Foundation Document Overview
Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area
Washington

Purpose

The purpose of LAKE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL RECREATION AREA is to protect, conserve, and preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Upper Columbia River Basin behind Grand Coulee Dam and provide for appropriate diverse recreation opportunities.

Significance

Significance statements express why Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, which includes some of the most publicly accessible shoreline in the Pacific Northwest, offers a wide range of visitor experiences and appropriate recreational opportunities.

- Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area is located within two distinct geologic provinces—the Okanogan Highlands and the Columbia Plateau—and is an outstanding and easily accessible landscape sculpted by a rare combination of sequential geologic processes: volcanism, collision of tectonic plates, continental glaciation, and cataclysmic ice age floods.

- Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area is located at a historic convergence point for numerous Pacific Northwest tribes and contains a central gathering place in their traditional homeland, including the site of the second-largest prehistoric and historic Native American fishery on the Columbia River.

- Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area protects prominent resources that highlight the direct impacts of development—from westward expansion through the New Deal—on Native Americans and other communities and is the only NPS site that preserves and interprets an early 20th-century Indian boarding school.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

Lake Roosevelt – The reservoir formed by Grand Coulee Dam extends more than 130 miles along the Columbia River and includes other tributaries, as well as a variety of geologic features and native vegetation and wildlife communities. Lake Roosevelt is a popular attraction because of its size, the beauty of its scenery, its location in relation to population centers, and public accessibility.

Public Shoreline – Visitors have access to more than 300 miles of publicly accessible shoreline in the recreation zone managed by the National Park Service. The shoreline and adjacent land provide a variety of visitor opportunities, including camping, wildlife viewing, and stargazing, and serve as launch points for activities on the lake such as boating, fishing, and swimming.

High-Quality Recreational Opportunities – The NPS recreational infrastructure at Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area is managed to provide appropriate and high-quality visitor opportunities that serve diverse interests and abilities. Opportunities range from solitude on remote stretches of the lake to group and family recreational activities.

Fort Spokane Complex – Strategically located at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers, Fort Spokane represents three important facets of westward expansion history: a military fort, an Indian boarding school, and a tuberculosis sanitarium.

Archeological Sites and Ethnographic Resources at Kettle Falls – Through its establishment and management, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area protects archeological sites and ethnographic resources associated with enduring human interactions with the Columbia River and surrounding landscape, including traditional villages and gathering locations, Old Fort Colville, Mission Point, the Kettle Falls Archeological District, and other submerged sites up and down the lake.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The immense size and scenic qualities of Lake Roosevelt offer a rich variety of opportunities to safely recreate on its resources.

- The layers and landscapes of the Lake Roosevelt area show the geologic forces that shaped the scenery: changes that happened through gradual uplift, volcanism, erosion, and—occasionally—in sudden cataclysmic events.

- Lake Roosevelt marks a transition zone between the desert-like Columbia Basin to the south and the slightly wetter Okanogan Highlands to the north.

- Human beings have been living along the Columbia River in the Lake Roosevelt area since the end of the last ice age, about 12,000 years ago.

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, the largest reservoir in the Pacific Northwest, stretches over 133 miles from Grand Coulee Dam to just south of the US-Canada border. The park manages more than 300 miles of publicly accessible shoreline, providing visitor opportunities ranging from solitude to group activities, including boating, fishing, camping, picnicking, and sightseeing.

Before impoundment of the Columbia River, Native Americans fished, hunted, and lived in the Upper Columbia River Basin. Life began to change in the early 1800s as different cultures arrived—fur traders, missionaries, settlers, and soldiers. Dam construction, completed in 1941, resulted in the loss of life-sustaining fisheries, changing the cultural, spiritual, and economic lives of the Colville and Spokane tribes.

In 1946 the Secretary of the Interior approved an agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation, the Office of Indian Affairs (now Bureau of Indian Affairs), and the National Park Service. The National Park Service was designated as the manager for Coulee Dam National Recreation Area. The name of the area was changed in 1997 to Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area.

The 1990 Lake Roosevelt Cooperative Management Agreement, or "five-party agreement," replaced the 1946 agreement and detailed responsibilities for the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians. It identified a "reclamation zone," a "recreation zone," and a "reservation zone," which defined management jurisdictions for each agency, but not land ownership. The National Park Service manages the recreation zone, subject to authorities of the Bureau of Reclamation required to carry out the purposes of the Columbia Basin Project.

In addition to the management of Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, the park leads coordination efforts among the partner-based Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail. Congress established the trail in 2009 to commemorate the dramatic series of floods, which occurred at the end of the last Ice Age (approximately 12,000 to 17,000 years ago) and left their mark on large portions of the regional landscape in what are now the states of Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.