

MISSION CREEK

NEWS

MARCH, 2009



What a winter for beautiful scenery in one of Olympia's newest parks! Mission Creek Park is going through some growing pains. Prior to the Parks

Department establishing the trail network two years ago, there were a handful of regular users. With nearly 17 years of "observational data", we've been totally amazed at the increase since then! Now, those who regularly enjoy the park likely exceed 100 – and growing. Visiting at different times of the day, or living near one of the 5 entrances, you're probably fully aware of how many people, dogs, bikes, and even horses are enjoying the park. The benefits of having a beautiful wild area, with great trails linking different parts of the neighborhood, are obvious and huge. The impacts, however, are also real. Here's what local residents, park users, and scientists are noticing:

- increased garbage, vandalism, graffiti
- wear and tear on trails
- a drop in wildlife sightings
- huge increase in dog poop
- reduced water quality of Mission Creek (fecal bacteria from dog poop)
- aggressive encounters with off-leash dogs

So, how do we preserve what we set out to protect, while accommodating the divergent interests and perspectives of park users under the current Parks Management Plan and rules? The park rules were created to protect both people and the park. A number of these are being violated and are subject to fines. For each of us, some rules are easier to abide by than others. Although individual violations may seem inconsequential, collectively they create problems.

Dogs have become one of the bigger issues the Olympia Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department (OPARD) is responding to these days. There is a strong movement to establish a dog park (or several) within the city parks system, but the current operating parks plan does not address this. Several models for dog parks are being proposed by dog groups and individuals and include everything from fenced ¼ acre parcels to designated (by time, day, or location) off-leash trails at existing parks. But none of these can occur until there is dog park advocacy language in the plan.

This is a good time and opportunity to get involved, send comments to OPARD, or attend a neighborhood meeting with OPARD representatives (place and time TBA). The Parks' Strategic Plan is in the process of being updated. Check their website and watch for city council agendas addressing the issues. Comments can be submitted to:

<http://www.olympiawa.gov/cityservices/par/parplan/>

You can also read the Interim Use Management Plan (IUMP) at:

<http://www.olympiawa.gov/cityservices/par/parks/Mission.htm>

More news! Another exciting opportunity for the neighborhood is the possibility of restoring Mission Creek's status as a salmon stream. Efforts are underway to explore partnerships between the City of Olympia, Port of Olympia, People for Puget Sound, South Sound Salmon Enhancement Group, and others to remove fish blockages and improve water quality.

We're looking into starting a "Friends of Mission Creek" to spearhead and support the many interests in the Mission Creek Watershed. Together we can keep Mission Creek Park's multiple uses compatible, keep the friendly neighborhood spirit, and improve the health of the Mission Creek watershed.

We look forward to working with you, and encourage you to visit the Northeast Neighborhood website at <http://neneighborhood.org/> if you're interested in more information about Mission Creek Park, the Northeast Neighborhood, or helping out during work parties.

So, **THANK YOU** for doing your part by:

- **Picking up after your dog** and disposing of waste either in your home cans or at the San Francisco Street entrance
- Picking up any other garbage you find in your wanderings.
- Carrying clippers now and then to keep the trails open.
- Being good Mission Creek stewards.

Wendy and Tom - In collaboration with the NENA Board.
You can contact us there if you have any questions.