

## WSGA Announces Park Liaison Program

The Washington State Geocaching Association ([WSGA](#)) is pleased to announce the **Park Liaison Program** (PLP), in which a WSGA member is paired with a park system to collaborate on geocaching activities. As geocaching celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, parks recognize that it's a popular, family-oriented activity, and are looking for ways to support it with limited staff and resources. The PLP helps parks embrace geocaching without compromising their goals or adding to their overhead.

The Park Liaison Program is another way in which WSGA is working with Washington parks at all levels (city, county, state, federal) to create mutually beneficial relationships and ensure continued access for geocachers – part of the club's founding mission. The Liaison puts a face on geocaching and provides a go-to person for park personnel. In turn, WSGA builds trust with the park system by self-managing our activity, ensuring greater support and faster resolution should problems arise.

The Park Liaison Program was piloted over the past two years at Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, the flagship of King County Parks. Its success has cemented a positive relationship with KCP, from the director to individual staff at its 180 parks. Today, other park systems see the mutual benefits of this program and are asking to participate.

What does a Park Liaison do? The specifics vary from park to park, but may include:

- Ensuring geocachers adhere to park regulations. If a park says “no off-trail use,” all caches must be by a trail (specific distance will be defined – at Cougar Mountain, it's 10 feet). “Day use only” – no night caching is permitted. If certain park areas are off-limits due to sensitive habitat or safety issues, no cache placements will be allowed.
- Ensuring geocachers adhere to [geocaching.com](#) guidelines on placement, especially those under [Off-Limit \(Physical\) Caches](#). We don't bury caches, screw things into trees, deface property, contribute to habitat destruction, etc. Mantra: “What would the ranger think?”
- Working with park personnel to create and/or implement caching guidelines for their lands. These may be informal, enforced by the Liaison, or written up as a public document. In most cases, cache placements can be overseen by the Liaison without a formal permitting or approval process by the park, as has been demonstrated over the past two years at Cougar Mountain, which has a strict no-off-trail policy.
- Physically visiting cache placements to ensure they adhere to guidelines and minimize environmental impact (e.g., social trails, foliage damage).
- Monitoring caches and addressing problems if the owner is not responsive, up to and including removing caches if required.
- Contacting cache owners and working with them to mitigate any problems that arise.
- Keeping park personnel informed about cache placements on their land, and promptly addressing any problems identified by park staff.
- Informing park personnel about geocaching and its benefits, such as raising awareness, educating visitors, and increasing attendance.
- Taking park personnel geocaching to familiarize them with the activity, show them cache placements in their parks, and get their feedback.
- Helping park personnel place caches to further their educational and outreach goals.
- Streamlining the park's interactions with Groundspeak by serving as a conduit to the company and reviewers. This is particularly helpful if the park needs to clarify its boundaries, request cache removals or moratoriums, or otherwise present an official request.
- Hosting CITO (Cache In, Trash Out) volunteer work parties to help the park. In addition to debris cleanup, a CITO event could be invasive-plant removal, native plant restoration, even trail-building - basically, whatever type of volunteer work the park needs.

Below are the park systems currently in the Park Liaison Program, along with their liaisons (real name and caching alias). In some cases, there are specific parks in the program, with the backing of their larger park system and plans to expand it into other parks.

- King County Parks (Cougar Mountain) – Abby Wolfe (hydnek); pilot
- Snohomish County Parks (Lord Hill, Paradise Valley) – Kathy McCormack (GrievousAngel)
- Kitsap County Parks – Jomer & Traci Siasat (Jomer & Traci)
- Seattle City Parks (Discovery Park) – Rod Gowdy (rodgowdy)
- Bellevue City Parks – Abby Wolfe (hydnek)
- Richland City Parks – Jen Wheeler (meandbrea)
- North Cascades National Park Service Complex – Abby Wolfe (hydnek)
- Camano Island and Cama Beach state parks – David Baumchen (Rey del Roble)
- Island County Parks (Wenbug County Park) – David Baumchen (Rey del Roble)

WSGA is also working with parks outside the Park Liaison Program, including those in Renton, Burien, and Anacortes; Washington State Parks; and Mount Rainier National Park. In addition, we coordinate with cachers working with other park systems, including Olympia City Parks.

Many thanks to the members of WSGA's Parks Advocacy Committee who have volunteered as Park Liaisons. If you're interested in participating, or know a park system you think would benefit, please contact Abby Wolfe ([hydnek](#)). Most parks currently in the program are in the Puget Sound area, but we hope to see it expanded across the state.

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