



Tree Removals Along South Hill Bluff: Update

January 12, 2018

www.SpokaneParks.org/Bluff-Restoration

Purchase of Private Property on the Bluff

- The Park Board unanimously authorized purchase of 50 acres of private property along the bluff as part of a settlement agreement related to the 2017 illegal road building.
- Parks and Recreation has long desired to obtain the property to allow for trail connectivity, increased recreational opportunities, and conservation of natural spaces.
- The City's 20-year comprehensive plan also indicates a desire to obtain ownership because of its obstruction to popular trail connectivity amidst 500 acres of conservation land.
- If the agreement is finalized, the land will be purchased for \$270,000, nearly 50% below appraised value (\$480,000) and below the first settlement offer.
- As part of the agreement, the City will release claims it might have against all parties.
- The land purchase is an opportunity to find a long-term positive solution.

Restoration

- Avista led the restoration efforts, with erosion prevention measures and the planting of native trees and shrubs in the summer of 2017. Their investment in restoration was about \$200,000.
- Friends of the Bluff helped manually water the new plantings.
- Thank you to members of and contributors to the restoration workgroup: Avista, Parks, The First Tee of the Inland Northwest, WA Department of Ecology, Land Expressions, Anderson Environmental, Friends of the Bluff, Comstock Neighborhood Council, Spokane River Forum and Spokane Riverkeeper, representatives of land owner R. Bracher, and open house participants.
- The restoration has been highly successful. Monitoring is ongoing, and re-seeding will take place as needed.

Process Improvements

- Parks has improved the tree permit process.
- Parks & Recreation will be filling some key management positions in 2018 that will bring a greater focus on the over 2,000 acres of natural areas in the Parks system, like the bluff.
- Parks will also more closely monitor the activities and plans of partnering organizations.

Overview of April 2017 events

- April 10 and 11, 2017 a contractor built a road and removed trees on Parks conservation land along the bluff on the south hill (below Bernard and north along the bank of Latah Creek), adjacent to and across an Avista utility easement corridor, and on private property.
- There was an apparent misunderstanding regarding the authorization of construction of the access road and tree removal. The City didn't receive a request or authorize a permit for this work, which would have involved property designated as conservation land.
- Read more details [here](#).