



Ross Lake National Recreation Area



View of Nohokomeen Glacier from Ross Lake

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to announce that the National Park Service is planning for the future of Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

This year, the National Park Service, together with our visitors, neighbors, and partners, is beginning the process of crafting a vision for the future of Ross Lake National Recreation Area (NRA). This vision will be contained within the form of an updated General Management Plan (GMP) for Ross Lake NRA. The GMP will be a broad-based plan that articulates and charts a course of action for Ross Lake NRA's management for the next fifteen to twenty years.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area is the most accessible part of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex. Ross Lake National Recreation Area protects 118,000 acres, is the corridor for scenic Washington State Route 20, the North Cascades Highway, and includes three reservoirs: Ross Lake, Diablo Lake, and Gorge Lake — water gateways to more remote areas. Ringed by mountains, most of this area is designated wilderness and offers many outdoor recreation opportunities along the upper reaches of the Skagit River, and between the north and south units of North Cascades National Park.

The National Park Service strives to protect Ross Lake NRA's diverse resources and to provide today's visitors and future generations with the opportunity to enjoy those resources. To succeed, we must first have a vision for the future and then plan and act to ensure that our vision is achieved. Towards that goal, we will together explore the following questions, among others:

- What actions must we take to ensure that the natural and cultural resources of Ross Lake NRA are adequately protected and preserved for the future?
- What should we do to make sure that each visitor has the opportunity to learn and understand the purpose and significance of Ross Lake NRA?
- What levels and types of visitor use are appropriate for various areas of Ross Lake NRA?
- How can we work effectively with other interested groups and individuals to protect the resources and increase support for Ross Lake NRA?

We are reaching out for your help and ideas as we develop an updated GMP for Ross Lake NRA. In October 2006, the National Park Service invites you to attend one of the seven workshops being held in the local North Cascades area, British Columbia, and Seattle. We hope you will join us to learn more about the general management planning process and share your ideas, concerns, and thoughts about Ross Lake NRA. I hope you will share in the process of crafting a vision for Ross Lake NRA by attending a planning workshop and/or completing and mailing the enclosed comment form.

Thank you for your help in planning for the future of Ross Lake NRA.

Sincerely,

Bill Paleck
Superintendent, North Cascades National Park Service Complex

You're Invited to a Workshop

- To help launch the planning process
- Learn more about Ross Lake NRA's resources and the GMP
- Discuss your ideas, concerns, and thoughts
- Talk with the planning team

We strongly urge you to attend one of these workshops. Your ideas are important for developing a successful plan. Also, please take your time to fill out the comment form enclosed in this newsletter and mail it by December 30, 2006.

Tuesday, October 17, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Concrete, WA

Concrete Senior Center Multipurpose Room
45821 Railroad Street

Wednesday, October 18, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Marblemount, WA

Marblemount Community Club
60099 State Route 20

Thursday, October 19, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Sedro-Woolley, WA

North Cascades NPS Complex Headquarters Baker and Shuksan Rooms, 810 State Route 20

Monday, October 23, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Bellingham, WA

Bellingham Senior Center Room
16315 Halleck Street

Tuesday, October 24, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Surrey, BC

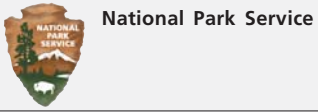
Hosted by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission
Surrey Community Services
9815 - 140th Street

Wednesday, October 25, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Chilliwack, BC

Hosted by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission
Chilliwack Arts Council Lounge
45899 Henderson Ave

Thursday, October 26, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Seattle, WA

Seattle Mountaineers Olympus Room
300 Third Ave West



General Management Plan
Ross Lake National Recreation Area

Contact Information

Address
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA
98284-1239

Telephone
(360) 856-5700

Fax
(360) 856-1934

E-mail
noca_superintendent@nps.gov

Park Website
www.nps.gov/rola

Planning Website
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/rola

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area and North Cascades National Park Service Complex

ROSS LAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA IS ONE management unit of the North Cascades National Park Service (NPS) Complex. The North Cascades NPS Complex is comprised of North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area (NRA), and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (NRA), a complementary suite of protected lands, united by a contiguous wilderness overlay. Combining these three distinct units under a single unique administration recognizes their shared purpose of preserving the core of the greater North Cascades ecosystem and wilderness while also advancing their individual purposes.



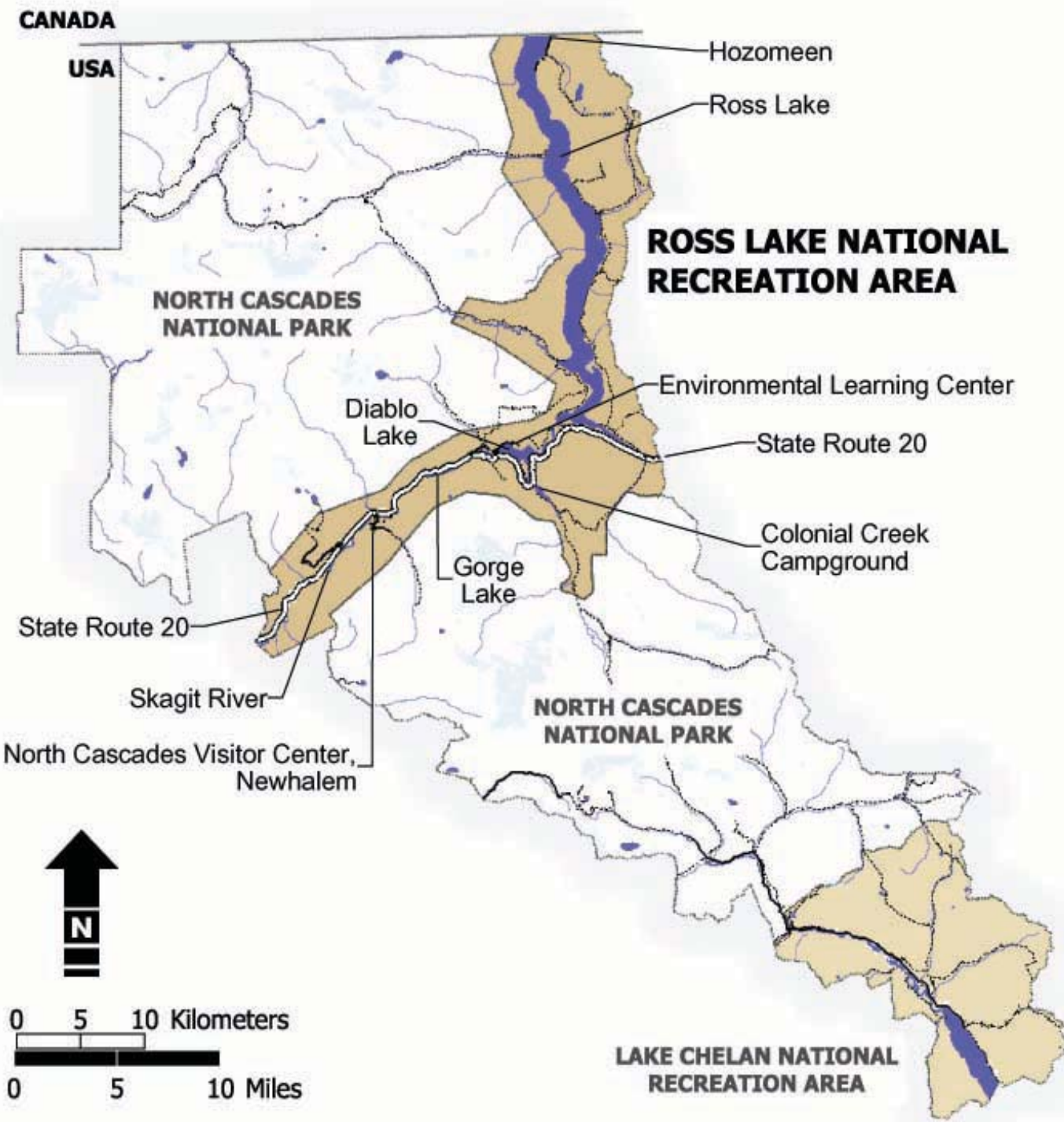
This sign marks an entrance to Ross Lake National Recreation Area and North Cascades National Park Service Complex.



Visitors fish from the accessible fishing dock at Colonial Creek campground.



Hikers along the Thunder Knob hiking trail.



Who will Plan for Ross Lake NRA?

PLANNING FOR ROSS LAKE NRA WILL be conducted by a multidisciplinary team, including park staff and planners from the National Park Service's Seattle office. The team will consult with other knowledgeable people inside and outside the NPS and with the general public.

Public involvement during Ross Lake's general management planning process will help decision-makers learn about the concerns, issues, expectations, and values of visitors, neighbors, and people with traditional cultural ties to the area, interest groups, scientists, scholars, and other government agencies. Through newsletters, public workshops, media releases and other means, the NPS will share information about the planning process and seek to foster consensus for implementing the approved plan among local publics, visitors, Congress, and others.

The general management plan for Ross Lake NRA was initiated in the Fall of 2005. The planning team has developed draft purpose and significance statements and an initial list of issue topics for Ross Lake NRA. We would like your comments on these statements and issues, as well as any additional concerns, issues, and ideas that you might have.

Map of Ross Lake National Recreation Area and the North Cascades National Park Service Complex.

What is a General Management Plan?

A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (GMP) identifies the overall direction for the future management of units of the National Park System. GMPs take a long-range, broad, conceptual view, answering the question, "What kind of place do we want this park to be?" They provide a framework for managers to use in making decisions about how best to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park. All concepts, strategies, and actions in a GMP must be consistent with the unit's establishment – its purpose and significance. The plan looks ahead twenty years and lays the groundwork for more detailed planning and the day-to-day decision making that follows. Providing long-range guidance for NPS managers, the plan also represents an agreement with the American public about how the park lands will be managed in the future.

The general management plan considers the unit as a part of larger ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic systems. This comprehensive approach includes coordination with the park's neighbors, including other open space land managers and neighboring communities, to ensure that the decisions made through this process are widely supported and sustainable over time.

The updated general management plan for Ross Lake NRA will describe the general path that the NPS intends to follow in managing the unit over the next fifteen to twenty years. The plan will identify desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that would be appropriate for each part of the NRA and the strategies for achieving those conditions. It also will

identify general locations where certain types of develop would be appropriate, and other areas where it would not be appropriate. The GMP will not resolve all the issues facing the NRA, provide detailed facility designs and management actions, or guarantee funding. Specific questions regarding how desired conditions will be achieved will be answered in new or revised implementation plans that will be prepared after the GMP is completed.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and NPS policy, the GMP will be combined with an Environmental Impact Statement or an Environmental Assessment. The GMP Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment will identify significant issues and concerns, present a reasonable range of management alternatives. It will also analyze the environmental consequences of each of the alternatives, and select the preferred alternative from among the considered alternatives, which will then become the final GMP.

Purpose of the National Park System
 "To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."
 National Park Service Organic Act,
 August 25, 1916

What Happens Next?

THE NEXT STEP WILL BE THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSSIBLE VISIONS FOR THE future (called alternatives). Evaluating a set of alternatives enables us to compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of one course of action over another and provides a sound approach to decision making, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. We will distribute these alternative concepts for public review and comment in 2007. Based on the analysis of impacts of the alternatives and the comments received, a preferred alternative will be selected. You will also have an opportunity to comment on the preferred alternative, and the other alternatives in the DRAFT General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment.

Ross Lake NRA GMP Schedule

Planning Steps	Date	Public Involvement Opportunities
1 Identify the Planning Context <i>*We are currently in this step</i> Reaffirm the purpose and significance of Ross Lake NRA. Determine issues and concerns, and gather and analyze information.	Fall 2005 to Fall 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a public workshop and provide comments. Read newsletter and send us your comments.
2 Develop and Evaluate Preliminary Alternatives Identify a reasonable range of alternative future conditions and management actions, assess their potential effects, analyze public reactions, and select a preferred alternative.	Winter 2007 to Summer 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read newsletter and send us your comments.
3 Prepare and Publish a Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment GMP/ EIS or EA Prepare draft plan describing the planning context, management alternatives, and impacts. Distribute to the public.	Fall 2007 to Fall 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a public workshop to learn more about the draft plan and provide comments. Read draft plan and send us your comments.
4 Revise and Publish the Final GMP/EIS or EA Analyze comments, revise draft document, and distribute to the public.	Fall 2008 to Fall 2009	
5 Implement the Approved Plan	Fall 2009 and beyond	Stay involved throughout the implementation of the approved plan. Check park website for updates.

Preliminary GMP Issue Topics

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN ISSUES are broad concerns, problems, and questions that need to be addressed in order to accomplish the unit's purpose and to maintain its significance. Since GMPs take a long-range, broad, conceptual view, the issues will be addressed with broad, conceptual solutions and recommendations. The following are examples of major issue categories:

- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Education and Interpretation
- Visitor Experience
- Visitor Use
- Safety
- Access and Roads
- Visitor Facilities
- Relationship of the Park with Partners, Agencies, Tribes and Local Communities

Examples of some preliminary issues identified by the planning team include:

- Management actions and resulting potential impacts for Ross Lake NRA must be considered within the context of North Cascades NPS Complex and how they may affect North Cascades NP and Lake Chelan NRA.
- Approximately 69% of the NRA is designated wilderness. The GMP should address impacts on ecological, scenic, and wilderness values from visitor use and development and population growth in neighboring lands, gateway communities and the region.
- An expected result of the GMP is that it will provide clear guidance for management of visitor use within Ross Lake NRA, including direction on hunting and fishing activities, commercial group use, climbing activities, winter use, use of the drawdown, stock use, extreme sports, and water-based uses.

- Collaborative planning with British Columbia Parks offers an opportunity to discuss cross-border joint management for resource protection, forest health and fires. There are currently conflicting regulations and operations between NPS and British Columbia Parks that should be discussed, including current visitor uses, solid waste management, campground fees,

garbage collection, firewood, and potential future uses.

- There is a concern that development of additional facilities on Ross Lake may change its existing character. Some people want to ensure that the character is not diminished by additional facilities.



Thunder Point campground is one of many boat-in campgrounds at Ross Lake NRA.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

View of Diablo Lake, within Ross Lake NRA

Purpose and Significance of Ross Lake NRA

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR AN area’s management and use and reaffirm the reasons why an area was established as a unit of the National Park System. We reaffirm the purpose and significance statements to establish the framework within which we can evaluate proposed alternatives to ensure that they are consistent with the park’s establishing legislation.

Draft Park Purpose

The park purpose statement clarifies the specific reasons why Ross Lake NRA was established.

The purpose of Ross Lake National Recreation Area is to complement North Cascades National Park and conserve the scenic, natural, and cultural values of the Upper Skagit River Valley and surrounding wilderness, including the hydroelectric reservoirs and associated developments, for outdoor recreation and education.

Draft Park Significance

Park significance statements describe why, within the national, regional, and NPS system-wide context, Ross Lake NRA’s resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation. The significance statements for Ross Lake NRA are:

1. Ross Lake National Recreation Area provides a variety of high quality outdoor recreation opportunities, accommodating people with a wide range of interests and abilities.
2. Ross Lake provides diverse water-based opportunities where visitors can experience the scenic reservoir amidst a mountain wilderness where small or non-motorized watercrafts characterize recreation in this serene setting.
3. The Skagit is the largest river draining into the Puget Sound. Abundant glaciers provide stable flows that help make it the only Puget Sound tributary to host all native species of anadromous fish and one of the highest concentrations of wintering Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states.

Ross Lake NRA is one unit of the North Cascades NPS Complex, and to fulfill its purpose of complementing North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake NRA must also maintain the shared significance of North Cascades NPS Complex. The significance statements for North Cascades NPS Complex are:

1. From deep forested valleys to alpine peaks, the North Cascades NPS Complex encompasses extreme gradients of climate and topography that contributes to an impressive diversity of habitats and species. This area is the core of a vast mountainous ecosystem of protected public lands spanning the border of the United States and Canada. The ecological integrity of the North Cascades NPS Complex and the greater North Cascades ecosystem depend on one another.
2. Envisioned as a wilderness park from its inception, the North Cascades NPS Complex is the core of over 2 million acres of federally designated wilderness, which is one of the largest such areas in the lower 48 states.
3. Preserved within North Cascades NPS Complex is abundant evidence of over 9000 years of cultural and technological development. This long history reveals a range of human adaptations to changing climates and environments at all elevations of the North Cascades.
4. North Cascades NPS Complex provides educational and scientific opportunities that support the understanding and preservation of park resources and values while contributing to public enjoyment and understanding.
5. North Cascades NPS Complex provides the wilderness traveler great challenges of physical endurance, route-finding and navigation through on- and off-trail hiking. The park contains climbing routes of high quality and aesthetic appeal, guarded by remote, rugged access and weather volatility, resulting in mountaineering experiences of solitude, mental and physical challenge and fulfillment.

