

## **Potential State Park Closures Discussed In Montesano**

### **Local News**

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The Washington State Parks and Recreations Department met with nearly 200 concerned citizens Thursday night in Montesano to discuss the state's intentions with Lake Sylvia and Schafer State Park.

Foreseeing a large State budget deficit, the Parks department has been asked to trim ten percent of it's budget, equating to 10 million dollars, State Parks planner Brian Hovis told the crowd "Parks has already cut \$3.5 million out of headquarters and regional office budgets, and it has come down to reducing state parks." The department is also considering extending seasonal closures, and shelving needed repairs. The 3.5 million dollars trimmed so far does not help for the 2009-2011 budget, that covers shortfalls in the Parks department's budget *ending* in 2009.

Hovis, and Regional Director Steve Brand answered hand-written questions after a short presentation on the department's budget. Handouts explained how over 800-thousand dollars in operating expenses would be saved if the state were to either transfer or mothball both Lake Sylvia and Schafer State parks.

Both Hovis and Brand emphasised that the department did not want to be having this conversation, adding that Parks would seek interested local government to take over the parks, and would aim to hand over the parks in as much of a "turn-key" state as possible. When questions were raised as to what if no one wanted the parks, in the example given of Schafer State park where no nearby city would likely support the park, Hovis said the State would likely mothball the park - *but there's a catch*.

Schafer state park was deeded to the State under the condition that it remain a state park, open to the public. in the absence of that stipulation, the State would have to give the park back to the Schafer family, Brand said that the department had spoken with the Schafer family, and said that they did not yet say if they would be interested in taking ownership of the park again. Schafer State park has grown since it was donated by the Schafer family anyway; neaby landowners have also donated, and the Parks department has purchased parcels when the option arose; leaving a patchwork of land that Brand said they "just don't know yet" what will happen.

With many questions left unanswered, Hovis said at the beginning of the meeting that many questions would likely raise more questions, and that Parks staff would be bringing those questions and comments back to the Parks Commission to go over. Hovis said he would make every effort to return answers via email.

Links of interest on this issue:

[\(http://www.parks.wa.gov/newsreleases/\)](http://www.parks.wa.gov/newsreleases/)

**[09-020 State Parks Commission regular meeting in Olympia next week.doc](#)** (49 kb)

-updated: 2/26/2009 5:24:15 PM

[09-014 Public meeting - Lake Sylvia Schafer potential transfers.doc](#) (42 kb)

-updated: 2/18/2009 1:19:19 PM

[09-009 State Parks Commission announces special meeting.doc](#) (43 kb)

-updated: 2/17/2009 4:21:02 PM