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SPECIAL THANKS - THANK YOU TO ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS, PARK USERS, AND NEIGHBORS FOR DONATING YOUR TIME AND PROVIDING US WITH VALUABLE INPUT NECESSARY TO GUIDE THE FUTURE OF BEAR LAKE REGIONAL PARK
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funding for the Phase I Master Plan + Shoreline Repair Project was awarded by the Board of County Commissioners in July 2021 at the request of Spokane County Parks Department staff seeking to repair eroding sections of shoreline in two designated focus areas. This Phase 1 Master Plan was initiated to help put the necessary design work in context with the surrounding park. Phase I is a first step in the planning process. It establishes a framework for future master planning and will function as a working document.

The Bear Lake Regional Park Phase 1 Master Plan, and future planning phases, rely on conversations and input from the park users who know and love it best, Park Department staff, and regulatory agencies. As additional funding becomes available, the public will again be invited to provide input, information will be added and updated, and the placeholder pages will be replaced by design plans for the remainder of the park.

The plan is organized into three chapters plus appendices.

CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND

This chapter includes preliminary information about the background and history of the park, information about the surrounding context, and the park’s place in the region. During future planning phases, this chapter will be further developed and updated as appropriate.

CHAPTER 2 - SITE ASSESSMENT

This chapter identifies areas for current and future phases of planning, an inventory of existing park features, and a site analysis for each of the two shoreline focus areas. During future planning phases, this chapter will be updated as appropriate and additional site analysis information will be included.

CHAPTER 3 - PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This chapter includes an overview of the public outreach process, Phase 1 Concept Drawings for high-use shoreline areas, opinions of probable cost, and lists of recommendations and pathways for implementing the plan. This chapter will continue to be updated as funding becomes available for future planning and design.

APPENDICES

The appendices contain historical documents, records of public participation, and additional master plan documentation. This is contained in a separate document.

As north Spokane County continues to grow, this document will help provide direction and resources for Bear Lake Regional Park that allow it to adapt to higher use and greater demands.
INTRODUCTION

Bear Lake Regional Park is a popular rural destination for residents living in the City of Spokane and the surrounding area. Community members wishing to dip their toes in a cool lake, hike up ponderosa covered rock outcroppings and join with family and friends for lazy summer afternoon barbecues regularly visit this 166-acre park which offers both forest and lake experiences.

Master planning for Bear Lake Regional Park was originally scheduled to begin in 2023. However, in 2021 it became apparent that some of the heavily used sections of the park need more immediate attention. These areas have been designated as the “East Shore” and “West Shore” shoreline focus areas. Design work in these areas includes replacing the gabion walls and concrete staircases to the water, creating solutions for the human caused erosion on portions of the shorelines, and addressing accessibility. The Phase I Master Plan is being developed in conjunction with design work for the shoreline focus area. This is to help put these areas within their broader context, begin park inventory and assessment, begin public outreach, and set the groundwork for additional master planning. This is a framework document and will be updated and amended during future phases of master planning.

MASTER PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REAFFIRM AND IDENTIFY WHAT BEAR LAKE PARK SHOULD BE, WHAT IT SHOULD NOT BE, AND SET PLANS ACCORDINGLY.

Purpose: Bear Lake Regional Park is used by residents and visitors for a wide variety of activities, including swimming, kayaking, hiking, cross country skiing, weddings, and mountain biking. Historically it was used for ice skating. Plans and designs shall identify and support desirable uses.

THE MASTER PLAN SHALL IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY TO THE PARK AND ITS AMENITIES, FOLLOWING UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES.

Purpose: The park was originally developed in the 1970s with most major improvements to the park taking place prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Therefore, many of the amenities within the park were not designed and built with ADA compliance in mind. The Master Plan should look to improve accessibility throughout the park, but particularly within the core area that includes the beach, day use area.

DESIGN MODIFICATIONS WILL IMPROVE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT ENTRANCES, DESTINATIONS, AND AS PEOPLE MOVE THROUGH THE SITE.

Purpose: It is a goal to enhance people’s experience at the park and showcase its valuable resources without significant additional expense.

PARK IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD MAKE VISIBLY APPARENT, BEAR LAKE’S UNIQUE NATURAL BEAUTY AND WILDLIFE HABITAT.

Purpose: Bear Lake was sold to the County Parks Department so its beauty, wildlife habitat, and unique recreational opportunities could be preserved for future generations. County staff recognizes a responsibility to honor the trust, generosity and vision of the Mast family.

PARK IMPROVEMENTS SHALL BE SUSTAINABLE IN DESIGN, UTILIZE DURABLE AND LASTING MATERIALS, BE EASILY MAINTAINED, AND REASONABLE IN COST TO IMPLEMENT IN PHASES.

Purpose: Spokane County Parks has a limited amount of funding and resources to build, enhance and maintain parks. Proposed park improvements should provide the most “bang for the buck” in light of limited resources available to maintain them.

EVERYONE IS A DESIGNER.

Purpose: Every voice in the design process is important and the special knowledge that each person brings is valuable.

THE MASTER PLAN SHALL CONSIDER AND IDENTIFY LAND ACQUISITION, IF NEEDED, TO ACCOMMODATE AMENITIES / IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE MASTER PLAN.

Purpose: Land acquisition may be an option, if needed, to implement certain elements within the Master Plan. Land acquisitions would need to be negotiated with willing sellers and would require approval by the Board of County Commissioners.
“What a gem for Spokane County to have.”

- Anonymous Comment, Public Pop-Up Event, Sept. 3, 2021

SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND
1.1 - LOCATION

Bear Lake Regional Park is located in Spokane County along SR-2 (Newport Highway). The park is 15 minutes north of the City of Spokane and surrounded by the smaller rural communities of Chattaroy, Colbert, Elk, and the City of Deer Park.
1.2 - NATURAL HISTORY & CONTEXT

Bear Lake Regional Park is located near the center of the Little Spokane Watershed. As such, it’s part of a significant natural system of lakes and drainages that supports a diversity of plant and animal species, as well as recreation opportunities. The spring-fed lake has a surface area of approximately 35 acres. Marshlands are located to the northeast and south sides and the park is heavily scattered with evergreens that cover all but the lake’s south side.
1.3 - ADJACENCIES

Publicly owned Department of Natural Resources property lies to the west of the park. Between these properties is a large privately owned parcel.

The park is bordered on the south side by large lot single family parcels (approx. 2.8 to 4 acres). To the north and west it’s bordered by a large, privately owned parcel, and to the east by N. Newport Hwy. Spokane County owns two parcels on the west side of the highway across from the park.
Bear Lake Regional Park currently serves a wider region than a community park including the Spokane metropolitan area and the more immediate residents of the communities of Chattaroy, Colbert, Elk, and the City of Deer Park. Within this area is the North Metro UGA and North Metro UGA/JPA, both of which are expected to require more community park acreage to meet the County’s Level of Service goals.

The 2020 US Census results show that Spokane County has grown by 68,118 residents, a 14.5% change from 2010. With the US 395-North Spokane Corridor expected to reach completion by 2029, it’s likely that housing development will continue to reach into north Spokane County creating a greater demand for high quality outdoor recreational experiences.

Increased population in these areas will create a need for even more facilities. In addition, existing facilities can expect heavier use. It is important that planning efforts for Bear Lake Regional Park address current site challenges and prepare for increased use by a diverse population looking to access nature close to home.
1.5 - PARK HISTORY

Since its inception as a Spokane County Park in 1974, Bear Lake has offered a wide range of amenities for guests to use including: a playground, restrooms, a horse corral, swim areas, docks and picnic shelters. In addition to these more actively programmed areas, the rural nature of the site invites visitors to interact with nature on wooded trails, lake shores and fields. Early morning mist on the lake welcomes a population more interested in reflection and meditation while guests later in the day play volleyball, throw birthday parties and splash around in the swimming area in a celebration of summer.

In 1897, Christian and Albertina Kuester homesteaded the land which included Bear Lake (formerly known as Kuester Lake). According to family member recollections, the Colville Indians sometimes used the lake as overnight campgrounds on trips between the Colville Indian Reservation and the village of Spokane Falls. The Kuesters first built a small log cabin, then the house that eventually became the caretaker’s residence for Bear Lake Regional Park (the house was demolished in 2018).

For a period of time, the property was operated as a resort area for water-oriented recreation. George and Bernice Mast owned the property between 1955 and 1974. According to a news article in the Spokane County Parks Department files dated 1970, Mast closed the resort because of the high cost of operation and increased vandalism.

In 1974, Spokane County purchased the property from the Masts for $300,000. A fourth of the cost, $75,000, was covered by local funds. A grant from the Federal Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service provided $150,000, with state funds contributing $75,000. At the time of purchase, the park area was approximately 225 acres. This included the currently existing 166 acre park on the west side of the N. Newport Highway, along with approximately 60 acres on the east side of the highway. While a majority of the 60 acres to the east have since been sold, Spokane County still owns approximately 20 acres.

A master plan for the lake was developed in the mid-1970’s that included the entire 225 acre property. Since then, the park has been developed through a combination of public and private sources. HUD, SCS, and CETA programs have provided funding and labor for a water supply system, restrooms, picnic facilities, a perimeter trail, and waterfront improvements.

In 2001, the Parks Department completed timber management plans and replaced roofs on four park structures. During the 2008 Recession, Bear Lake Regional Park was hit heavily by budget cuts. Restrooms were closed and needed repairs and updates were delayed. Spokane County Parks is now investing in a new master plan for the park and embarking on renovations to be phased over several years.
1.6 - PARK SIGNIFICANCE AND USE

Bear Lake Regional Park offers year-round recreational opportunities such as hiking, swimming, fishing (juveniles fishing rules), non-motorized boating, dog walking, bird watching, and cross-country skiing.

The park is especially important to those who are less mobile or more vulnerable. While it’s enjoyed by a wide range of user groups, the park is unusual and especially appreciated for its close-in location, natural character, and ease of accessibility for all ages and abilities.

PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY (WALKING, RUNNING, BIKING AND SWIMMING)

Many park users noted the importance of the relatively level loop path around the lake for exercise. Some were especially interested in ensuring that ADA parking be located near the trail for those who are less mobile or pushing a wheelchair or stroller. Others value the option of being able to drive to the other side of the lake to pick up a friend or loved one who may not be able to do the full loop.

Strava’s Heatmap shows that the loop path around the lake and the service road and trail leading south out of the park onto adjacent privately owned property are likely the most heavily used pathways. Several other walking paths join with internal park pathways along the south and west sides of the property. Strava has also tracked exercises on the water, both swimming and possibly boating. The most heavily used water route is likely swimming between west and east shore areas.

The Strava Global Heatmap shows ‘heat’ made by aggregated, public activities over the last year. The global heatmap on Strava is an interactive data visualization of over 1-billion activities athletes have taken the world over – a claimed 200,000,000 years’ worth of data – where the more popular a route is the brighter it is on the map. Thicker, lighter lines indicate more activities.

This map of Bear Lake is an aggregate of walking, running, cycling, and swimming activities in and around the park and offers valuable insight into uses, access points, and social trails within the park.

FISHING & BOATING ACTIVITY

Bear Lake is a special angling opportunity designated for youth, senior and disabled anglers.

Fish that are self-sustaining at Bear Lake include largemouth bass, yellow perch, and green sunfish. In addition, the lake is stocked annually by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). For example, in 2021 they stocked 1,500 catchable-size rainbow trout (10-11 inches), 1,500 “grow-and-take” size rainbow (7-8 inches), and 375 jumbo-size rainbow (18-22 inches). Channel catfish are stocked when funding allows. Numbers of stocked fish vary and are dependent on availability.

WDFW’s biggest challenge at Bear Lake is reserving fishing for juveniles, seniors, and the disabled, as the rules state. Their enforcement officers visit the lake as often as possible, but many adults that do not fit the rules fish the lake anyway. WDFW has suggested the design plans include places to provide signage around the lake reminding anglers of the rules.

As a small non-motorized lake, Bear Lake is considered by many to be a perfect first paddle for young families and those with disabilities. However, it has been noted that getting even small non-motorized boats to the water can be a challenge. Because there is not a designated loading area, many boaters must carry their craft quite a distance or over sloped terrain to avoid obstructing the ADA parking area.
USE PATTERNS

Spokane County Parks installed a TRAFx Research Ltd. system in 2020 to count vehicle traffic into the park. The numbers shown on the report represent automobiles entering and leaving the park, so the total vehicle count must be divided by two. The counters show that in 2021, an average of 187 automobiles a day entered the park. Visitation was heaviest in June at an average of 351 autos a day, and lightest in December at an average of 68 autos a day.
“Having an area like this close by to enjoy with family and friends, fish & swim is wonderful. The walking opportunity in the park helps my parents stay fit and healthy.”

- Anonymous Comment, Public Pop-Up Event, Sept. 3, 2021
2.1- PLANNING PHASES

KEY MAP

For planning purposes, the park is divided into three major sectors: East Park, West Park, and South Park. These three planning areas were defined based on a variety of factors including landscape character, current uses, and potential future uses. Within East Park and West Park are the two Phase 1 shoreline focus areas called East Shore and West Shore respectively. These subareas are being addressed first as Phase 1 because they are heavily used, and the park features within these areas have reached their end of life. Subsequent phases of the Master Plan will focus on improvements in the remaining sectors. Considerations will be made during future planning phases to explore the potential for uses such as a dog park and campground in South Park.

The Phase 1 Master Plan contains an inventory and analysis of features throughout all planning sectors. Below are general descriptions of the three planning areas:

WEST PARK
The park perimeter trail around this side of the lake is mostly upland with filtered views of the water. This is currently the most active recreation area in the park and includes children’s play equipment, a volleyball court, lawns, picnic areas, and lake access for swimming. This side of the park is bordered on its north and west sides by privately owned property. This undeveloped property helps define the park’s natural wooded character and many park users access the trails on the property (many are likely assuming that this area is part of the park). The County is encouraged to explore the feasibility of acquiring this property to expand the park and public trail system, should it become available for purchase in the future. Phase 1 planning includes the West Shore focus area, a subarea of West Park.

SOUTH PARK
This large, partly wooded area of the park includes a seasonal stream, irrigated former ballfields, and an underutilized horse corral. It’s bordered on the south by a large-lot residential area. Currently, there is not a designated use for this area of the park. The Bear Lake Regional Park Master Plan completed in the mid-1970’s suggests a campground and ballfields. It has also been used as a gathering place for outdoor events and weddings. During this Master Planning effort, suggestions for this area included creating an off-leash dog park.

The graphic to the left will serve as a locator map for inventory, analysis, and design elements in the park throughout the rest of the Master Plan.

EAST PARK
The perimeter trail around the lake hugs the east shore. This relatively narrow landscape between the highway and the lake includes rocky upland woods as well as marshy areas and wildlife habitat. Generally, this area is quieter than the west side of the park and is attractive for fishing, swimming, and launching small, non-motorized boats. Phase 1 planning includes the East Shore focus area, a subarea of East Park.
SYMBOL KEY

- Unofficial trail entrances. Usually gated but may allow motorized access.
- Primary park entrance. Easy to miss at highway speeds. Entry sign is small.
- Primary vehicular circulation. Gravel roads in fair condition.
- Parking areas. Gravel lots need definition, maybe expansion.
- Maintenance areas.
- Primary pedestrian circulation
- Restrooms
- Potential viewpoints

GENERAL PARK ANALYSIS

- Cold Winter Winds: May erode shorelines. Exposed areas have reduced seasonal use.
- Hot Summer Winds: Typical wildfire movement. May carry dust and debris.

18 miles to Diamond Lake
12 miles to Spokane
SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS - PARK WIDE

TRAILS
Numerous wooded and field trails wind their way through the park in various conditions. They show signs of frequent use and offer a more passive experience. These are not considered accessible trails.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: For single-track or double-track trails, these are in good condition. Designating some for accessibility improvements is warranted.

WETLAND AREAS
The northern and southern shorelines of Bear Lake are covered in wetland vegetation, primarily cattail (Typha) species. These are located in fringe areas with shallow water (usually less than 2 feet deep).

- Year Built / Renovated: Not applicable.
- Condition Assessment: Not applicable.

PARKING LOTS
There are five (5) existing gravel parking lots in the park providing roughly 175 parking spaces including designated ADA stalls. There is strong evidence that at peak seasonal use, the number of parking stalls is inadequate.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: The ADA stalls on the west and east sides of the lake may not meet Access Board requirements. These should be graded and paved if necessary.

GRAVEL ROADWAYS
Existing roadways on site are gravel and the conditions of the roads vary throughout the site depending on the amount of traffic. Some sections, such as the roads near the entrance may require some regrading and graveling.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: All roads could use grading and gravel refreshing.

FORESTED AREAS
Much of the park areas surrounding the lake are covered in native forest in a condition similar to that in the "Trails" photo. There is a significant build up of underbrush and ladder fuels in most areas that would make wildfires difficult to contain.

- Year Built / Renovated: Not applicable.
- Condition Assessment: The park should have a forest management plan developed that schedules removal of ladder fuels and heavy underbrush. Certain areas near structures and valuable property should be considered for thinning.
EAST PARK

1. Fishing Dock
2. Unofficial Boat Launch
3. Picnic Shelter
4. NE Restroom
5. SE Restroom
6. Light Pole w/ Electrical Receptacle
7. Steel Phone Box with Door (No Phone)
8. Horse Shoes
9. Gabion Bank Stabilization
10. Gravel Road
11. Concrete Stairs N
12. Concrete Stairs S
13. Gravel Parking Lot
14. Vehicular Gate
15. Vehicular Gate
16. Boulder In Path
17. Bench
18. Wood Rail Fence
19. Asphalt Path
20. Single-track Dirt Trail
21. Wetland Vegetation
22. Native Forested Area
23. Maintenance Storage Area
24. Gravel Turnaround
25. Dirt Road / Trail
26. Swim and Fishing Area
27. Septic Leach Field
28. Hilltop Viewpoint
29. Forested Areas
30. Accessible Parking Spaces
31. Boulders
32. Wood Bear Statue
Bear Lake offers accessible shoreline fishing following juvenile fishing rules: only juveniles (under age 15), senior anglers, or anglers with a disability who have a designated harvester companion card may fish in this lake. Largemouth bass, perch and rainbow trout (which are stocked annually) provide a variety of fishing experiences.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** The dock materials are in good condition. The design is narrow making access difficult in wheelchairs. It is currently located in shallow water making it less than ideal for fishing.

Despite the lack of a boat launch visitors keen to take to the water walk their vessels down to the shore and manually launch. An unofficial boat staging area is located to the south of the existing fishing dock located on the eastern shoreline of Bear Lake. An additional access point is located along the northwest shore, close to the designated swim area which has led to slope destabilization.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** Not Applicable
- **Condition Assessment:** Shore boat launching has eroded the shoreline from over use. The current east side location does not have a large beach to safely stage and launch multiple boats between the path and water.

Near the existing fishing dock this picnic shelter offers a quieter picnic experience for visitors to Bear Lake than the west side shade structure. Picnic tables, bench seating and a barbecue in the center of the structure invite people to relax and enjoy each other’s company. Access to this location is awkward and the shelter has poor views of the lake.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1976-1977
- **Condition Assessment:** The picnic shelter is in good shape and does not appear to need significant repairs.

Gabion baskets are in poor condition with tops that are typically exposed where the landscape fabric has pulled back exposing wire. Wood plank edging is attached to gabions in some locations but no longer serve any purpose due to erosion of lawn area on gabion tops. This is creating a hazardous condition due to exposed wire baskets.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1991-1922
- **Condition Assessment:** The gabions are collapsing and need removed or replaced.
KEY NOTES

EXISTING RESTROOM
- Wood framed construction, designed in 1970's or 1980's
- Plumbed for water and septic
- Separated men's and women's facilities, no family separated facility
- Restroom is usable with only minor repairs and cosmetic work needed
- South side of southern building is used for informational signage

EXISTING SHADE STRUCTURE
- Wood/timber framed construction
- Masonry (fireplace style) BBQ with (2) cooking stations. Steel cooking surfaces should be replaced due to heat warping
- Basalt rock facade and fire brick repairs are needed on body of BBQ
- (1) permanent bench, other amenities are movable

TYPICAL SITE AMENITIES
- movable wood picnic tables and steel trash receptacles

ASPHALT PATHWAY
- Condition of asphalt varies, majority is sound with areas in need of repair

GABION BANK STABILIZATION
- Gabion baskets are in good condition but tops are typically exposed where landscape fabric has pulled back exposing wire
- Wood plank edging is attached to gabions in some locations but is not serving any purpose due to erosion of lawn area on gabion tops
- Hazardous conditions include exposed wire baskets, tripping hazards

OPEN LAWN AREA
- Lawn areas is non-irrigated resulting in brownout as season progresses
- Area often used as a boat staging area

EXISTING SWIM AREA
- Swim area is located at the wide flat area between the existing asphalt pathway and the lake edge
- Water access is limited by current bank stabilization (gabion walls)
- No accessible water access is provided

EXISTING BOAT LAUNCH AREA
- Existing launch area is closest lake bank to parking lot
- Current boat launching conflicts with fishing activities
SITE ANALYSIS - EAST PARK

TO BE COMPLETED IN PHASE 2
WEST LAKE
33. Restroom
34. Play Area w/Equipment
35. Sand Volleyball
36. Horse Shoes
37. Picnic Shelter
38. Swimming Area
39. Lake Access Wood Stair
40. Steel Stair for Water Access
41. Accessible Parking
42. Chain Link Fence
43. Vehicle Gate
44. Gravel Road
45. Beach Erosion Area
46. Gabion Bank Stabilization
47. Manhole
48. Single-track Dirt Trail
49. Bench
50. Fishing Access Trail to Lake
51. Abandoned Dirt Road
52. Wood Rail Fence
53. Boulders
54. Picnic Area with Tables and BBQs
55. Gravel Parking Lot
56. Asphalt Path
SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS - WEST PARK

**ASPHALT PATH - EAST SIDE**
The asphalt path condition varies with a several portions of the path needing repair due to root heave.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1978-1982
- **Condition Assessment:** A portion of the path is being replaced north of the north restroom. The remaining cracked and heaved portions on east side of lake also need repair or replacement.

**SWIMMING AREA**
A designated swim area along the northwest shore provides access to swimmers interested in splashing around or swimming laps and from the northeastern shore. Three sets of steel stairs provide access to the swimming area with a slope retained by gabion walls. However, landscape fabric on the top of the walls has pull back from wires and created tripping hazards. No accessible water access is provided.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1976-1977
- **Condition Assessment:** The swimming area could use additional amenities such as a buoy line and swim dock.

**WOOD STAIR**
These wooden stairs on the northwest edge of the shoreline provide access from the asphalt trail down to the water. The stairs are in good condition.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** These stairs are in fair condition and do not appear to need immediate repair.

**PLAYGROUND**
A playground structure replete with slides and climbing features is located on the northwest side of the lake near the swim area and a picnic shelter. The playground equipment appears in good condition.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1987
- **Condition Assessment:** Wood fiber fall zone material needs replenish and/or raking daily to ensure proper depths for safety.

**PICNIC AREAS**
Tree shaded open lawn areas along the northwestern shoreline offer views of the swimming and play areas. Amenities such as picnic tables, BBQ grills and trash receptacles are placed throughout the west side of the lake to accommodate users.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** These areas are under irrigated, resulting in scorched, brown lawn. A regular lawn and irrigation maintenance regime is warranted.

**VOLLEYBALL COURT**
Nothing says summer like a game of beach volleyball. This sand volleyball court located near the playground, swimming and picnic areas will tempt you to re-enact the Top Gun volleyball scene.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1974
- **Condition Assessment:** Poles, net, and sand field appear in good condition.
HORSESHOE PIT
A horseshoe pit is located south of the playground in the west park area. The pit appears to be infrequently used and may not be an attractive element in this area of the park.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: the pits are in fair condition, but appear there is little interest here for them. Perhaps they would see more use near the corral.

PICNIC SHELTER
A small picnic shelter is located in close proximity to the swimming area and playground offering a shady place to rest. Picnic tables and a barbecue grill are perfect for hosting birthday parties on hot summer afternoons! This shelter can be reserved on the County Parks website.

- Year Built / Renovated: 1982-1983
- Condition Assessment: The structure appears to be in good repair. More lighting underneath would extend the time of use and increase safety around the shelter.

RESTROOM
The west park area is served with one restroom located between the parking lot and swimming area. This building is larger than the restrooms on the east side of the lake.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: the building is currently closed, apparently as there is no septic field available. Sewage is pumped to a holding tank that needs to be emptied periodically. With shrinking maintenance budgets this is no longer possible.

GABION WALL
Gabion baskets are in poor condition with tops that are exposed in several locations where the landscape fabric has pulled back exposing wire. Wood plank edging is attached to gabions in most locations due to erosion of lawn area on gabion tops. This is creating a hazardous condition due to exposed wire baskets.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: As noted above. These gabions need removed and replaced, or a different beach option investigated.

ASPHALT PATH
The asphalt loop path around the lake continues on the west side. The path is only near the lake on the northern half of this side. Other areas wind through the picnic lawn and through wooded areas offering a different experience.

- Year Built / Renovated:
- Condition Assessment: The condition of the asphalt pathways varies with certain areas in need of repair.
**KEY NOTES**

**EXISTING RESTROOM**
- Wood framed construction, designed in 1980’s
- Plumbed for water and septic (to storage tanks)
- Restroom requires septic truck to pump waste from tanks. Restroom has not been pumped out for several years. Currently closed and a portable toilet has been installed
- Building is in need of some siding repair and cosmetic upgrades
- West side of building is used for informational signage

**EXISTING SHADE STRUCTURE**
- Wood/timber framed construction, self standing
- Steel BBQ outside structure overhead cover
- Picnic tables and trash receptacles are movable
- Concrete pad floor is in good condition

**TYPICAL SITE AMENITIES**
- Movable steel top/framed picnic tables
- Movable steel trash receptacles
- Permanent wood topped picnic tables on concrete pad
- Permanent self standing steel BBQ

**ASPHALT PATHWAY**
- Condition of asphalt varies, majority is sound with some areas in need of repair

**GABION BANK STABILIZATION**
- Gabion baskets are in good condition but tops are typically exposed where landscape fabric has pulled back exposing wire
- Gabion edging is attached to the leading edge of gabions for lawn soil retention on gabion tops
- Hazardous conditions include exposed wire baskets, tripping hazards.

**OPEN LAWN AREA**
- Lawn is non-irrigated due to non-operating quick couplers resulting in brownout as season progresses

**EXISTING SWIM AREA**
- Swim area is located at the widest flat area between the existing asphalt pathway and the lake edge with the least vegetation/easiest access to the water
- Water access is limited by current bank stabilization (gabion walls)
- No accessible water access is provided
- Area has shade tree coverage and picnic lawn area with permanent picnic tables and BBQ units
- Lake views from some locations are compromised by vegetation between lawn area and lake edge

**STEEL STAIR FOR WATER ACCESS**
- Stair includes concrete pad at top landing and aggressive tread (tough on bare feet)

**EXISTING ACCESSIBLE PARKING**
- Current ADA parking does not comply with surfacing and slope requirements

**EXISTING SWIM LAWN AREA**
- Lawn is non-irrigated resulting in brownout as season progresses
SITE INVENTORY - SOUTH PARK

SOUTH PARK
57 Undisturbed Riparian Habitat
58 Bench
59 Boulders at Road Corridor
60 Utility Corridor
61 Restroom
62 Park Entrance Booth
63 Park Information Sign
64 Park Entry Signage
65 Open Lawn Area
66 Horse Corral
67 Asphalt Poth
68 Well House
69 Native Forested Area
70 Gravel Parking Lot
71 Trail to Cottonwood Road
72 Gravel Road
73 Drinking Fountain
74 Bear Lake Main Gate
75 Single Track Dirt Trail
76 Gravel Service Road Gate
77 Gravel Service Road
78 Split Rail Fence at Entrance
79 Slash Pile & Burn Pit
80 Highway Sign
81 Stream Bed
82 Vehicle Gate
83 Septic Leach Field
84 Wood Rail Fence
85 Prairie Meadow Area
86 Culvert
87 Asphalt Paving
The existing interpretive billboard is in good condition. Relocation should be considered during a future planning phase to enhance views of the lake and enhance the visitor arrival experience.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 2011
- **Condition Assessment:** This sign is in good condition but should be relocated.

This open lawn area, which was previously a softball field, is now used mostly for unscheduled summer sports and dog training.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** The lawn is in good condition and is being properly irrigated.

The horse corral is tucked in the south end of the south park area. Barrels and pole are located in the corral for training.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** The fences and gates of this horse corral appear to be in good condition, however the amenity is being underutilized due to the condition of the access road.

This concrete masonry unit constructed restroom is in good condition. Located south of the lake this fully accessible men’s and women’s restroom serves the southern half of the park site.

- **Year Built / Renovated:**
- **Condition Assessment:** The building appears to be in fair condition.

This building is located off the beaten path, on the edge of a native forest. Wood siding and a shake roof are deteriorating.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** Pre-1974
- **Condition Assessment:** This building should be considered for replacement with a pre-fabricated concrete structure.

This old entry booth has the nostalgic feel of state and national parks. If day use fees were ever needed, this structure could see use again.

- **Year Built / Renovated:** 1976-1977
- **Condition Assessment:** This building is in need of masonry, siding and roofing repairs. The existing entry sign is located on the park entrance building.
“Please take time to enjoy a walk around this gem. You will then, and only then, be able to appreciate just how important it is to all who are able to come here. Sit and watch the many different people enjoy their time here. From the youngest to the oldest! It deserves our very best care from us.”

- Anonymous Comment, Public Pop-Up Event, Sept. 3, 2021
3.1 - PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

Public input is critical to the success of any park planning effort. During the development of the shoreline repair designs and the Phase 1 Master Plan, the public was engaged on a regular basis to gain their suggestions and feedback. Agencies with jurisdiction and stakeholders were also engaged throughout the design process. Public outreach will continue to be an integral part of future planning phases and a summary of the process and key findings will be included in this section. Whereas, more information about the public outreach process and early design concepts may be found in the appendices.

PHASE 1 MASTER PLAN - EAST SHORE & WEST SHORE

The public outreach process was facilitated by Parks Department staff and organized by three key points in the design process as follows:

a. Pre-design,
b. 15% Shoreline Repair Concept Alternatives, and
c. 30% Shoreline Repair Preferred Concepts (final comment period).

Opportunities for input were advertised on Facebook, Instagram, and the Spokane County project webpage. In addition, Parks Department staff provided notification by e-mail to those who provided their e-mail address.

The following paragraphs summarize the outreach process at each of these phases, along with key findings that helped guide the design process. More detailed summaries and records of the outreach process for Phase 1 may be found in Appendix A.

PRE-DESIGN

The outreach process began at the pre-design phase in an effort to learn more about what people value about the park as a whole, how they recreate in the park and designated shoreline focus areas, and what issues Parks Department Staff should be aware of while planning for the park. The first step in the process was to create a new webpage on the County’s website to share information about the project. Next, input was gathered through e-mail, phone conversations, written comments, and surveys as outlined below:

- Project webpage posted on Spokane County’s website, August 2, 2021,
- Stakeholder Agencies and Organizations Outreach, beginning August 24, 2021,
- Pre-Design “Visions & Values” Public Pop-Up Event at Bear Lake Regional Park, September 3, 2021, and
PRE-DESIGN KEY FINDINGS

Values
When participants were asked what they value most about Bear Lake Regional Park, many offered a form of the words quiet, nature, hiking, and beauty. In addition, we learned that many people visit the park to experience nature and the opportunity to see wildlife. The park’s easy accessibility, especially for those who are disabled, is another reason people enjoy visiting.

Recreation
Walking in various forms (e.g. walking, hiking, jogging, dog walking, pushing a stroller) appears to be the top recreational opportunity. Viewing wildlife, paddling, fishing, and swimming are also popular.

Amenities
Desired amenities to support these activities include benches with a view, improved accessible parking facilities, an enhanced boat launch facility, improved fishing docks, swim beaches and docks, picnic areas, and an off-leash area for dogs.

Other Comments and Suggestions
- Re-open the bathroom facilities on the west side.
- Provide a rinse off station for swimmers.
- Irrigate the lawn on the west side picnic area.
- Provide pet waste bags on the trails and heavily used areas to encourage people to clean up after their pets.
- The south field would be a good place for an off-leash dog park.
- Speeding bikers, and especially e-bikes, have created conflicts with other users on the park’s narrow trail system. This includes an e-bike striking a toddler on a tricycle.
- Consider a life jacket loaner station.
- The lake should remain non-motorized.
- If the existing dock is moved it should be positioned in deeper water than it is now.
- It would be wonderful to have at least two places on the west side that accommodate disabled anglers.
- Install fishing gear waste receptacles to clean up monofilament fishing line and hooks.
- Fishing regulations are not enforced, and many who do not fit the rules fish the lake anyway.
- Additional locations for fishing regulation signage are needed.
- Underage alcohol consumption, littering, and loud music are sometimes an issue, especially on weekends.
- Some park visitors help care for the park by picking up litter and helping note improper uses.

The information that was shared by various park visitors helped the design team set initial goals for the East Shore and West Shore focus areas. This includes accommodating as many compatible uses as possible, while recognizing the importance of maintaining the valued natural setting. The focus in the Phase 1 Shoreline Focus Areas will be on enhancing universal access between parking areas and the water for walkers, swimmers, non-motorized boaters, and fishermen. Mitigation measures will be incorporated to help improve water quality, wildlife habitat, and enhance the natural setting. Other suggestions will be considered as the design is developed. It should also be noted that although not all desired uses will be accommodated in Phase 1, they will be evaluated for inclusion during future planning phases.
1. How long is your travel time to visit Bear Lake Regional Park?

- Under 10 minutes: 42%
- 10-20 minutes: 11%
- 20-30 minutes: 16%
- 30-40 minutes: 16%
- Over 40 minutes: 16%

2. Which county do you live in?

- Spokane County: 79%
- Pend Oreille County: 21%

3. Which of the following best describes your situation?

- Under 18 years old: 5%
- Single or married adult, no kids: 37%
- Parent / guardian with older kids (14-19+ years old): 16%
- Retired / “empty nester”: 42%

4. How often do you visit Bear Lake Regional Park?

- Weekly / several times a week: 47%
- Several times a month: 5%
- Several times a year: 32%
- Every few years: 16%

5. What did we miss? Is there anything else you would like us to consider as we work to design enhancements at Bear Lake Regional Park?

- premature: 3%
- beautiful: 3%
- consideration: 3%
- barrels: 3%
- park: 3%
- side: 3%
- making: 3%
- dog: 3%
- lake: 3%
- beaches: 3%
- people: 3%
- considerations: 3%
- bathhouses: 3%
- beautiful: 3%
- beneficial: 3%
- care: 3%
- closed: 3%
- accommodations: 3%
- counties: 3%
- costs: 3%
- improvement: 3%
During this design phase, two concept alternatives were presented for the East Shore, and two for the West Shore in the form of a public survey. In addition, preliminary outreach to permitting agencies began during this period. The survey was an opportunity to continue learning more about how people would like to use the shoreline areas and what facilities are desired to support those activities. In addition, the public was invited to share what they liked or did not like about each of the concept alternatives.

**KEY FINDINGS**

**East Shore Concept Alternatives A and B.**

There did not appear to be a clear preference between the two concepts. But, reactions to specific features indicated support for two features as shown on Concept A; 1) a larger contiguous sandy beach on the north side, and 2) a new fishing dock further north to replace the existing fishing dock.

**West Shore Concept Alternatives C and D.**

Similar to the east side, there did not appear to be a clear preference between these two concepts. However, reactions to specific features indicated support for the swimming and beach areas shown on Concept C and the fishing dock shown on Concept D.

With consideration for the input provided, the design team developed one preferred alternative for each shoreline focus area.
During this design phase, an introduction to the draft master plan was posted online, and the public was invited to comment on the Draft East Shore Design Concept, and the Draft West Shore Design Concept. Discussions continued with agency staff and project stakeholders throughout this phase.

**East Shore Draft Concept Design**

The design considers public input received on Eastside Concepts A & B as outlined in the previous section. It includes the following features:

- A contiguous sandy beach on the north side,
- Replacement of the existing fishing dock with a new deep-water fishing pier,
- A non-motorized boat launch area with an automobile turnaround to make it easier for boaters to drop a small craft then park in one of the designated parking areas,
- Expanded ADA parking facilities,
- A new, large picnic shelter at the top of the hill overlooking the lake to take advantage of views (the existing shelter will be removed to make room for the automobile turnaround), and
- Native plantings.

**West Shore Draft Concept Design**

The concept alternative for the West Shore considers public input received on Westside Concepts C & D as outlined in the previous section. It includes the following features:

- Expanded swimming and beach areas,
- Shaded areas for picnic tables and lawn (the design team will work around existing trees where possible),
- Two new fishing piers,
- Improved accessible parking areas and pathways,
- A septic leachfield so the restroom facility can be re-opened, and
- Native plantings.

**KEY FINDINGS**

Many respondents shared suggestions for functional improvements to better serve the public and protect the park from unwanted activities. The full comments are included in the Appendix and all comments, along with input from permitting agencies and Park Operations, were given careful consideration by the design team prior to moving forward to 60% design documents.

**OTHER PUBLIC INPUT**

**SPECIAL EVENT & VISITOR SURVEY, 2017-2019**

This survey for park visitors who rented a shelter shows that the top suggestion, at 71%, was to improve the restroom facilities. Tied for second at 23.8% each were suggestions to provide electricity and increase trash services.
KEY FINDINGS - WEST PARK

RESERVED FOR FUTURE PUBLIC OUTREACH
DESIGN PROCESS SUMMARY
The first phase of the master plan focuses on the two areas called East Shore and West Shore. Preliminary design of these improvement areas was completed during the summer and fall of 2021 by:
- Establishing opportunities and constraints derived in the Inventory and Analysis process,
- Reviewing initial public input on the park as a whole and shorelines in particular,
- Preparing alternative shoreline area concept designs for review and comment by the public, permitting agency representatives, and Parks staff, and
- Refining concept alternatives into preferred concepts.

Preferred concepts were then evaluated in winter of 2021 and presented to the public in January of 2022 in the form of 30% Construction Documents to gather additional feedback.
RESERVED FOR FUTURE MASTER PLAN PHASES

WEST PARK
EAST PARK
SOUTH PARK
3.3 - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**PHASE 1 SHORELINES - PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

The proposed improvements listed below encompass the preferred design concepts for the shoreline activity areas at Bear Lake Park. Elements of the design concepts are divided into seven projects for each shoreline area and are listed in the priority they should be accomplished if annual construction budgets are limited.

**WEST SHORE**
1. Demolish gabion retaining walls and construct sand beaches with boulder seat walls and stairs.
2. Install mitigation plantings and begin monitoring periods.
3. Construct new concrete ADA parking stalls and accessible route pathways to playground, beach, and water.
4. Repair damaged / deteriorated portions of the asphalt loop path.
5. Install split rail fencing.
6. Construct new septic leach field and complete any repairs necessary to reopen the restrooms.
7. Construct fishing piers and swim platform.
8. Repair and improve turf irrigation system.

**EAST SHORE**
1. Demolish gabion retaining walls and construct sand beaches with boulder seat walls and stairs.
2. Install mitigation plantings, split rail protection fencing, and begin monitoring periods.
3. Construct new loop and drop off, concrete ADA parking stalls, and accessible route pathways to the loop pathway and water.
4. Install new picnic shelter and construct new ADA parking stalls near the shelter.
5. Remove existing dock and construct new fishing pier.
6. Repair damaged / deteriorated portions of the asphalt loop path.
7. Renovate restrooms.

**PHASE 1 SHORELINES - PRIORITY PLAN BUDGETS**

**Estimated Construction 2023 - 2026**

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Estimated Construction 2023 - 2026
RESERVED FOR FUTURE MASTER PLAN PHASES

WEST PARK
EAST PARK
SOUTH PARK
RESERVED FOR FUTURE MASTER PLAN PHASES

WEST PARK
EAST PARK
SOUTH PARK
RESERVED FOR FUTURE MASTER PLAN PHASES

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