

Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park and Wanapum Recreation Area Comments

November 19, 2020 – December 9, 2020

I prefer to keep off road access as is stated in plan 3, in other word no changes. ¹

This is a general comment, from a family that stays at Wanapum Recreation Area at least 2-3 times annually, while we're rock climbing just across the river: we love this campground! We've introduced it to friends and even youth outdoor groups, who've stayed there with us and found its amenities to be a wonderful relief at the end of a day of climbing. When it's not too cold, jumping in the river is a major bonus. Campground staff have always been knowledgeable and helpful. I'm not sure what we would change, other than expanding the campground if that's possible (as it often fills up), but it's a place that's dear to our hearts and the source of many of our fondest memories. ²

I support Alternative 1 ("Heritage" concept) for Ginkgo Petrified Forest. Protecting our natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations is important, and it is one of the easiest, most cost-effective ways to maintain our natural resources. As a restoration ecologist, I understand that once natural areas are damaged, it is extremely expensive and difficult, if impossible, to return ecosystems to their pre-damaged state. I would support WA State Park in limiting vehicle access in the park to protect rare or at-risk species, and natural features, and maintain the shrub-steppe plant communities that are becoming increasingly limited in Washington state.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this planning effort. ³

Thanks for the opportunity to review the planning documents for the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park and Wanapum Recreation Area. As someone who has visited this area dozens of times over the last 40 years, I have strong opinions about the options. In particular, I think that option 2 (which allows primitive camping in the Rocky Coulee area) is far superior to the other two options. This land is a unique asset in the state, in that it's one of the last places where one can do remote camping at low elevations in eastern WA. As such, it is a treasure for those of us who like open spaces and the opportunity to get out into nature, away from the buzz of human activities, and to be able to do so regardless of the season. Indeed, the Ginkgo area is a place that draws many to botanize, watch birds, study lichens, observe pollinators, etc., and because of its low elevation and unique ecosystem, is a prime go-to spot for naturalists in early spring, when the rest of eastern WA is largely still dormant. Furthermore, large areas of sagebrush-dominated habitat are scarce (other than the off-limits areas of Hanford and the Yakima Firing Range) in the state, and this remains one of last places where one can get that unique feeling that camping in an expansive arid ecosystem can provide. Limiting camping only to developed sites would be a dreadful mistake that would relegate this area to being just another park that one could not fully experience. Camping in the desert and hearing nothing but the wind and great horned owls and coyotes serenading the moon is something that one can't experience at a developed campground. Please don't deprive future generations of this unique experience. ⁴

I should also have mentioned that there are many sites currently used for dispersed car camping to the N and W of Rocky Coulee...typically wide spots or green dot pullouts. It would be good if the adopted plan permitted such dispersed camping. ^{4b}

Prefer Alternative 1 when speaking of Ginkgo Petrified Park and Wanapum. ⁵

Dec 7, 2020

Hello. I offer my comments re the Ginkgo Stage 2 planning document as a 40+ year user of nearly all of the various facets of Ginkgo Park, with my predominant use being access to the Quilomene / WhiskeyDick Wildlife areas for hiking and upland bird hunting, via the Primitive Road accessed from Recreation Drive. I strongly encourage consideration and implementation of Alternate 3 as the plan which would offer the most versatile park usage for the widest array of users, while preserving the natural wonders and historical structures that make this such a special and unique component of the State Parks system. In my view, the top benefits of Alternate 3 include:

1) Maintaining seasonal access to the Primitive Road off Recreation Drive via the current self-registration and call-in code gate system. My observation over many years has been that this access is relatively lightly used, and almost exclusively by users who dutifully observe the park rules. The recent improvements to the self-registration system and gate access are working as intended, and seem to be very effective at promoting responsible use of this area. Having an alternate egress point for access to the lower-elevation portions of the Quilomene / WhiskeyDick Wildlife areas is critical when the primary higher-elevation access roads become difficult or impossible to navigate during inclement fall / winter weather. As well, limiting or eliminating vehicular access via the primitive road would preclude use of the inner reaches of North Ginkgo to all but a very few extremely able-bodied users, depriving many others of the joy of this desolate but rich bit of geography;

2) Creation of a trail from the Cove to a new Iron Horse / Palouse to Cascades Trail access point. This will encourage and facilitate greater use of this world-class "rails to trails" amenity;

3) Classification of the lands adjacent the Interpretive Center and Trailside Museum as Resource Recreation, and the subsequent expansion of the trail systems within. This will presumably open some underutilized areas of interest to a greater array of users.

Thank you to State Parks staff for the well-prepared presentation of planning alternates. ⁶

As a WA resident, I would like you to continue ORV travel through just like it is now. ⁷

I received a letter from Melinda Posner directed to "Selected Owners of Properties Adjacent to Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park". I own approximately 36 acres to the north west of The Cove. I have two homes on this property. I have a easement through The Cove to access my property. The information and map that was mailed to me did not show any impact whatsoever to my property. It appears however that the information sent to me was grossly misleading

regarding actual proposed alternatives which would significantly affect my property. Alternative 2 and 3 show a Park trail/road traversing my property adjacent to my homes and connecting to a Department of Defense Road leading to a connection to the Palouse to Cascade Trail.

A connection of The Cove Recreation Area to the Palouse to Cascade Trail seems like a very good idea. I have traveled this trail several times on my mountain bike from Kittitas to The Cove. Respectfully the connection proposed in Alternative 2 and 3 is profoundly misguided. A road/trail already exists at the south east end of The Cove which connects to the Palouse to Cascade Trail. I know this because I have done it several times. Why in the world would this connection not be use, its more direct, doesn't cross private land and is ALREADY THERE. Alternative 2 and 3 as it relates to The Cove would negatively impact the quite enjoyment of my property and I object to it in the strongest possible terms. ⁸

I support Alternative 3 that allows for existing ORV use to travel through the park. It is important to retain linkages to other adjoining routes and trails. ⁹

Alternative 1: National Heritage Theme - This is the best alternative overall for Ginkgo. Ginkgo is best managed as a natural/heritage area with emphasis on the geological and Native American features that are preserved in the park. However, I think that Recreation Drive should remain open to through traffic for a limited number of LOCAL users, given that access to WDFW lands on the Colockum can be difficult for Vantage hunters to access at certain times of the year. I am a hiker, but can live with a limited amount of traffic on that road.

One of the most vital features of Alternate 1 will be the acquisition of the Stockdale parcel north of Rocky Coulee and the WDFW parcel adjacent to the parcel containing the last remaining standing stone so as to provide a protective buffer from further vandalism at that site.

Alternative 2: Expanded Recreation Theme - No matter what, this alternative needs to include the acquisition of the two parcels mentioned above. I like the idea of linking the Cove with the Palouse to Cascades Trail and shifting management to State Parks. In general, mountain bikes should not be allowed on the sensitive soils of the Park, particularly in their current extremely vulnerable condition due to recent wildfires. If limited trails can be constructed to provide access between the Trailside Museum and the Palouse to Cascades Trail, that would be great.

And no camping north of I-90 other than the PUD boat ramp, please. Campers in the desert seem to be careless of their surroundings and should be confined to waterside areas.

Alternative 3: Trail Emphasis Theme. I'm not in favor of Alternative 3, with its de-emphasis of Natural Area Preserves. Again, the landscape of Ginkgo is highly susceptible to wildfire and associated damage and increasing the density of trails will only exacerbate this problem. The Cove to PtoC connection is a great idea. Recreation Drive access needs to be limited to through traffic for Vantage residents only. ¹⁰