

KLICKITAT CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

SPRING 2010

Central & Eastern Klickitat Conservation Districts

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10th Annual Tree Planting Days for 2nd and 5th graders from Goldendale



Nearly 800 Ponderosa Pines, donated by Central & Eastern Klickitat CDs, were planted by the 2nd and 5th grade classes from Goldendale public schools. Planting was done at the farm of Don and Judy Thomas, who are in the process of reforesting their property.



The districts also provided a classroom presentation for the 2nd graders, and subsidized the students' bus transportation.

Brooks Memorial *District* Park ?

From its 3,000-foot location in the Simcoe Mountains, Brooks Memorial State Park is not only a good base for exploring the Klickitat Valley, but also sights farther south to the Columbia River, west into the untamed Klickitat River region and Mount Adams, and north into the Yakima Indian Reservation and the viticultural lands of the Yakima Valley. This is the dry side of the Cascades, which means hot and dry summers with cool nights. Winters are generally chilly and snowy. Brooks Memorial is open year-round and offers seasonal activities accordingly--hiking the park's trail system in summer, with cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing in the winter.

Acquired in six parcels between 1944 for and dedicated to area citizen Nelson B. cellent community road system, especially The area had been a joint picnic site for the annually held work and planning days and



and 1957, Brooks Memorial State Park is named Brooks, who is credited with establishing an ex-the highway between Goldendale and Toppenish. chambers of commerce from the two towns, who enjoyed a picnic each summer.

Nestled in the lodgepole pine forests Park attracts outdoor enthusiasts seeking round. Here you can wander nine miles of River up through the forests to a breathtaking lookout. From the top, take in the colorful wildflower meadows each spring and panoramic views of Mount Hood in the distance. There will be a variety of wildlife including deer, squirrels and some of the best bird-watching opportunities in the state.

of the Simcoe Mountains, Brooks Memorial State adventure, wildlife and a taste of culture year-hiking trails leading along the Little Klickitat

The close proximity to area points of interest should make people want to set up camp and spend time at popular nearby attractions. Gaze up at the stars in wonder at the Goldendale Observatory. This unique facility caters to the public, providing programs to delight both novice and experienced star gazers. Tour the world-renowned Maryhill Museum overlooking the Columbia River and witness an impressive replica of Stonehenge.

The Park is home to many wildflowers and birds unique to the Northwest, and should provide a good opportunity to draw groups that are interested in viewing these unique species. There are numerous birds present in the Park. Look for all four hummingbirds: Rufous, Anna's, Calliope, and Black-chinned. Check treetops for Western Tanagers and tree trunks for Williamson's Sapsuckers and Pileated Woodpeckers, plus Pygmy, Red- and White-breasted Nuthatches. More forest birds abound: Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkeys, Steller's Jays, Cassin's Vireos, and Mountain Chickadees. There are meadow residents as well: Western Bluebirds, Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Western Wood-Pewees, Pine Siskins. Watch aloft for Vaux's Swift, Red-tailed Hawks, and Bald Eagles.



Brooks Park consists of 700 acres on both sides of Highway 97. Approximately 100 acres are on the west side of the road where the day use picnic area is located. Also on the west side of the road is the RV campground which consists of 23 RV utility sites and 22 tent sites. There are two day use covered kitchen areas and a shower facility. An RV dump station is provided for campers, and is available to travelers for a fee. Across the road is the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) which provides for camping and educational opportunities for groups of up to 100. The large main lodge building contains a commercial kitchen with seating for over 100. There are 4 girls' cabins and 3 boys' A-frame

cabins, with shower facilities for each group. Also on the east side is a group camp with limited facilities, used mainly for tent camping.

In addition to picnickers and travelers stopping at the RV park, many groups from both Klickitat and Yakima Counties have been using the Environmental Learning Center and/or the group campground for years. Church groups, family reunions, and school science camps consider their Brooks Park trips a tradition.

Now the State of Washington is divesting itself of several state parks as part of its effort to reduce the budget deficit, and Brooks is one of those parks. The loss of Brooks as a public park would mean that local patrons would have to travel significantly farther to find a comparable site. For schools in particular, that added expense would likely mean the end of their tradition.

Motivated solely by the desire to make sure that this valuable public natural resource remains available to citizens of and visitors to this area, Central Klickitat CD has stepped forward to accept ownership of Brooks and its operating assets, and continue its operation as a public park.





Before deciding to pursue this action, CKCD solicited input from many groups within Klickitat County, including the Klickitat County Commissioners, Klickitat County Natural Resources, Klickitat County Parks Commission, Washington State Parks, and Back Country Horsemen. A public meeting was held on April 13 at which approximately 30 interested individuals expressed support for the idea, and also concern about the economic feasibility of the project.

CKCD's proposal would expand the use of the ELC, making it available for groups that do not currently use the facility and the acreage around it. This may include adding one A-frame on the boy's side to increase the capacity of the facility. We plan to utilize old roads and unused trails as equestrian, walking and mountain biking trails. Volunteers from Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, Mt Adams Chapter will help with the trail construction. Later, the park will make a perfect stop over for equestrian people traveling Highway 97 to stop and rest or exercise their horses. Highlines or a small corral with campsites will provide overnight accommodations for them.

There are areas on the east side that could potentially be used by stargazers. The clear night sky and no light pollution, combined with excellent camping areas, would be ideal for these groups. A concerted effort will be made to contact these groups and bring them in during spring and summer, and especially during major astrological events.

On the west side of the highway existing trails will be improved, new trails established, and interpretive signs will be installed to point out the various plants, animals or other points of interest along the way. The RV Park will be expanded and improved to include two or three pull-through camp sites.

A great deal of effort will go into marketing the new park to make it better known, and to make passing travelers want to stop. This will be done cooperatively with Klickitat County Economic Development and the Goldendale Chamber of Commerce, among others. Support from many organizations in the County is being sought, and the cooperative efforts by all of these groups will help with name recognition and volunteer assistance. A Brooks Park Benefactor Fund will be established for donations that will provide for funding necessary for park improvements. This will also help make the community feel involved and a part of the park. Local participation in this endeavor is key to its success, and every effort will be made to allow locals the opportunity to feel they are part of this park, either through financial means or volunteerism.



The park will be managed overall by the conservations district's manager, who will be responsible for the daily decisions that will be required. He will be assisted by the administrative assistant for the district, who will be responsible for tracking the financial information and perhaps dealing with reservations. There will be a park ranger, whose responsibility will be on-site to provide maintenance and park supervision to visitors. While he will report directly to the district manager, he will have an important role in determining how the park is managed, and how to increase the revenue potential of the park. The park ranger should be someone with a working knowledge of Brooks Park.

The Board of Supervisors for Central Klickitat Conservation District will have the ultimate decision making power over the direction of the Park. A subcommittee comprised of supervisors and interested community members has been formed to provide input to the board and manager, but the policies and direction will be at the discretion of the five members of the Board of Supervisors.

Based upon financial information provided to us by Washington State Parks, we believe the park under its current configuration can gross approximately \$100,000 to \$110,000 per year. This is below the estimated break even point of \$140,000. By increasing Park utility campsite use from 25% to 40% over the season, standard site use from 11% to 25% the park will generate enough income to break even. By increasing the capacity and use of the ELC at the same time, the park should make money. We estimate it will take 3 to 5 years to make the improvements necessary for the park to be self-sustaining.

CKCD will submit its formal proposal to the Washington State Parks Commission in May of 2010, and expect to have an answer from them by October of this year. For more information, or to volunteer for the Brooks Park committee, call district manager Jim Hill at (509)773-5823 ext. 5, or send an e-mail to cdoffice@gorge.net. You may also view the complete proposal on our web site, ckcd.org.

**Central & Eastern Klickitat
Conservation Districts**

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We're on the Web
ckcd.org / ekcd.org

Conservation * Development * Self-Government

The function of a Conservation District is to take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related resources.

The 2010 plant sale distributed nearly 11,000 plants to 114 customers, including farmers, ranchers, schools, civic groups, homeowners, and contractors. The installation of these plants will benefit Klickitat County in many ways, including, but not limited to:

- Improved soil structure and stability
- Increased water infiltration
- Reduced soil erosion by water and/or wind
- Increase shading of streams, resulting in lower water temperatures and improved fish habitat
- Enhanced habitat for wildlife and birds
- Reduced nutrient, sediment, and chemical runoff into ground- and/or surface water
- Edible berries and nuts for human use
- Improved aesthetics
- Water conservation due to replacement of inappropriate plants with native species
- Increased physical and psychological well-being resulting from fresh air, exercise, and social interaction

Special thanks to Klickitat Valley Grain Growers for letting us use their building on pick-up day!

EQIP: A Prescription for Forest Health

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural and forest producers who face threats to soil, water, air, and other natural resources on their land. NRCS administers the EQIP program with advice from Local Work Groups. The program provides incentives to improve forest stands and treat related natural resources such as forest health, water quality, and wildlife habitat. The program is available to private forest landowners and may be delivered through a partnership with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

EQIP can help you with pre-commercial thinning, slash treatment, site preparation, and tree planting to improve suitable forest stands. Tree planting can also include seedling damage protection and treatment of competing vegetation during the initial establishment phase. Additional incentives will be available to address other resource concerns, such as maintaining wildlife enhancements and reducing erosion.

The deadline to apply for EQIP is July 15th 2010. To apply please contact Sergio Paredes of NRCS at 509-773-5822.

