

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
STEPTOE BUTTE AND STEPTOE BATTLEFIELD PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS
WHITMAN COUNTY LIBRARY - COLFAX, WA - MARCH 7, 2017

ROAD MAINTENANCE

- Maintain Rd but don't over develop, i.e. No big RV's on top.
- Yeah, fix the road. I no longer ride it due to the pot holes and gravel.
- 'If road improvement is implemented, please address the planting of scarred areas.
- The road to the top of Steptoe Butte needs to be repaired.
- Steptoe Butte – keep fixing the road, last year was a good start.

INTERPRETIVE

- The Coeur d'Alene Tribe would like to be consulted on the interpretation information at the Steptoe battlefield site. Perhaps even assist in helping with additional or updated signage.
- The Coeur d'Alene Tribe would like an opportunity to contribute some cultural/historical information related to Steptoe Butte and its use of that area. The Tribal school in De Smet completes its "Antelope" run on the butte each year.
- BOTH Steptoe Butte + Battlefield
 - Increase tribal participation in planning + interpretation
 - NATIVE place names
 - Stories/history
 - Contemporary use
- The interpretive signs at Steptoe Battlefield need updating. The best scholarship on the actual location of events leading to and following the battle has been done by a member of the Whitman County Historical Society.
- Battlefield – Interpretive panels from native perspective too.
- The two interpretive signs on US 195 (Steptoe Butte especially) need to be updated and replaced.
- Wildlife or vegetative Interpretive Panels alongside the geologic panels. (Steptoe Butte)
- Whitman County Historical Society has developed an interpretive trail following the route of Col Steptoe to and from the battle location. The final portion of the route of Father Joset to the parlay locations is all that remains to be identified. We want to work together with all interested parties to make this trail available as a drive with a guide either on paper or online.

ASTRONOMY

- Astrophotography – star parties

- At LIGO/Handford they coordinate these quite a bit, the dark sky at Steptoe Butte makes it a great place for these. Not sure if there is a way to tie any astronomy interpretive panels to the site. Likewise some interesting weather facts (degree variation up the butte, top wind speed recorded at the top, etc.)
- Park hours are 6 AM – Dusk in Summer and 6 AM-6 PM Winter
 - Steptoe Butte is popular for Astronomy/star gazing. I know groups from Spokane come down w/ telescopes as well as local groups. Allowing after dark use of the park for this activity would be appreciated. Maybe a permit for groups who want to use the Butte for astronomy after hours.

TRAILS

- I think a trail would be a valuable recreational addition, provided it avoids sensitive Palouse Prairie remnants and has proper signage.
- Need bike trail and hiking trail. Better signs and road signs and road.
- Steptoe Butte: Need for a well-maintained foot trail separate from the road.
- Mountain bike & multi use trails
- Butte: The old abandoned access road would make a good bike/foot trail. (West slope)
- Adventure – Extended cycling trail connecting Colombia plateau trail Palouse falls, Lewis & Clark trail etc. Could be paved, gravel, or dirt. Should be viewed as expedition style cycling.
- For assistance with mountain bike trails contact Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (Spokane chapter).
- Butte – Regarding the Butte, one issue I see is a lack of variety regarding human powered exploration. Trails to access and view the native fauna would go a long way and provide an alternate to the road to access the view at the top.
- Would like to see more trails

LONG TERM BOUNDARIES/PARK EXPANSION

- Incorporate purchased land around Steptoe butte with state parks recreation. Multi user trails and mountain bike friendly.
- Inclusion of the recent Land Trust acquisition with Steptoe Butte park is recommended. At least 6 apple cultivars thought extinct have been rediscovered there. Two have been confirmed in the past 2 months.
- Steptoe Butte: Long-term boundary. Since development of the wind farm to the North, the best views are now to the South, West, and East. Land acquisition should be in those directions.
- Steptoe Butte SP – If the long-term boundary is extended to the surrounding property, it'd be nice to find a way to continue the hunting uses.

- I'm interested in the neighboring property/Palouse Prairie remnant. Is WA PARKS the appropriate entity to preserve and manage (weeds) it? If not, whom?
- "Closing the loop" re: property seems obvious and intuitive – the parks would want to consider purchasing any properties surrounded by the existing road/boundary.
- Include Bassett-Folwell property in future butte boundary.
- Work with the newest private landowner (Bassetts) to expand park?
- Expand the State Park to include the whole hill.
- We need the whole mountain in the state park!
- The opportunity to acquire >400 acres of native Palouse Prairie is unparalleled! Most remnants are of 5 acres or less. This is a great opportunity for the conservation functions of the parks.
- Include Bassett/Folwell land in future boundaries
 - Natural Palouse habitat
 - Historical Resources
- Neighboring land to expand the boundary. Obvious private sale of ~450 acres of "original" Palouse land. From the sound of it, they are very interested in incorporating it into the park.
- Why didn't the parks service buy the land around Steptoe Butte that went for sale in 2016? I think the parks service should expand the boundary.
- Steptoe Butte Park –for future purchase –There are approximately 50 acres attached to the picnic area that has historic orchards.
- Perhaps consider adding a few smaller parcels out by Hume Road as part of the long-term boundary as future landing zones for hang-gliders and paragliders.

HANG-GLIDING/PARA-GLIDING

- Build 20 feet of footpath from parking lot down to top of west slope –for paragliders and hang gliders.
- Perhaps consider adding a few smaller parcels out by Hume Road as part of the long-term boundary as future landing zones for hang-gliders and paragliders.
- Hang gliders and Para-gliders Both use Steptoe Butte extensively. The existing physical condition of Park is near ideal now, although a larger long term boundary would be good.
 - This is actually one of the safest flying sites around – to kick us off would actually increase our risk. (I, personally have flown there since 1975 with no injuries.)
 - We pick up litter, and would like to participate in a friends program. Contact Center of Lift Flying Club. We make a point to be respectful of adjacent landowners, particularly seeded fields.
 - Flying safety: (Hang & paragliders) Steptoe is safer than other sites because:
 1. Due to its conical shape, the wind is always straight in somewhere.

2. Smooth slopes generate less turbulence & tripping hazards. Few actual cliffs where one could fall.
3. Miles of emergency landing zone-in case someone doesn't make it to their intended L/Z
4. Few hazardous obstacles, such as trees, power lines, barbed wire, etc.
5. If we have to leave Steptoe, it would actually increase our risk.

- Overnight camping. Options for Butte Events. AKA Fund raiser for friends of group.
- Bury power line on north side launch location. Will improve natural look and aesthetics. Will also improve safety of north side launch.
- Vegetation maintenance for N, S, E & West launch locations with designated access paths/trails.
- Obtain a long term boundary marker for land owned by Klaveano family. Our landing zone property owner.
- Develop a spectator area with benches/seating to improve the culture of safety & awareness.
- Supporting volunteer effort in participation of friends of group.
- Use of top of Butte for hang gliding + paragliding recreation use. Launches in N, S, E + West.
- Information board to include rules for flight and for spectators.

CAMPING

- Primitive campground @ the Battlefield for users of Steptoe Butte – John Wayne Trail.
- Whitman County has limited camping opportunities. Especially now with the loss of Central Ferry State Park. Please consider camping opportunities at Steptoe Butte as new potential boundaries are considered.

TOWERS

- Remove or camouflage cell towers. Mask them as Ponderosa pines?
- Hide the cell tower or remove
- Remove the towers –they are not consistent with Virgil's donation of the land. They interfere with photography, which is becoming increasingly popular driving visitors to the county.
- Is there any way to get rid of that giant tower-kind of sticks out like a sore thumb!

GEOCACHING

- I would like to see a second WA State Park sponsored geocaching Geo Tour. I found the previous one to be very fun.

- Friends came to visit Butte only because they had seen 3 geocaching sites on a smartphone app.
- I think that some state parks should have WA State Park maintained geocaches.

SIGNAGE

- Battlefield –Boundaries marked? It is close to a ballfield and farming. Knowing where it “is” would help when a person is actually there.
- Better, larger signs expanded boundaries.

PLANTS/ORCHARDS

- Please do not cut down any fruit trees without public input
- Would like to see a Heritage orchard at Steptoe Butte St. Park. A repository for other Heritage varieties of apples & other fruit trees still found on the Palouse. Existing trees could serve as root stock for grafts of other trees.
- The Steptoe Park plan must include protection of plants + wildlife native to the Palouse region.
- I am concerned about management of non-recreational aspects of the park. Such as preservation of native vegetation. How active will the State’s management be for these purposes. That would include control of invasive species.

BIRD WATCHING/NESTING

- Steptoe Butte has an excellent wild-bird resource – Being able to safely walk along the road would be nice – More pull-offs up the road would be nice too.
- The park is a well-known site for birders to seek species hard to find in the wheat fields. Rock-wrens, rosy finches, Townsend’s Solitaire just to name a few. This is a strong feature!
- Close certain areas for ground nesting birds during breeding season.

USES

- Local school children make yearly field trips for geology + history discussions.
- Future use idea –Drone launch site. Farmers <40 yrs old are purchasing drones for field scouting.
- I would like to see some more mixed use, especially if the park can be expanded. The only real use now is driving the ribbon to a paved parking lot. Specifically I’d like to see trails for hiking/running and maybe even biking. I love that you’re planning, but a common issue is money. From my perspective, parks are not a big priority for the legislature.
- I use Steptoe Butte State Park for hiking, biking + running every summer.
- I use Steptoe Butte 3 times a year to view fields and look at area houses/views.

OTHER

- Battlefield. Brochure? Info? Educate.
- Notice you have pamphlets for parks in area but not on Steptoe Battlefield??
- How are you funded for these new park endeavors?
- Spray weeds in the road at a minimum. Lots of noxious weeds on road below the bottom picnic area.
- Info by residents of Rosalia
- Public land is important for future generations its protection.
- Steptoe Butte: Would be nice to have access to top in the winter.
- Make the Discovery Pass and the Fish & Wildlife pass interchangeable. It's all state land.
- Steptoe Battlefield. Needs enough picnic tables for groups to meet.
- Steptoe Battlefield. Needs restrooms.
- Always see out of state or Canadian plates on cars at the top. Photographers fill the Butte in May – July 4th. Any thoughts about a sign in app to let the park know how it's being used.
- Balance. Don't let it get "loved to death."
- Self-limited access. No big parking lots, etc. Limited hunting in the new ground around Steptoe Butte
- At Steptoe – investigate administrative process that would allow limited hunting in conjunction with protection of prairie + orchards.
- Roughly 1-2 times a year our local fire dept. goes to the Butte for an accident, rescue or medical call. Don't forget they need year round access.