



## Year in Review: 2007

In 2007, Friends of the Falls continued our work to transform the River Gorge into a vital, dynamic 400-acre public playground where all citizens of Spokane can enjoy a meaningful connection with this natural, free-flowing stretch of the Spokane River. To recap recent accomplishments on behalf of the river:

- **In 2007 the Great Spokane River Gorge Strategic Master Plan won the “Mayor’s Choice” award for excellence in urban design.** The result of five years of work by the community, the Plan identifies 15 key projects to further the restoration and enhancement of the river gorge, and establishes a clear strategy to implement these projects. Published in May, 2005, after a year of public planning process, the Great Gorge Plan has been endorsed by the City of Spokane, its Parks Department, the Spokane Tribe, and many other organizations as well as over 1,500 of our citizens.
- **This year we began a process of formal engagement with the City of Spokane with the goal of fully integrating the Gorge Plan into the City’s comprehensive plan.** As part of that effort, we established a planning committee led by board member Travis Nichols to review the comp plan and see where gaps need to be filled. Adoption of the Gorge Plan as part of the City’s comp plan is also a goal of our newly elected Mayor, Mary Verner, and the time seems right to move this project forward in 2008.
- In 2007, we also actively engaged in the process to update the City’s shoreline master plan. We took part in meetings of the Shorelines Policy Committee and submitted written comments on key planning issues.
- We are playing an active role in the update of the Downtown Plan through our executive director’s participation on the Downtown Plan Update Task Force.
- Since release of the Gorge Plan, FOF has worked to implement a **whitewater park** as the first of its 15 priority projects, securing over \$650,000 in grants and private contributions to construct the facility. The park will enhance recreational quality and water safety, and will be constructed with careful attention to the needs of fish and wildlife. **In 2007 we completed fundraising for project design, permitting and construction.**
- In 2006, we identified the opportunity and wrote a grant that awarded the City of Spokane \$530,000 to construct another priority project - a **visitor center** at the entry to People’s Park that will provide amenities such as restrooms to reduce negative impacts to the environment. Over this past year, we worked closely with the Spokane Parks Department to shepherd this grant through a competitive evaluation process and get it funded. Best of all, the money we raised for the Whitewater Park provided the required 50% match for this grant to the City, **bringing a total of over \$1 million in state funding and private contributions to the river in 2006-2007.**



- This summer we formed a **partnership with the City** to move the Whitewater Park and the Visitor Center forward. We are now engaged in design and permitting. Construction should begin next summer, but **there is much left to do before this project becomes a reality, and Friends of the Falls must continue our efforts to keep it moving.**
- In 2007, we formed a partnership with the **Peaceful Valley Neighborhood** to restore riparian habitat and build a walking trail along the south bank of the river - another priority project of the Gorge Plan. Led by Matt Phillipi and his neighbors in Peaceful Valley, this project is in the early planning stage. Look for a design workshop in early 2008.
- We are supporting efforts in partnership with other groups to **implement several other priority projects** from the Gorge Plan, including a tribal cultural center, a “Southern Gateway” business district along the Sunset Highway, and completion of the Fish Lake Trail.
- At this year’s **Spokane River Clean-Up**, 750 volunteers assembled in High Bridge Park and recovered six tons of trash along the banks of the river. This is our fifth year organizing the clean-up event, which invites citizens to connect with the river and gorge on a personal level and promotes a community ethic of stewardship for this resource.
- As we advocate for the Great Gorge Plan, we also **work with other community leaders to find a sustainable solution** to fund operations and maintenance of the growing network of trails, green spaces, access points, and other amenities along the Spokane River.

Through these many efforts, we seek to fulfill a vision first articulated for Spokane by the Olmsted Brothers in 1907: a 400-acre “Gorge Park” framing one of the most unique and impressive landscapes found anywhere in the United States. Such a park will connect downtown’s Riverfront Park to scenic greenbelt areas downstream and ultimately to the 10,000 acre Riverside State Park, creating an 11-mile river corridor rich with opportunities to recreate and enjoy a natural amenity that is uniquely Spokane.

Imagine an 11-mile river corridor accessible to all people - in kayaks, canoes, rafts and inner-tubes; birdwatchers and disc golf enthusiasts; cyclists, mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners and walkers. Imagine the opportunities for school field trips where children learn about their local environment, history and culture; where unique natural amenities attract university students, knowledge workers and entrepreneurs, and where adjacent neighborhoods enjoy multiple connections to open spaces and fantastic views within a natural, protected, accessible and distinctive urban river corridor.

We believe the Great Gorge project will change the self-image of the Spokane region. An active, stunning and accessible river corridor will fill people in Spokane with pride and will reinforce a sense of place, while increasing the health and enjoyment of future generations.

Our advocacy will continue in 2008. Check back for updates, and consider joining Friends of the Falls today to help us continue our efforts on behalf of the river.

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