

Cama Beach Public Comments

July 22 – August 12, 2024

To: Washington State Park Director Diana Dupuis and Members of the Commission:

Hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of volunteers from Western Washington have given their time and efforts to care for Cama Beach Historical State Park. The reason is simple: it is a unique treasure that adds value to our lives, those of island residents and the park's more than 270,000 visitors a year. It is also an historic place, legally on the National Register and cherished in the hearts of Washingtonians.

We firmly believe the cabins, the boathouse and beachfront store--all run with volunteer help--should remain open.

- Cama's 37 rustic cabins provide respite from a frantic modern life, especially for families and those wanting to be near nature and the sea around them; the cabins are moderately priced and much sought-after, making access possible for families who could otherwise never spend a night on the ocean's shore. These Cama Beach cabins provided a refuge for city dwellers during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 when they were booked by people from Seattle and other densely populated areas.

- Cama Beach boathouse, which for decades rented out rowboats, canoes and kayaks to people eager to get out on the water, may be the last of the more than 200 boathouses that dotted the coastline of Puget Sound from the 1930s into the 1960s. This era was important to the development of recreation in the state and has had continuing effects on the area. With the closure of the boathouse, access to boating and fishing--so central to traditional life in Washington--is almost gone for many.

- The Saturday "Toy Boats" program located in the boathouse maintained the connection to boatbuilders of the past and emphasized creativity, using basic brace-and-bit, hammer-and-nails technology for children of all ages, often helped by parents and grandparents. It drew in campers, locals, Scouts, church and school groups, handicapped students and many others. While "Toy Boats" has continued by working from a trailer at Camano Island State Park, it no longer has the connection to boat-building that it had in the boathouse, where real boats are stored and a display of historical posters explains the importance of boathouses throughout the state.

- The Cama store, popular for generations with camping supplies, toys and guidebooks, was an old-fashioned store that also kept artifacts in display cases, including letters and postcards from guests, doubling as a museum of island culture and selling hard-to-find items from the Resort era. It was a library for guests in the cabins who could borrow games, reference books, and maps of the area and was a favorite with children who could shop alone for candy or popsicles with the change in their pockets.

- In its assessment of Cama Beach, The National Registry of Historic Places concluded: "Since its acquisition of the property in 1994, Washington State Parks has sought to preserve the resort in its entirety while moving ahead with planning for adaptive use of Cama Beach as an environmental learning center."

We need to continue to adapt by making Cama Beach an environmental model for the future, not by closing it.

Respectfully,

Volunteers at Cama Beach Historical State Park (with a total of 30 years of service) ¹

Please save Cama Beach cabins - this location is spectacular. The community, visitors and future generations will benefit from maintaining this park for public use. ²

Hello, I'd like to make a suggestion for the future cabins at Cama Beach as someone who has stayed there several times. If the old cabins must be removed to remove the bulkhead and restore the beach environment, would it be possible to build new cabins further back on the beach? Maybe not as many, but at least the waterfront view could still be enjoyed? I understand that there are other considerations such as permitting and the sewer lift, but perhaps there would be a way to maintain at least some of the best cabin rentals in the state? Thanks for your consideration. ³

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the state of Cama Beach State Park. This comment is in two parts - our relationship to this park, and in part 2, suggestions for the current state of affairs of the park.

Our family of 4 has visited Cama Beach multiple times over the past years as both day visitors, restaurant goers and cabin renters. Our sons learned to battle monsters with sticks as their swords on the shores of your beaches. They quietly watched the whales pass close to shore, the barnacles clicking at low tide, and the clams sprinkle water. They have looked at periwinkle shells under a microscope and played baseball in the dirt space in front of your restrooms. This unique gem of a state park holds a dear place for us and in our family memories.

The park service and volunteers have been wonderful about keeping us abreast of the septic and seawall issue. I wanted to throw out a couple of ideas and suggestions.

1: I wanted to ask that if humanely possible please do NOT sell off any part of this precious land to private use. Please keep this off the table. Cama beach is easily accessible to people of all socioeconomic status with no ferry needed. It also is one of the few stretches of beach available for use in Camano island. Please do not sell off this crucial public resource so that future generations continue to share this wonder with their children.

2: The septic issue combined with the seawall issue is heartbreaking. Is it possible to move the cabins and structures further away from the shoreline? Perhaps across the road or closer to where the septic system is located? This would preserve the cabins, and then the crumbling seawall could be repaired in sections to preserve buildings and sections of the property not easy to move. What other strategies have parks been able to successfully use? Would it be possible try to break apart a solution that keeps the park open while repairs are staged? Can we leverage avenues of levies, federal grants and/or government funds for this work?

3. Lastly, should you need people to assist in future endeavors, I would be happy to help where I can! Feel free if you need any help from the general public.

Thank you all for your service. I am hopeful we are able to find a way to keep this park open!

Best Regards,⁴

Please do what it takes to keep the Cama Beach cabins open as a resource to the area and for the future. It is these places and experiences that are irreplaceable. My family has been visiting the cabins for the past several years as part of an annual school trip. It is the highlight of the

summer for my daughter and it's not an experience that can be replicated! I haven't even had the heart to tell her that the trip is cancelled this year due to needed repairs. There are countless stories and memories from this special place from numerous individuals and families, and that means something to the local community and state of Washington. While I appreciate there are challenges, this is an investment worth making to preserve this valuable resource. Please take the feedback to heart and vote to protect the cabins. Thank you for considering! ⁵

We implore the state to keep Cama Beach Cabins open. Do your jobs, preserve and protect the property, the Cabins, the seawall. This place is a treasure and deserves to be saved. ⁶

As a frequent visitor to Camano Island and Cama Beach, and having visited various other trails and parks on the island and having read of the history of this beautiful area, my input is to offer the cabins for sale to home owners on Camano Island so these historic cabins remain on the island without endangering the sea wall. I also feel that the cabins should be sold to property owners who have an existing dwelling just like the cabins at Quinault are only sold if the buyer has an existing home so the cabin is not the main residence- this would preserve the cabins' history while maintaining infrequent use which would enhance their viability for decades to come. Obviously, if the sea wall can be preserved intact, letting them at the park would be the best option, but my idea provides an excellent idea of preserving history and giving Camano Island homeowners and piece of history to upkeep and enjoy. ⁷

Hello,
As a lifelong resident and property owner on Camano Island, I am asking that you seriously consider the repair and opening back up of the Cama beach cabins and the boathouse. All during the childhood years of our 5 children, we enjoyed time at Cama beach and the boathouse activities. Both our boys found so much enrichment there. So needed today. All the history and such a grand location for it all to take place. Yes, climate change will affect so much for all of us ~ but I'm standing in with the thought that we can take one day at a time and deal with things as they come. All of the volunteer work and all of the efforts given thus far speaks wonders. History should be preserved as so much everywhere is being developed, destroyed or eliminated. This is happening everywhere. Let's save what little great history we have!! ⁸

We were married at Cama Beach in 2016 and hoping to plan a 10 year anniversary there. It is a beautiful gem in the Pacific Northwest and absolutely my favorite place.

After reviewing comments, the presentation, and the recommendation from staff who have the most information and experience of the place that the recommendation to not reopen where they currently exist is the current best recommendation and likely also the best recommendation going forward. It seems that the cabins could be removed and the area made available for beachgoers and hikers with more attention to the trails and that perhaps cabins could be moved to the other end of Camano Island where there is higher elevation.

It is important to preserve the sanctity of the soil and cultural gravesites there without disruption and disturbance even if our hearts wish for more time to stay and play there. It seems that it is possible to be ecologically, economically, and culturally mindful considering the impacts of climate change, increased population, etc.

The most important aspect is to source state/grant/tribal funding and partnerships that will support a move of the cabins as necessary. It must be clear that and under no circumstances,

there is no option that the land be sold to private developers. Partnering with local Tribes to co-manage the land would make a lot of sense.⁹

We ask to be able to see the alternate options and proposals considered in the decision to close the cabins. The cabins are historical and support tourism and the economy of camano island. We do not support the closure and would like to see how the closure was determined financially to be the best option and what the plan is for the future or all other infrastructure in the park. All alternate options should be available to the resident to make educated comments on the closure.¹⁰

I urge all those involved in decion making regarding Cama Beach State Park to pursue every avenue to preserve the current integrity of the park, it's cabins, and boating opportunities¹¹

I support the reconstruction efforts for the cabins at Cama Beach.
This is our history we must preserve it!¹²

Please, please, please do whatever it takes to reopen the cabins at Cama Beach. This is a jewel in the crown of our beautiful state parks. Families have made memories here for generations.
Please!¹³

In 2023, Cama Beach State Park had 272,888 visitors and brought in \$982,650 in revenue.1

Original Purchase Understanding

Karen Hamalainen and Sandra Worthington, granddaughters of original Cama Beach Resort owners, sold the property to the state at 60% less than commercial value with the express intent it would be a living museum and the land, cabins and buildings would be available to the public at affordable rates.2

“Our priorities were to keep it open to the public at low cost, to have it be an environmental learning center, and a place for quiet retreats,” said Gary Worthington, the Risks’ son-in-law and the author of a Cama Beach history. 3

"The owner's desire to retain some of that (historic) flavor and display it . . . to save the cabins, the boats and boathouse and build a museum and other things." 4

A Living Museum

Cama Beach Resort is listed on the National Historic Register. “That no comparable examples of auto-era resort design remain in the State of Washington adds to the level of significance inherent in this remarkable property.... All aspects of integrity are present in the resort complex.” The National Historic Register application is a compelling explanation as to why the land and buildings are truly a one of a kind living museum.5

One of the historical aspects is their beachfront location – moving the cabins means disrupting the historical significance.

Washington State Budget

Washington State’s budget (revenue and spending) has increased significantly every year for the past 9 years. This reflects the continued steady revenue increase that the state has experienced during that time. The budget for 2024 (\$81.9 billion) is more than double the 2014 budget (\$38.6 billion). This year \$4.8 billion was added to the original budget to reflect the significant revenue increase.6

Cultural Concerns

In 2007, prior to the park opening, \$2 million of archaeological survey work was completed to help identify and protect the culturally sensitive areas. Work requiring digging that has happened at the Park since the opening in 2008 has not found any significant discoveries. (Cama Beach Foundation information sheet)

“Before the park opened - State Parks officials say they changed their plans to address tribal concerns.” 7

Waterfront property owners all over Washington State regularly comply with the extensive archaeological and environmental regulations required for every repair, renovation and building project.

Will the Parks Commission please advise the citizens of Washington State regarding what laws or regulations have been changed since the extensive 2006 renovation which included renovating cabins and buildings, constructing multiple bathrooms, a restaurant and drop-off shelter. Why do regulations prevent you from repairing the infrastructure – resulting in the closure of all cabins and bathrooms BUT the state managed the huge project of building and renovating the park only 16 years ago?

Climate Change Concerns

All buildings were raised 2 feet in 2007. “The resort buildings sit up to 2 feet higher than they did before restoration (in 2007).” 8

The Final Sea Rise and Vulnerability Analysis was created for “the community to understand the threat of climate-induced coastal hazards, such as sea level rise.” This was issued by Monterey California and evaluated coastal vulnerabilities in 2030 based on maximum of 8.8 inches of sea level rise. 2060 vulnerabilities were evaluated based on a maximum of 20 additional inches of sea level rise.9

The Sound Shore Stewards newsletter wrote about the November 15, 2021 record-setting storm that hit the night of a king tide. Areas of the grounds received storm surge waters, and the water almost, but not quite, intruded into the store building. They did not report water inside any of the more than 30 buildings. The covered outdoor concrete area of Center for Wooden Boats, which sits directly adjacent to the seawall, did receive storm surge waters. 10

1 (<https://parks.wa.gov/about/strategic-planning-projects-public-input/reports-studies/visitation-reports>).

2 (historylink.org/File/8843)

3 (<https://www.seattletimes.com/life/outdoors/launching-a-new-era-at-cama-beach-state-park/>)

4 (<https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=19931028&slug=1728404>)

5 (https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprdstorage/lz/electronic-records/rg-079/NPS_WA/01000505.pdf)

6 (www.Fiscal.wa.gov) (www.wsha.org/articles/governor-inslee-releases-proposed-2023-25-budget/)

7 <https://www.seattletimes.com/life/outdoors/launching-a-new-era-at-cama-beach-state-park/>

8 <https://www.seattletimes.com/life/outdoors/launching-a-new-era-at-cama-beach-state-park/>

9 https://files.monterey.org/Document%20Center/CommDev/Planning/Local%20Coastal%20Program%20Update/16_0316_FINAL_Monterey_ExistingConditions_wAppendixA_WEB.pdf

10 (<https://soundwaterstewards.org/2021-11-15-storm-surge-at-cama/>)¹⁴

Hello,

We recently found out that there may be a potential closing of Cama beach cabins and we are devastated by hearing the news as we have been renting Cama Beach cabins ever since it first started renting 2009? Our families have created memories year after year there. Every year we had invited many of our friends to create even more memories and enjoy its beauty. It is our home away from home (just an hour away from our home in Redmond). We urge you to change your decision of closing them forever to keep them running and have the people enjoy the beautiful cabins with an incredible view of Puget sound. The volunteers work tirelessly there and in fact we

were thinking about volunteering there soon and it's sad to hear about the recent decision. We recently visited Cama beach for a day trip again two weeks ago, had delicious lunch at Cama center cafe, enjoyed the view of Puget sound but was very sad to think that we couldn't rent the cabins anymore. I understand there may be more reasons besides fixing the sewer issues but I am sure the park has good income from the years of renting cabins over these years and if the maintenance can be covered. Our humble request to think again about your decision. Please let me know if there are ways to share pictures as I didn't see the option here.

Thank you! ¹⁵

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the potential discontinuation of cabin rentals at Cama Beach State Park. My family and I have been visiting the park since it opened in 2009, and it has become a cherished tradition for us and our friends.

Cama Beach State Park holds a special place in our hearts. The cabins provide a unique and irreplaceable experience, allowing us to connect with nature and each other in a way that few other places can offer. Over the years, we have created countless memories, from watching the sunrise over the water to enjoying evenings by the campfire. The park's serene environment and the sense of community it fosters are invaluable to us.

We understand that there are significant challenges related to the upkeep of the cabins, including septic system failures and other infrastructure issues¹². However, we believe that with proper planning and investment, these challenges can be addressed without losing such a vital part of the park's appeal. The cabins are not just structures; they are a part of the park's history and a source of joy for many families like ours.

We urge you to consider the long-term benefits of maintaining the cabins. They attract visitors from all over, contributing to the local economy and promoting outdoor recreation. Moreover, preserving these cabins aligns with the park's mission to provide a space for people to enjoy and appreciate Washington's natural beauty.

Please take into account the voices of the many families who, like us, have found a home away from home at Cama Beach State Park. We hope that the cabins will continue to be a part of this wonderful park for many years to come.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. ¹⁶

Please leave the cabins at Cama Beach where they are! They do so much good for people not as lucky as I am to live in this beautiful place. I've lived here 15 years and walk down quite often from my house opposite the trail head ant Ivy Way. I see weddings, groups of young families of all ethnicities, high school running teams, boating enthusiasts, crabbers, all able to afford time on the beach only through the generosity of the parks department. It gives me joy to see kids and parents so happy, relaxed and free, a sight not available many other places.

As we face our existential climate crisis, we're going to need young people who are passionate about nature, and what better way to teach them than time spent in those cabins.

Regarding the economics of fixing something you know will be destroyed: As the marine biologist at the public meeting said it will take 25 years for seas to rise so high that they engulf the structures. At \$1million a year from rentals and weddings, it makes sense to maximize the revenue stream as long as possible to help support other parks. These 25 years can be used to figure out how to keep the Cama Beach a public sanctuary for people who otherwise wouldn't have access.

Thank you for reading these comments and considering an option that keeps the park open and available as long as possible, ¹⁷