

Mt St Helens Advisory Committee

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Draft Recommendations on the Future of the Monument

The congressionally impaneled advisory committee met in an open public retreat session on February 27th & 28th in Longview to work through draft recommendations on the future of the monument. This followed a year of public meetings held in locations throughout SW Washington. These recommendations are designed to be released to the public for public comment before the committee adopts final recommendations for presentation to our Congressional delegation.

The Committee has agreed to the following meeting schedule:

Monday March 30th for Public Comment in Kelso in the Commissioners Hearing Room from 6-9pm.

Monday April 13th for Public Comment in the Camas Police Department Community Room, 2100 NE 3rd St., Camas, WA from 6-9pm.

Thursday May 14th all day at the Cowlitz County Regional Conference Center for drafting final recommendations. Open to the public. No Public Comment.

Comments may also be emailed to SHACComments@co.skamania.wa.us

The draft recommendations are listed as follows:

ACCESS

- *Properly fund maintenance of all trails, roads and facilities*
- *Improve and expand access*
 - *Fund and build 504 all-weather road extension from Coldwater to US12*
 - *Fund and build 503 spur all-weather road from Cougar to Carson*
 - *Upgrade FS Road 25 to all-weather road, Level 5 Standard*

INFRASTRUCTURE

- *Reinvest in Coldwater Ridge as an overnight destination to include science, interpretation, education, visitor services, food and university partnerships*
- *Insure visitor and emergency communication capability around the Monument*
- *Develop and fund an Emergency Response Plan*
- *Provide adequate, non-federal utility service where needed in the Monument*
- *Shift responsibility for the Spirit Lake tunnel to the Corp of Engineers*

RECREATION

- *Recreational opportunities should be broadened to embrace a diverse and responsible use of the forest*
- *Adequately fund and maintain recreational facilities*
- *Create camping facilities using Lower Falls as a template*
- *Recommend more recreational activities including camping and fishing in the Restricted Area that are compatible with the Act by creating a Scientific and Recreational Advisory Committee to vet recreational opportunities and suggestions in the Restricted Area for the managing agency*
- *Designate seasonal recreational activity locations for motorized and non-motorized participants*

CONSERVATION

- *The Restricted Area should be left to unimpeded recovery maintaining the geological and ecological processes as well as the integrity of the features*
- *Visitor impacts and carrying capacity of the Restricted Area will be consistent with the goals of the Act*
- *No road building in the Monument*
- *Support coordinated partnerships with all stakeholders to control invasive species*
- *Maintain habitat protection*
- *Encourage partnerships with voluntary organizations*

SCIENCE

- *Expand science funding with specific emphasis on more direct public education and broader interpretive and applied science programs*
- *Dedicate the Monument Scientist to science*
- *Provide an expanded science experience for visitors*
- *Promote the Monument as a scientific laboratory*
 - *Involve the universities and community colleges*
 - *Develop new technologies*

INDUSTRY

- *Continue to develop relationships with industrial land owners bordering the Monument*
- *Encourage relationships with emerging technologies and industry in remote sensing, robotics, nanotechnology and renewable energy*
- *Create an R&D laboratory setting for technology applications in harsh environments*
- *Continue to address recreation and tourism as industrial components*

TOURISM

- *Develop destination resorts in and around the Monument*
- *Develop a year-round regionally coordinated marketing plan*
- *Fully fund the managing agency's interpretive programs*
- *Develop a regional tourism network (Destination Marketing Organization)*

- *Develop a user-friendly, unified (state and federal) fee system*
- *Develop products and services that will enhance visitors' experience*
- *Establish and fund a Special Use Permit process for the Monument*

MANAGEMENT MODEL

- *Retain Forest Service management*
 - *Create an administrative unit consisting of existing Federal lands west of and including the 25 Road with no expansion of the Monument boundary*
 - *The Monument itself must be a line item funded from the Mandatory portion of the Forest Service budget*
 - *This model should be used as a template for "Special Places" within the National Forest Service system, as the current model has failed*
 - *Require an annual meeting with stakeholder groups*

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WILL BE GIVEN FURTHER CONSIDERATION FOLLOWING PUBLIC COMMENT:

- *Congressional oversight*
- *Ongoing role for the Advisory Committee*
- *Cooperative Agency Status*
- *Partnership agreements with state, local, federal entities and other stakeholders to include an annual meeting*
- *Cooperation of counties on comprehensive planning on private lands adjacent to the Monument*

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