of capital park development work, funding should be sought for development of a comprehensive trail plan and construction of a trail system. Development of such a plan should seek public input to ensure the trail system is developed and managed in a manner that is responsive to user needs and resource protection. Agency staff should seek out active partnerships with trail user groups and other interested parties to plan, develop, and maintain the park’s trail system. Until a comprehensive trail plan is developed for the area, an interim trail plan should be prepared to address issues for existing trails such as allowed conveyances, maintenance needs, and signing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Interpretation of natural and cultural resources | As part of capital development of interpretive facilities at the Dalles Mountain Ranch property, a park-wide interpretive master plan that builds on the interpretive master plan developed for the Horsethief Lake Area should be prepared. This plan should seek the involvement of regional natural and cultural resource organizations and experts and at minimum include:  
- Identification of park management goals related to interpretation  
- Identification of target audience  
- Identification of parameters/limiting factors under which the interpretive program must operate  
- Inventory and identification of natural/cultural resources appropriate for interpretation  
- Development of interpretive themes and sub-themes  
- Development of a network of interpretive opportunities, i.e., enticement, orientation, interpretive hubs, and location/design of specific opportunities |
| Interpretation of historic ranching equipment | As part of the park-wide interpretive planning effort, agency staff should continue working with the Friends of Dalles Mountain Ranch to restore historic ranch machinery. The location, extent, and facilities allocated for this purpose should be determined through more detailed site/facility planning for development of the Dalles Mountain Ranch area. If possible, the process of restoration should be shared with park visitors and be a part of the park’s interpretive master plan. |
| Paragliding                                | Paragliding at Dalles Mountain Ranch will be managed as outlined in the Interim Paragliding Management Plan previously established for the park. Following master planning for the Horsethief Lake - Dalles Mt Ranch area, a finalized paragliding management plan will be prepared in cooperation with the Cascade Paragliding Club and other interested individuals and organizations that reflects any changed circumstances. |
| Rock climbing                              | Due to the popularity of Horsethief Butte for rock climbing, a management plan for this activity has already been prepared. Rock climbing activities will continue to be managed through this plan. |
| Coordination with Columbia River Gorge Commission and the USFS National Scenic Area | Following State Parks and Recreation Commission action on the facilities concept plan, land classifications, and long-term park boundary for Horsethief Lake State Park and the Dalles Mt Ranch Property, agency staff will seek zoning changes (if necessary) as part of the Columbia River Gorge Commission’s National Scenic Area Management Plan review process. Agency staff will also continue to advocate public park use of the Dalles Mt Ranch area during review processes for designation of the Dalles Mt Road as a “key viewing area” by the Columbia River Gorge Commission. |
| Coordination with Klickitat County | State Park staff recognizes that conversion of the 3,200-acre Dalles Mt. Ranch property to a state park represents a significant change in land use for this area. Staff intends to work closely with Klickitat County to address issues of mutual concern (e.g., park-related use of Dalles Mountain Road) and seek practical solutions. Agency staff will continue to solicit input and cooperation from County Commissioners and staff during each phase of the master planning process currently underway. |
Partnerships

The diversity of natural and cultural resources, as well as the potential for recreational resources at Dalles Mt. Ranch and Horsethief Lake, and the associated groups that take interest in these resources, have great potential for the forming of partnerships between State Parks and private groups. As such, park staff should seek to develop relationships with interested groups to work on programs in the park. Organizations that could potentially serve as partners include:

- SECRETS program - environmental education programming and volunteer/fund raising cooperation for facilities development.
- WSU Cooperative Extension - research effects of grazing on natural resources of the gorge area.
- Friends of the Gorge - environmental ed programming.
- Oregon Native Plant Society - agriculture-related technical assistance and cooperation.
- Backcountry Horsemen - trails-related planning/design, construction, maintenance, and on-going management.
- Columbia Area Mountain Biking Association - trails-related planning/design, construction, maintenance, and on-going management.
- International Mountain Biking Association, Eastern Washington - trails-related planning/design, construction, maintenance, and on-going management.
- Mazamas - Rock climbing management and trailhead sanitation development.
- WSU - Grazing/Haying and other technical agricultural management support and public interpretation.
- Livestock Growers Association - agricultural management cooperation and technical assistance.
- Klickitat County Noxious Weed Board - agricultural management cooperation and technical assistance.
- Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association - interpretive/visitor center development, regional tourism marketing, and lodging/camping-related technical assistance.
- Klickitat County Tourism Advisory Committee - Recreational services-related technical assistance.
- Gorge Trust/Friends of Dalles Mt Ranch - general support, volunteer coordination, fund raising support.
- Cascade Paragliding Club - paragliding trailhead development, on-going paragliding management.
Let us know what you think

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 Eastern Region's Stewardship Program at (509) 665-3329 or drop by the park office. The Horsethief Lake – Dalles Mountain Ranch Master Planning Project web site www.parks.wa.gov/hldmrplan.asp also provides an e-mail link for comments.

Next steps and final decision making

Staff intends to present recommendations included in this document for final consideration and action by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission at its scheduled June 19, 2003 meeting in Wenatchee, WA. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review forms an integral part of the planning process and is also available for public comment upon request.

We hope you find this process interesting and that you choose to remain actively involved in planning for the park. With your help, we will hand this park down to our grandchildren as a lasting legacy and a treasure of which we can all be proud.