



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, April 22, 2026, 5:00 PM
Zoom and Council Chambers, 616 NE 4th AVE

NOTE: The City welcomes public meeting citizen participation. TTY Relay Service: 711. In compliance with the ADA, if you need special assistance to participate in a meeting, contact the City Clerk's office at (360) 834-6864, 72 hours prior to the meeting so reasonable accommodations can be made (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title 1)

To Participate Remotely:

OPTION 1 -

1. Go to www.zoom.us and download the app or click "Join A Meeting" and use Meeting ID – 861 3821 1597
2. Or, from any device click <https://cityofcamas-us.zoom.us/j/86138211597>

OPTION 2 - Join by phone (audio only):

Dial 877-853-5257 and enter meeting ID# 861 3821 1597

For Public Comment:

Click the raise hand icon in the app or by phone, hit *9 to "raise your hand" (or email to parks@cityofcamas.us)

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENTS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [Approve Minutes of Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting – March 25, 2026](#)
[Presenter: Ellen Burton, Chair](#)
[Time Estimate: 5 minutes](#)

MEETING ITEMS

2. [Bike Park Partnership \(Discussion\)](#)
[Presenters: Jeremy Morse, Chris Bloom, Pete Clagget, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance](#)
[Time Estimate: 30 minutes](#)
3. [Memorial Bench/Plaque \(Discussion\)](#)
[Presenter: David Kern, Chairperson, The Allen "Woodsy" Thomas Project](#)
[Time Estimate: 15 minutes](#)

4. [Commission Presentation to City Council \(Update\)](#)
[Presenter: Bud Henson, Parks & Recreation Commissioner](#)
[Time Estimate: 10 minutes](#)
5. Parks Projects Updates (Update)
Presenter: Chris Witkowski, Parks and Recreation Director
Time Estimate: 15 minutes

PROJECT UPDATES

OTHER ITEMS

6. Commissioners Updates
Presenter: Ellen Burton, Chair
Time Estimate: Remainder of Time

CLOSE OF MEETING



Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 5:00 PM
Council Chambers, 616 NE 4th AVE

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Commissioner Burton

ROLL CALL

Present: Ellen Burton, Alicia Brazington, Katy Daane, Bud Hensen, Jason Irving, Adam Stadlander and Jenny Wu

Staff: Sydney Baker, Tammy Connolly and Chris Witkowski

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one from the public wished to speak.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Agenda Item Approve Minutes of Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting – February 25, 2026
 Presenter: Ellen Burton, Chair

It was moved by Hensen, and seconded, to approve the February 25, 2026 Parks and Recreation Meeting Minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

MEETING ITEMS

2. Recreation Programming Debrief
 Presenter: Tammy Connolly, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

This item was for the Parks and Recreation Commission's information only. Connolly provided an overview of the recreation programs.

3. Metropolitan Park District
 Presenter: Randy Curtis, Former Parks and Recreation Commissioner

This item was for the Parks and Recreation Commission's information only. Curtis provided an overview of the committee's Metropolitan Park District research.

4. Regional Parks Funding Task Team
 Presenter: Chris Witkowski, Parks and Recreation Director

This item was for the Parks and Recreation Commission's information only. Witkowski provided an update on the Regional Parks Funding Task Team.

5. Commission Subcommittees
Presenter: Chris Witkowski, Parks and Recreation Director

This item was for the Parks and Recreation Commission's information only. Witkowski provided an overview of the subcommittee assignments.

6. Parks Projects Updates
Presenter: Chris Witkowski, Parks and Recreation Director

This item was for the Parks and Recreation Commission's information only. Witkowski provided updates on Crown Park, Legacy Lands, Spring Fest, E-bikes and the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant.

OTHER ITEMS

7. Commissioner Updates
Presenter: Ellen Burton, Chair

Irving commented about the Camas Little League clean-up day, Legacy Lands, Crown Park and the RCO grant.

Brazington commented on Crown Park and thanked Jacquie Hill for her work. Brazington visited Goot Park and the Skate Park.

Daane commented about Crown Park.

Stadtlander commented about Crown Park and a Clark County Parking lot paving project.

Hensen commented about Crown Park.

Burton commented about Dorothy Fox Park.

CLOSE OF MEETING

Burton adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

Camas, Washington Bikepark and Mountain Bike Destination

What is a bike park?

- Bike-specific, self-contained facility open to the public
- Includes constructed features designed for bikes, in most cases made of asphalt, dirt, rock, or wood
- Combines pumptracks, skillsparks, jumplines and trails
- Supports a variety of user groups like bmx, scooters, and mountain bikes

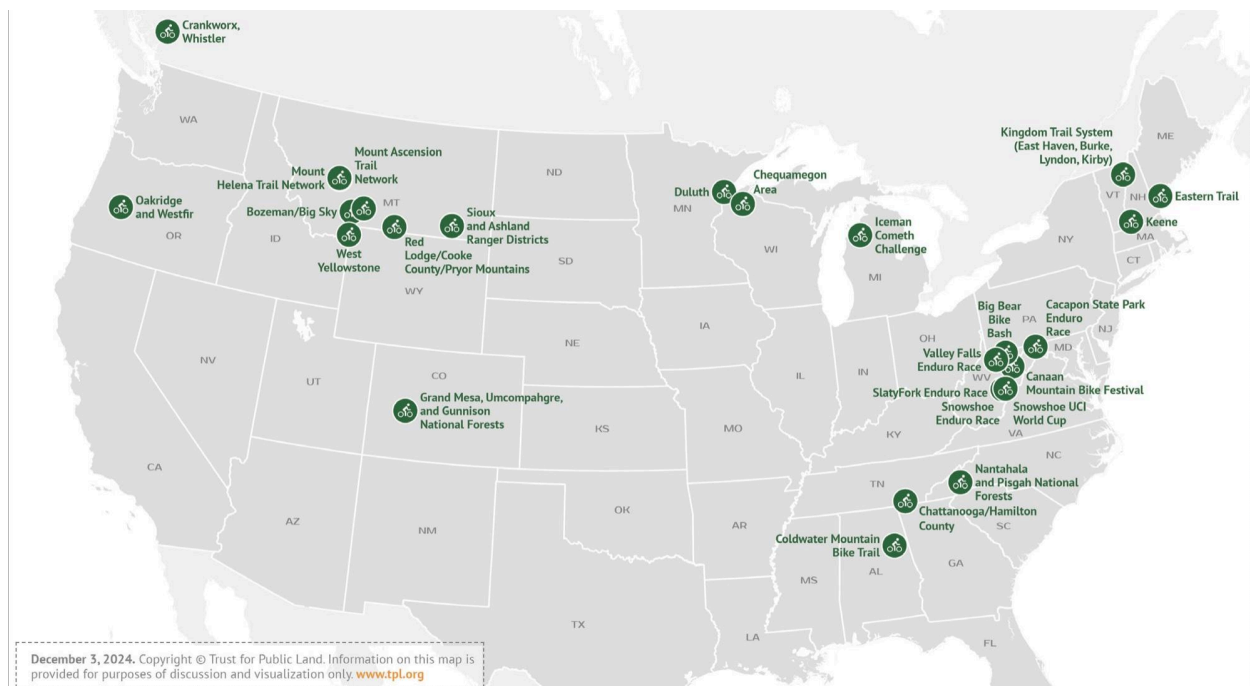
Why one is needed?

- Start executing the goal of turning Camas, Washington into a mountain bike destination
- In Lacamas Park, Camas & Clark County's largest off road specific trail network of 12 total miles, a mere 0.6 miles is dedicated to bike-only trail
- PROS Plan 2021 Community Survey reported "48.7 percent of respondents said there were "not enough" walking or biking trails"
- According to the Trust for Public Lands study, outdoor recreational development is one of the best categories for funding return on investments
- Elevate Camas as a more livable and desirable destination by investing in accessible outdoor recreation, boosting community well-being while fueling local business growth and visitor driven spending.
- According to the Outdoor Foundation, bicycling is the number one gateway activity that gets kids outside and ultimately interested in other activities such as hiking, camping, and fishing
- Lack of close proximity bikeparks exclude people of lower socio-economic status from the multitude of health benefits from cycling
- Provide a safe progression of skills obstacles for children & cyclists of all ages and cycling levels to learn bike handling skills
- Deter unauthorized trail building & channel community efforts into specific areas

What is a mountain bike destination?

- Regional zone attracting mountain bikers to dedicate trips and choices into an area
- Combines bikeparks, single track trails, pumptracks, interconnectivity
- Playful transportation allowing residents and users to travel throughout area via mix of fun, accessible trail networks of unlocked, underutilized green spaces
- When designed well, users enjoy less car dependent transportation routes

Where have mountain bike destinations been successful?



Camas as a mountain bike destination

- Activate unused greenspaces
- Fill regional gap in user needs of family friendly place to take kids in southwest Washington
- Use bikepark and pumptrack as a slice of entire pie fulfilling package of bike destination attributes
- Replicate a proven model of investment for economic growth and community value

Bikepark Examples

Ruby Hill Bikepark in Denver, Colorado (~seven and a half acres)

<https://www.trailforks.com/region/ruby-hill-bike-park-24939/>



The Railyard in Rogers, Arkansas (~five acres)

<https://visitrogersarkansas.com/railyard-park-downtown-rogers>



Where are other bikeparks in our region?

- Currently no option exists without either an hour plus drive or safe family-friendly parking

Gateway Green in Portland, Oregon (~25 acres)

<http://www.gatewaygreenpdx.org/>



Golden Eagle Park in Hood River, Oregon (one acre)

<https://www.hrats.org/trails/golden-eagle-park-pump-track>



Cedar Park Basecamp in Sandy, OR (~10 acres)

<https://www.ci.sandy.or.us/parks-recreation/page/cedar-park-featuring-base-camp>



White Salmon Bikepark in WS, WA (~25 acres)

<https://explorewhitesalmon.com/white-salmon-bike-park/>



Mountain bike organizational support

Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, 501 (c)(3)

https://www.evergreenmtb.org/images/files/EMBA_2023_Annual_Report.pdf

- Seattle based, statewide not for profit trail advocacy organization
- The largest mountain biking nonprofit organization in the pacific northwest
- Over 9,000 active, paid membership statewide
- Strong, local presence able to assist in planning, design, construction and maintenance

Panthers Composite Mountain Bike Team

<https://www.panthercomposite.com/>

- Mountain bike cross country race team composed of middle and high school riders, family members, and volunteer coaches competing in the Oregon Chapter of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA).
- 60 active boys and girls athletes across middle and high school grades alongside 32 coaches
- Such strong community interest team caps total participants
- Active users of Lacamas Park hosting regular weekly practices

Camas Bike & Sport

<https://www.camasbikes.com/>

- Growth of trails and users supports this family-owned business helping keep revenue on our side of the river

Review of Economic Impacts of Mountain Bike Tourism

Trust for Public Lands

<https://www.tpl.org/media-room/new-trust-for-public-land-report-highlights-economic-power-of-mountain-biking-for-rural-communities>

- Mountain bike tourists of destination riding areas spend an average of 416\$ per trip
- Higher Daily Spending: Mountain bikers tend to outspend hikers and other forest users.
- While general outdoor enthusiasts might focus on low-cost activities, mountain biking involves substantial investment in equipment and travel, with many riders spending between \$60 and \$100 per day while traveling.

Bentonville, Arkansas

<https://www.visitbentonville.com/articles/post/bentonville-arkansas-is-disneyland-for-mountain-bikers/>

- 74 million in trail development over ten years generates over ~150 million ANNUALLY for the region

Bellingham, Washington

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6e9ae8c3beb64a7c8d2e922fde7f6ce4>

- 30 percent of mountain bikers in Bellingham are from out of Whatcom County
- Two-thirds of the out-of-town cyclists make more that \$70,000 a year, and more than half reported spending a minimum of \$40 each time they visited. "

Washington State Economic Analysis for Outdoor Recreation

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/economic-analysis-of-outdoor-recreation-in-washington-state-2020-update/>

- For every \$1 dollar spent on Washington state outdoor recreation, \$1.52 in economic activity was generated in the regional economy.
- Clark county spends \$715,959,000 on outdoor recreation and gets back \$1,028,143,000, a multiplier of 1.4x back for every dollar invested.

This would not be a park expense, but a recurring revenue generating regional asset

Contact information for further questions

Jeremy Morse

Evergreen Southwest's Lacamas Park Trail Steward and Camas/Clark County Bikepark Official
Advocate/Representative

Jeremy.ICU.Morse@gmail.com cell: (972) 322-8650

Date: Wednesday April 22, 2026

To: Chris Witkowski, Camas Parks and Recreation Director,
Camas Parks and Recreation Commission members:

Subject: Bench/plaque honoring Allen “Woodsy” Thomas,
reporter, Outdoors Editor of The Columbian, Camas native

Our committee is asking for permission to place a bench with a plaque at the beginning of the Lacamas Heritage Trail to honor of Allen “Woodsy” Thomas, who was admired by thousands for his 39 years as the Outdoors Editor of The Columbian.

We are asking that the plaque be large enough to include sentences explaining Allen’s impact on readers and the environment. I look forward to speaking with you on Wednesday April 22nd.

Please see in your packet testimonials about Allen’s work and importance in our community. Allen grew up in Camas and graduated from Camas High School in 1970.

Also included are sample photos of a traditional bench, a bench with small plaque, a basalt bench with plaque, the Lacamas Heritage Trail plaque and the start of the Lacamas Heritage Trail. Allen ran that seven-mile trail hundreds of times.

Thank you,
David Kern (360) 904-7669
dallankern@gmail.com
for The Allen “Woodsy” Thomas Memorial Bench Project.

Benches, plaques

Item 3.



Here are sample photos of a traditional bench, a bench with a small plaque, the Lacamas Heritage Trail plaque and the start of the Lacamas Heritage Trail, plus a basalt bench with plaque in Esther Short Park in Vancouver.

To honor Allen Thomas, the spirit of the Northwest outdoors



Always, Allen Thomas invited you along.

In his straightforward writing style, he welcomed you aboard, then caught a log-size salmon at Buoy 10 in the Columbia, his account so real that you adjusted your balance with every bounce of the boat.

As you hiked by his side along forest trails and across mountain meadows, the glow and perfume of pines and wildflowers drenched your senses.

And when he interviewed policymakers, he got answers to the very questions on your mind.

For thirty-nine years, spanning the activities of your family's grandparents, parents and children, his stories and columns in The Columbian newspaper inspired you to fish, hunt, hike, run, camp, the spectrum of enjoying and protecting nature's beauty and bounty.

Unfold a map of Southwest Washington: See the lakes? The rivers and streams? Those thrilling sightlines to the thrones of the Cascades? Yes, yes, yes, Camas High School and University of Washington graduate Allen used them as classrooms, and you sat up straight.

He won awards from the region's outdoors writers, those crusty caretakers of Northwest exceptionality. He was the outdoors ultimate insider. Whether you landed a steelhead or harvested huckleberries, he celebrated with you, not as some distant, artificial-intelligencer processing cold data, but as your comfortable campfire storyteller.

This year, his own story turned grim: leukemia.

Because of his extraordinary devotion to both nature and readers, we, his retired, former colleagues at The Columbian, are asking you, who govern the area's recreational sites, to select a popular natural feature – a fishing hole or scenic viewpoint, a hiking or running trail, a campsite or picnic nook – to be named in his honor.

In a recent lively but wearying reminiscence, he described long walks on the Lacamas Lake Trail and the Washougal River Greenway, two routes Allen and “two-thirds blind” Kona, the yellow lab belonging to his wife, Sherrie, roamed “all over hell.” Ignore the slang; for dog and dad, it was heaven.

As to his own struggle, Allen shrugged. “I think I'm still dying,” he said, “but I'm not sure.”

Please ensure his legacy. We will pay for the sign and supply the inscription.

For the continuity of his contributions, a forever honor. A sign.

A child looks up and asks, “Who is this Allen Thomas?” You answer, “A journalist who learned nature's ways, who taught what he learned, who lived what he taught. Always”

What they say about Allen Thomas



“People enjoying our beautiful Pacific NW outdoors were better prepared, better informed, and had a better experience because they read Allen’s Thomas’ trustworthy articles in *The Columbian*. They also found out about new places to visit, when fishing and hunting seasons were occurring and the related regulations, and kept up on current events and techniques. Allen always provided reliable, factual, and useful information—not fluff stuff. For those providing the information he asked tough questions and expected solid answers. He knew his readers relied on him. He was right. Thank you Allen for years of professional journalism that focused on important information. I always appreciate it.”

Dean Sutherland, former Washington State Senator

Allen was a great man to work with. He had a unique ability to understand the complex dynamics of Columbia River fisheries management and relay it to the reader.

Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Policy Coordinator, retired
Howell, Michigan

First, and foremost, I am very sorry to hear of Allen's fight against leukemia. During my nine year tenure (1991-1999) on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, we were very fortunate to have Allen covering "everything outdoors" on the Forest. Allen and I developed a relationship where he knew he could come to me about anything happening on the Forest and why or what we were doing about it. There were parts of the Forest that he knew better than my own personnel, so his credibility on issues or questions was always well taken.

In all of my previous assignments, we never had someone from a newspaper of his caliber covering our trail system, wilderness areas, and more as extensively; he set the standard. Get well, Allen.

Ted Stubblefield, former Forest Supervisor, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

A true gentleman who loved the outdoors, and a most honest, truthful sportswriter that I had the pleasure and honor to work with.

Butch Smith, owner Coho Charters

“The majority of my 37-year career with Washington Department of Fisheries and later Fish and Wildlife was in Clark and Skamania counties Fish Hatcheries Programs. I was told early on that Allen Thomas was a trusted reporter and would print your information with the facts you provided, always in an informed manner that one would hope for.

As you might expect, not all the stories were about success. Some were of tragic failures of facilities or systems. None of the stories Allen parented via interviews with me, or my employees were ever without facts and evidence. He was most helpful in getting the word out regarding fishing or hunting opportunities around the Southwest Washington region. A fine reporter.”

Richard Johnson

What they say about Allen Thomas

Poets miss the point of nature; they see only beauty. Scientists, too, miss it; they see only data. To the words and numbers, Allen Thomas added the essential point: fun. As *The Columbian* newspaper's outdoors writer for 39 years, he persuaded multitudes to get out and enjoy. He knew the freedom of an aimless hike, the thrill of catching a fish, the satisfaction of watching a near-blind dog explore one more path. A captive of only his own curiosity, Allen learned nature's secrets, he wrote what he learned, he lived what he wrote.

Jim Stasiowski, colleague, *The Columbian*, Arroyo Grande, Calif.

“Having retired after a considerable tenure as outdoors editor at *The Seattle Times* (as well as travel editor in the final stint of my 22 years there) I might be qualified to speak to the contributions of Al Thomas, who was my colleague during a decade I worked at *The Columbian*.

As an outdoors writer, Al accomplished what many in his position never could: bridging the schism between the "hook-and-bullet" crowd (a term I learned from Al) and those whose love of nature is expressed strictly through hiking, climbing, camping and other physical activities out of the house. Al could write about a favorite hiking trail in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest with the same knowledge and enthusiasm he applied to analyzing the prospects for limiting out on opening day of the salmon fishery at the Columbia River's Buoy 10.

In a world racing toward today's polarization, that was an outdoor writer's talent not to shake a trekking pole at. (Or skewer with a gaff hook.) For decades, Al "Woodsy" Thomas played an important role in getting many Southwest Washingtonians out on our rivers and into our woods, the kind of positive exposure that boosted and helped preserve outdoor recreational resources for all of us. A fitting tribute, be it naming a trail, a boat launch, or a wilderness campsite in his honor, would be well-deserved.”

Brian Cantwell Center Island, WA



Item 3.

“When I worked at *The Columbian* in 1978-1982, my colleague Allen Thomas was an invaluable ally in understanding and reporting on the outdoors and environment. As a reader, he was an essential guide to exploring Southwest Washington. Recognizing his many years of experience and accomplishments is an excellent idea.”

Bill Dietrich, former reporter and writer for *The Columbian* and the *Seattle Times* Anacortes, Wash.

Allen was the Dean of outdoor journalists on the West coast. None of his peers came close to his grasp of the biology, politics and legal implications of fishery management. Amazingly he was able to do it without bias and with fairness to all user groups.

Steve Watrous, Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS), Washington State Recreational Seat for 34 years

What they say about Allen Thomas

Loved supplying fishery data/info to Allen and then seeing how he expertly assembled it in his Thursday outdoor report.

Joe Hymer

PSMFC Supervisory Fishery Biologist

Since I wasn't into hunting and fishing, I didn't read a lot of what Allen wrote, but man, I remember being in the newsroom and listening to his passionate dissertations on every detail, and I mean complex stuff such as land-use laws, special-interest groups, etc., all things concerning nature. The guy's brain was a magnet for details about the subjects that mattered to him and his readers. "Woodsy," his newsroom nickname, perfected the ability to combine his personal interests with an occupation that allowed him to enlighten a larger community that shared his passion.

Wendy Reif, former reporter *The Columbian* Vancouver, Wash.

When Al Thomas was married, some of us learned that his actual first name is George. What most, if not all, of us in attendance knew was that Allen Thomas' real first name was Woodsy. It was a nickname, for sure, but it stuck like few others born in *The Columbian's* newsroom.

It stuck because it was as fitting as could be for the outdoors writer who covered all things hunting, fishing and hiking. Not only has he earned a bit of recognition for his work, any memorial serving as testament to his love of the outdoors should be dedicated to Allen "Woodsy" Thomas.

Thomas Ryll, former reporter for *The Columbian*. Salmon Creek, Wash.

Allen lived what he wrote. And he was fiercely proud of his Outdoor page. He wrote the stories and headlines, took many of the photographs, crafted the graphics and took pride in the layout. He knew his readers appreciated his efforts. And when I was out on trails with him, he would engage others. Where were they headed? Had they tried the loop trail? Had they seen the nearby waterfall?

Allen and I hiked many trails in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and in Mount Rainier National Park. It was a wonder to be on the Pacific Crest Trail. I remember gazing at Mount Adams from Killen Creek Meadows. The stars that night put on a great show.

I need to thank Allen for all those fishing and hiking trips. I could not have asked for a better guide.

Dave Kern, former reporter and editor for *The Columbian*. Port Orchard, Wash.

I met Allen Thomas shortly after my retirement from the Coast Guard in 1986. I was instantly impressed with his ability to share his outdoor knowledge in many fields; hunting, fishing, hiking and cross country skiing among them. He educated a very large segment of outdoors people in SW Washington through his regular articles in *The Columbian*. He had developed a large network of contacts in these specialties, as well as with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and other management agencies.

Al Thomas was an active participant - he did it first and wrote about it later. I never found an error in his writing.

Thanks to Allen Thomas, I was able to get "on speed" with my outdoors pursuits in minimum time and I have enjoyed his friendship for almost 40 years.

Craig T. Lynch Ridgefield, Wash.

What they say about Allen Thomas

Allen Thomas is the finest journalist I have ever read dealing with our natural resource issues. Allen wasn't just a fishing and hunting writer, he was a journalist who dealt with all of the outdoor activities available in our region and the policy and management that governed those activities.

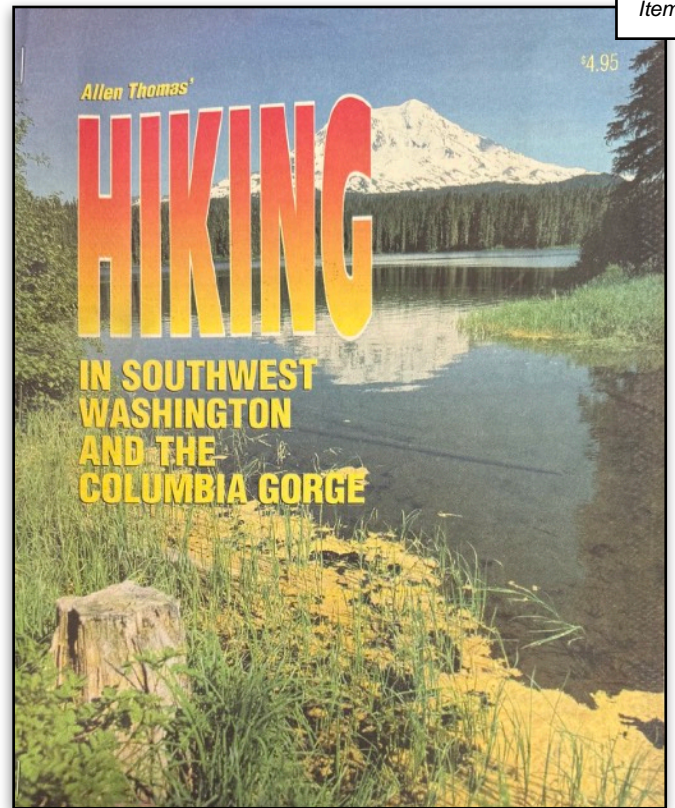
What sets him apart is his detailed knowledge of the subject matter, not just from a user perspective but also from a management and policy perspective.

He wrote substantial articles on hiking, cross country skiing, Columbia River Fisheries Policy development, the Forest Management Plan. He wrote a great article on cooking at elk camp. He didn't write "hook and bullet" pulp. Allen Thomas wrote in-depth tutorials on outdoor recreation. When you were done reading his articles you would usually know where to go, how to get there, how to equip yourself for the activity, the rules that governed the activity and any potential challenges.

Allen covered subjects like the Forest Management Plan, Columbia River Fisheries Policy, ocean salmon seasons. These are extremely complex challenging subjects and few writers will take the time to understand them. Allen did because he took the time. Almost anytime I attended a meeting on Natural Resource issues in our region, Allen Thomas was in the room. Didn't matter if it was during business hours or not, if it was important he was there. I know of no other writer who did such an excellent job of keeping the public informed about the processes that affected the public's access to their natural resources.

Allen also had an excellent way of encouraging dialog with the public. In some case to the public's chagrin because he would let folks go on and then very accurately quote them.

Ed Wickersham spent 30 years as a fish and wildlife enforcement officer for the State of Washington and then two federal agencies



Item 3.

Al was more than a source of helpful and accurate information about backcountry hikes. He was also an inspiration. My former wife Linda and I typically limited our day hikes to 6-10 miles of moderate difficulty. Al was enthusiastic and encouraging about the Goat Rocks area and especially the 13-mile loop hike to Goat Lake in far east Lewis County, just 1.5 miles from the Yakima county line. The hike has a 2,600-foot elevation gain.

oregonhikers.com rates it as "difficult" if done in one day and **not** "family friendly.") The views were expansive and spectacular; goats were playing in the snow above the lake. When we returned home we were so excited and proud of ourselves I called Al to share the news of our triumph, which he had spawned. He recently told me that the Goat Lake Loop is his favorite hike in the entire Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Gregg Herrington, former city editor and columnist for *The Columbian*.
Salmon Creek, Wash.

What they say about Allen Thomas

Allen is someone easy to greatly respect and admire. He did what he did very well and he did it for a very long period of time. As the outdoor and fish and wildlife reporter for The Columbian, he had subject matter expertise second to none. His writing inspired us to more often and better experience the world around us. And he did that for four decades! That qualifies him as nothing less than an institution. To our great and good fortune, this all was in service of strong, community journalism.

Denny Heck, Washington State
Lieutenant Governor

Allen was the author of many compelling stories of the Lower Columbia River and its formidable reach. He embodied the value of lifelong, fact-based learning, all the while taking intense personal enjoyment in our native Northwest flora and fauna. We the public as caretakers of this special place on Earth are grateful recipients of Allen's firsthand, razor-sharp observations of our interactions with nature. He shared with us for nearly 40 years on the pages of The Columbian.

Years ago as an avid fan I got an extra bonus when Allen asked me to create a concept design for his new home's landscape. I recall his clear, well-articulated vision for his yard and garden which became his own personal paradise and sanctuary. It reflected his love of the region and for me it was an honor to be involved.

Kelly Punteney Former Urban Trails and Greenways Planner for Vancouver/Clark County Columbia River Renaissance Vision Plan Project Manager

Though it appears small on a map of the state, the outdoors around Vancouver with its ridges and rivers are rugged enough to conceal enough nooks and crannies to keep an explorer busy for a lifetime.

In an era before viral clickbait and "influencers" Al Thomas was a trusted guide for his readers; he shared not only the picturesque but also the important natural resource issues that challenge us all to be stewards of the outdoors and not simply passive visitors.

When I first started work for our new Vancouver office, Al was someone who I could turn to in order to help me understand an issue. Fresh out of college and new to the area, it was so helpful for me to learn from his experience. One trail in particular deep in the Dark Divide Roadless area stands out to me as a prime example of where he helped me to see where we could do more to protect and steward these special places that he knew so well. His passion for sharing those places with all of us through his writing will always be remembered.

Ryan Ojerio, SW Washington Regional Manager for Washington Trails Association

Allen liked to write his articles with the most recent and reliable information available He became the go-to guy for the latest scoop. ... He can talk the talk and walk the walk when it comes to hiking in the mountains.

Gene Ritter Vancouver Wildlife League

What they say about Allen Thomas



Allen Thomas “Woodsy”

There was a moment when Al and I approached a little lake bordered by fallen trunks under a roaring waterfall. The smell of Douglas fir and soil blended with a mineral mist after a short hike in the Columbia River Gorge. That was decades ago, and I will never forget it.

I was a kid on my first internship at my family newspaper, The Columbian, along with Al “Woodsy” Thomas, the outdoors reporter. The internship was meant to introduce me to all the departments in the newspaper, including advertising, press production, and accounting – but seeing what experiences the newsroom had to offer, and Al’s beat especially, sparked an excitement in me. It was a moment when I knew the newsroom had all the adventure I sought in a career. Al’s welcoming presence and his admiration for nature, captured in his writing, were like magic to me.

Al was a beloved member of our newsroom and greatly admired by our family, the Campbells, who continue ownership of the newspaper. My father and former publisher, Scott Campbell, was very fond of Al, for his writing, his positive presence and also because Al helped me become interested in joining the family business. Now, as editor of The Columbian, I have an even deeper understanding of what magic our local writers can do for the community here in Southwest Washington. I have recently written hiking and outdoors stories for the paper, just like Al, and I think about that long-ago hike with him often when I’m out in the forest.

I am lucky to have known him personally, and Al’s writing will live as a gift in our archives for readers forever.

Will Campbell, Editor and Co-owner of
The Columbian

What they say about Allen Thomas

Our family learned of the recent passing of *The Columbian's* Outdoors writer, Allen Thomas. While the *Columbian's* writers have impacted our thinking and awareness over 33 years, Allen Thomas impacted our behavior.

I'm Steven Clark, married to Cherie Kearney and grandfather to Kacee. I'm a biology professor emeritus from Clark College. I live in Washougal and am out on a trail every week of the year for adventures like trail running, researching American pika in the Gorge and finding flowers for the UW's Rare Care plant monitoring. Throughout the years raising our now-college-age granddaughter, I was carefully following the advice of Allen Thomas.

In the early 2000's Allen wrote a heartfelt article titled, "Hiking With Kids." He shared that for all his love of the outdoors, he had inadvertently damaged that love in his own son. Their hikes were too long and too hard, appealing to the pace and aesthetics of an avid and competent outdoorsman, and his cooperative son began to see hikes as grueling rather than enchanting. Allen wrote a cautionary piece to prevent well-meaning parents from making his mistakes. Among his jewels were these:

Lesson 1: Hike as far as the enjoyment of the children takes you. Be prepared to turn back far, far short of the goal

Lesson 2: Provide water. Not just water to drink but pick a location where there is shallow water to get all wet. Children love playing in the water.



Item 3.

Steven Clark and granddaughter Kacee in happy times. Clark loved the recommendations of Allen Thomas.

At my granddaughter's eighth birthday party she announced to us, "Now I'm eight, and grandpa said I'm old enough to go on an overnight hike!" I had no idea of this past promise, but I re-read Allen's article (he sent me a copy that I have to this day), and we planned our adventure.

We chose Blue Lake in Indian Heaven (page 36 in Allen Thomas' 1994 *Hiking in Southwest Washington Guide*). It was 3.3 miles one way. Water everywhere. Plenty of breaks and snacks. Kacee loved it. Every year through high school we backpacked, canoed and camped—following Allen's great advice.

Thanks to Allen Thomas, his trail guides, insight, love of nature and parenting advice, Kacee still hikes and camps and loves it.

Steven Clark, Washougal

OUTDOORS

The Columbian

www.columbian.com/sports/outdoors

TRIBUTES TO 'WOODSY'

People enjoying our beautiful Pacific NW outdoors were better prepared, better informed, and had a better experience because they read Allen's Thomas' trustworthy articles in The Columbian.

They also found out about new places to visit, when fishing and hunting seasons were occurring and the related regulations, and kept up on current events and techniques. Allen always provided reliable, factual, and useful information—not fluff stuff.

For those providing the information he asked tough questions and expected solid answers. He knew his readers relied on him. He was right.

Thank you Allen for years of professional journalism that focused on important information. I always appreciate it.

Dean Sutherland
Former Washington state senator

Allen is someone easy to greatly respect and admire. He did what he did very well and he did it for a very long period of time. As the outdoor and fish and wildlife reporter for The Columbian, he had subject matter expertise second to none. His writing inspired us to more often and better experience the world around us. And he did that for four decades! That qualifies him as nothing less than an institution. To our great and good fortune, this all was in service of strong, community journalism.

Denny Heck
Lieutenant Governor of Washington

Though it appears small on a map of the state, the outdoors around Vancouver with its ridges and rivers are rugged enough to conceal enough nooks and crannies to keep an explorer busy for a lifetime.

In an era before viral clickbait and “influencers” Al Thomas was a trusted guide for his readers; he shared not only the picturesque but also the important natural resource issues that challenge us all to be stewards of the outdoors and not simply passive visitors.

When I first started work for our new Vancouver office, Al was someone who I could turn to in order to help me understand an issue.

Fresh out of college and new to the area, it was so helpful for me to learn from his experience.

One trail in particular deep in the Dark Divide Roadless area stands out to me as a prime example of where he helped me to see where we could do more to protect and steward these special places that he knew so well. His passion for sharing those places with all of us through his writing will always be remembered.

Ryan Ojerio
SW Washington Regional Manager for Washington Trails Association

In my 40-plus year career I worked with hundreds of journalists, including some who won the Pulitzer Prize. Al Thomas was among the very best I ever saw. Intelligent and fair, curious and enthusiastic, he inspired me and all of his colleagues to challenge ourselves to be better journalists and humans.

Craig Brown
Editor emeritus at The Columbian

During my nine year tenure (1991-1999) on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, we were very fortunate to have Allen covering “everything outdoors” on the Forest.

Allen and I developed a relationship where he knew he could come to me about anything happening on the Forest and why or what we were doing about it. There were parts of the Forest that he knew better



Former Columbian outdoor writer Allen Thomas with a fall chinook salmon caught upstream of the Astoria Bridge in the Buoy 10 season at the mouth of the Columbia River. Fun fact: Al did not like to eat fish, but he did like to share his bounty.

than my own personnel, so his credibility on issues or questions was always well taken. In all of my previous assignments, we never had someone from a newspaper of his caliber covering our trail system, wilderness areas, and more as extensively; he set the standard.

Ted Stubblefield
Former Forest Supervisor, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Allen lived what he wrote. And he was fiercely proud of his Outdoor page.

He wrote the stories and headlines, took many of the photographs, crafted the graphics and took pride in the layout. He knew his readers appreciated his efforts. And when I was out on trails with him, he would engage others.

Where were they headed? Had they tried the loop trail? Had they seen the nearby waterfall?

Allen and I hiked many trails in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and in Mount Rainier National Park. It was a wonder to be on the Pacific Crest Trail. I remember gazing at Mount Adams from Killen Creek Meadows. The stars that night put on a great show.

I need to thank Allen for all those fishing and hiking trips. I could not have asked for a better guide.

Dave Kern
Former Columbian editor, reporter

Al was more than a source of helpful and accurate information about backcountry hikes. He was also an inspiration.

My former wife Linda and I typically limited our day hikes to 6-10 miles of moderate difficulty. Al was enthusiastic and encouraging about the Goat Rocks area and especially the 13-mile loop hike to Goat Lake in far east Lewis County, just 1.5 miles from the Yakima county line. The hike has a 2,600-foot elevation gain. (Oregonhikers.com rates it as “difficult” if done in one day and not “family friendly.”)

The views were expansive and spectacular; goats were playing in the snow above the lake.

When we returned home we were so excited and proud of ourselves I called Al to share the news of our triumph, which he had spawned.

He recently told me that the Goat Lake Loop is his favorite hike in the entire Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Gregg Herrington
Former Columbian city editor, columnist



From the archives, Allen Thomas took many photos while on hikes, especially wildflowers. As he put it, arrowleaf balsamroot blooms make the eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge spectacular during May.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A service for Allen Thomas is set for 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22 at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 1206 N.E. Birch St. in Camas.

He educated a very large segment of outdoors people in SW Washington through his regular articles in The Columbian. He had developed a large network of contacts in these specialties, as well as with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and other management agencies.

Al Thomas was an active participant — he did it first and wrote about it later. I never found an error in his writing.

Thanks to Allen Thomas, I was able to get “on speed” with my outdoors pursuits in minimum time and I have enjoyed his friendship for almost 40 years.

Craig T. Lynch
Ridgefield

Allen Thomas is the finest journalist I have ever read dealing with our natural resource issues. Allen wasn't just a fishing and hunting writer, he was a journalist who dealt with all of the outdoor activities available in our region and the policy and management that governed those activities.

What sets him apart is his detailed knowledge of the subject matter, not just from a user perspective but also from a management and policy perspective.

He wrote substantial articles on hiking, cross country skiing, Columbia River Fisheries Policy development, the Forest Management Plan. He wrote a great article on cooking at elk camp. He didn't write “hook and bullet” pulp. Allen Thomas wrote in-depth tutorials on outdoor recreation. When you were done reading his articles you would usually know where to go, how to get there, how to equip yourself for the activity, the rules that governed the

Brian Cantwell
Retired Seattle Times outdoors editor, former Columbian reporter

I met Allen Thomas shortly after my retirement from the Coast Guard in 1986. I was instantly impressed with his ability to share his outdoor knowledge in many fields; hunting, fishing, hiking and cross country skiing among them.

activity and any potential challenges.

Allen covered subjects like the Forest Management Plan, Columbia River Fisheries Policy, ocean salmon seasons. These are extremely complex challenging subjects and few writers will take the time to understand them.

Allen did because he took the time. Almost anytime I attended a meeting on Natural Resource issues in our region, Allen Thomas was in the room. Didn't matter if it was during business hours or not, if it was important he was there. I know of no other writer who did such an excellent job of keeping the public informed about the processes that affected the public's access to their natural resources.

Allen also had an excellent way of encouraging dialog with the public. In some case to the public's chagrin because he would let folks go on and then very accurately quote them.

Ed Wickersham
Former state of Washington wildlife enforcement officer

I'm having a hard time finding the right words. But I'll never forget the discussions about important life matters. You know, like whether spaghetti and green beans go together (they don't, despite what he thought). Or whether he spent too much time sitting with a string in the water and walking from Point A to ... Point A when he should have been hunting.

Or his bewildering lack of appreciation for the wonder of architecture and ingenuity that is a train running underground (another inside joke that readers won't get).

These discussions continued long after I left The Columbian, all the way until my final call to him. I will miss those emails. And I will think of Al every time I get on a train that runs underground.

Andrew Seligman
Former Trail Blazers beat writer for The Columbian

I was told early on in my 37-year career with Washington Department of Fisheries and later Fish and Wildlife was in Clark and Skamania counties Fish Hatcheries Programs that Allen Thomas was a trusted reporter and would print your information with the facts you provided, always in an informed manner that one would hope for.

As you might expect, not all the stories were about

success. Some were of tragic failures of facilities or systems. None of the stories Allen parented via interviews with me, or my employees were ever without facts and evidence. He was most helpful in getting the word out regarding fishing or hunting opportunities around the Southwest Washington region. A fine reporter.

Richard Johnson
Former Washington Department of Fisheries hatcheries programs

Having Woodsy as a colleague for my 17 years at The Columbian was a treat. I was especially appreciative of Woodsy during a winter storm (in the early aughts, I believe).

My car was encased in ice after a couple days sitting in The Columbian's parking lot (a few of us who had to get the paper out were allowed to stay at the Hilton). Woodsy brought in a hair dryer and extension cord and de-iced my car so I could finally go home. As I remember it, it took at least 20 minutes in the cold to melt enough of the ice.

That willingness to step up is but one example of Al's humanity and his ingenuity.

Paul Danzer
Former Columbian sports writer

Professionalism and passion. He loved his job. He loved his beat. He was the Outdoors expert. And he loved talking about that subject.

Here's the thing, though: He had a way of sharing that enthusiasm for the outdoors even with people who knew nothing about the outdoors. Me? Back in the day, I only went into the woods to chase after my errant golf ball.

That didn't matter, though. I still wanted to hear his stories. Every day in the office, he had a story. And it was so fun to listen to a man with so much passion on a subject.

Here's the thing: It was so easy to listen to him because he also was genuinely interested in my life, my passions. He was like that with everyone in the office. Always curious. And funny, too. Al loved talking with people, to find out their stories.

That made him a great journalist. It made him a greater person.

Paul Valencia
Former Columbian sports writer

I never needed a hiking guidebook during the years I worked at the Columbian. I had Al Thomas sitting across from me for those four years, and that was better than any laminated map or dog-eared manual.

I often spent my time off from covering the Trail Blazers by exploring trails in Southwest Washington and Northern Oregon. I just needed to ask Al for something unique. Something challenging. Something away from the populous paths full of loafer-footed day hikers. He delivered with what remain some of my favorite hikes anywhere.

Al possessed a deeper, almost ancestral knowledge guidebooks could never offer. He knew the exact week wildflowers would explode into a riot of color at different locations. He knew where snowpacks would turn an access road into a glacial barricade. And whenever I returned, he would eagerly — giddily, his excited laugh echoing across the newsroom — ask about the journey, listening intently to every detail and filing it away in the massive guidebook of his mind for future adventurers.

Brian Hendrickson
Former Trail Blazers beat writer for The Columbian

ON COLUMBIAN.COM
Read many more tributes online.



~PROCLAMATION~

Whereas, Allen Thomas was born on October 2nd, 1952, in Vancouver, attended Camas Public Schools, and was a lifelong Clark County resident; and

Whereas, Mr. Thomas was a reporter for the Columbian newspaper from 1975 to 2017, including as the Columbian’s outdoor writer from 1978 onward, earning the nickname ‘Woodsy’; and

Whereas, over the course of over a half century of reporting, he was known for his love of the outdoors and natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest, credibility, in-depth reporting, care for others, professionalism, passion, and expertise on topics related to natural resources and outdoor recreation; and

Whereas, the Clark County Council finds it fitting and proper to honor a man who dedicated his life to helping Clark County residents better understand the natural world we inhabit and the policies and management of our resources;

Now, therefore, we, the Clark County Council, do hereby officially recognize the lifetime contributions of

Allen ‘Woodsy’ Thomas

In Clark County, Washington. The Council appreciates Allen Thomas’ lifetime of service to his community and commits to finding a fitting way to celebrate his accomplishments in perpetuity. Furthermore, the Council encourages residents to spend time enjoying the wild places and natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest in his memory.

Dated this 6th day of January 2026.

CLARK COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Sue Marshall
Sue Marshall, Chair, District 5

Glen Yung
Glen Yung, District 1

Michelle Belkot
Michelle Belkot, District 2

Wil Fuentes
Wil Fuentes, District 3

Matt Little
Matt Little, District 4









Camas Parks & Recreation Commission 2025 Annual Review

April 20, 2026 City Council Workshop

“Begin the begin” R.E.M.

1. Strategic Plan Alignment
2. Parks Data
3. Team
4. Special Events
5. Facilities
6. Recreation Programming
7. Maintenance
8. Projects
9. Challenges
10. 2026 Preview
11. Summary



“The only people for me are the mad ones...” Jack Kerouac

2025 Parks & Recreation Commissioners

Ellen Burton - Chair

Katy Daane

Jason Irving – Vice Chair

David Dewey

Alicia Brazington

Bud Henson

Jenny Wu



City Council Liaisons

Tim Hein

John Svilarich

“Vision without resources is hallucination” Thomas Edison

Alignment with Strategic Plans

City Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Vibrant Community Amenities

Stewardship of City Assets

2022 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan (PROS)

Maintain What We Have

Welcoming for All

Stewardship of Land, Parks & Programs

Plan for & Fill Known System Gaps

“I dwell in possibility” Emily Dickinson

Camas Parks (2025)	
Total Visits	771,000
Unique Visitors	308,000
Out of Town Visitors	195,000
Usage increased 11% from 2024	

Source: PlacerAI Data

State of Washington 2024 Outdoor Recreation Spending	
Total Spending	\$25.2 billion
Local Parks Economic Contribution	\$862.7 million
Clark County Spending per Resident	\$1,000-\$2,500

Source: Earth Economics “Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State (2025 Update)”

Benefits of Urban Parks	
Improves Physical & Mental Health	Increase Community Engagement
Lowers Healthcare Costs	Reduce Crime
Attract Residents & Businesses	Increase Equity
Increase Revenue & Job Opportunities	Reduce Infrastructure Costs
Mitigate Effects of Climate Change	Increase Property Values

Source: City Parks Alliance

“We are in the hands of utter lunatics...” Edina Zichy Pallavicini

Saying Goodbye



Krista Bashaw - Retired in May after 30 years of service

Welcome to the Team

Chris Witkowski – May

Jacque Hill - September



The Stalwarts

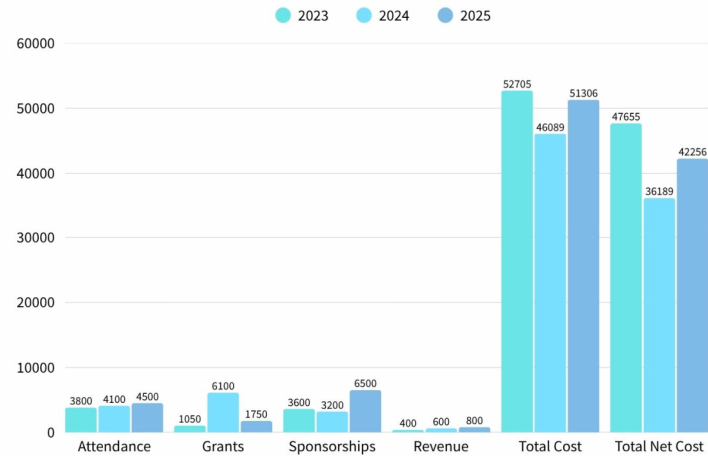


Tammy Connolly – 25th year

Susan Palmer – 18th year

“Great moments are born from great opportunity” Herb Brooks

Hometown Holidays



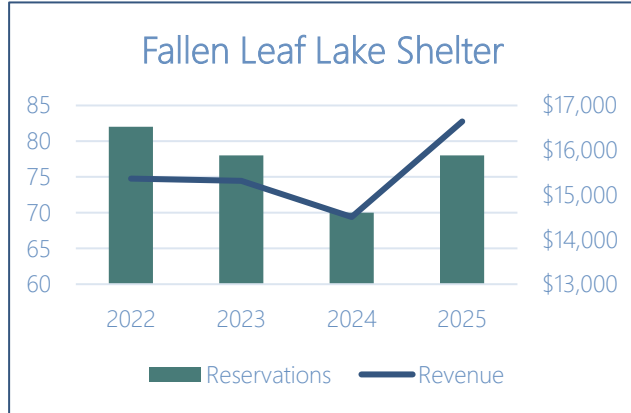
2025 Special Events

- Egg Scramble
- Movies in the Park
- Concerts in the Park
- Leadbetter Walk & Roll
- Hometown Holidays

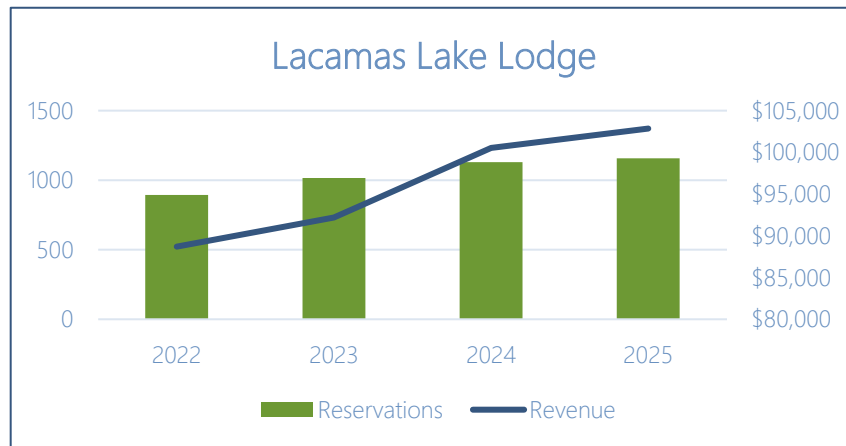
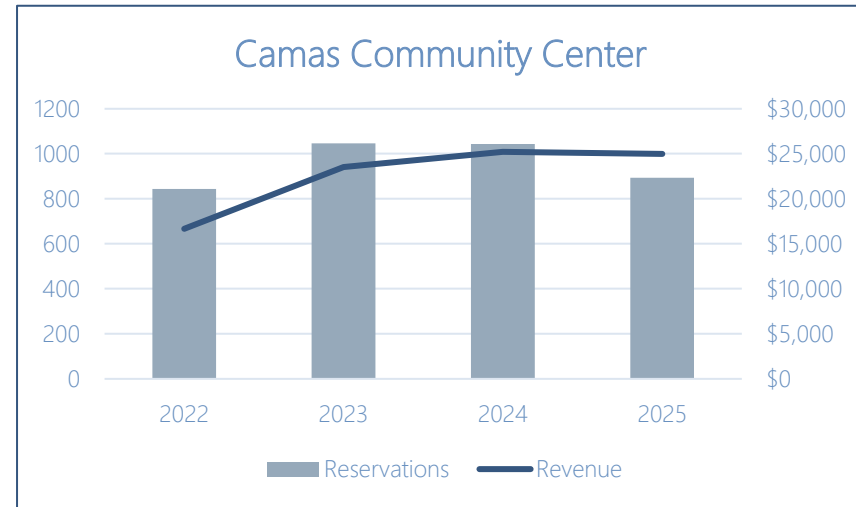
- 2025 event offerings were reduced due to staff transition
- Traditional and new events are back for 2026

“Everybody’s working for the weekend” Loverboy

Facility Rentals



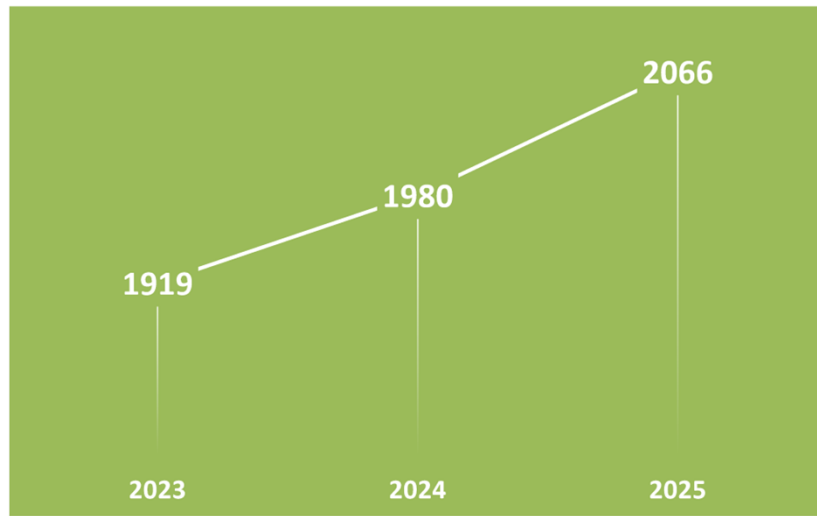
Note: 2024 decline equates to seven reservations



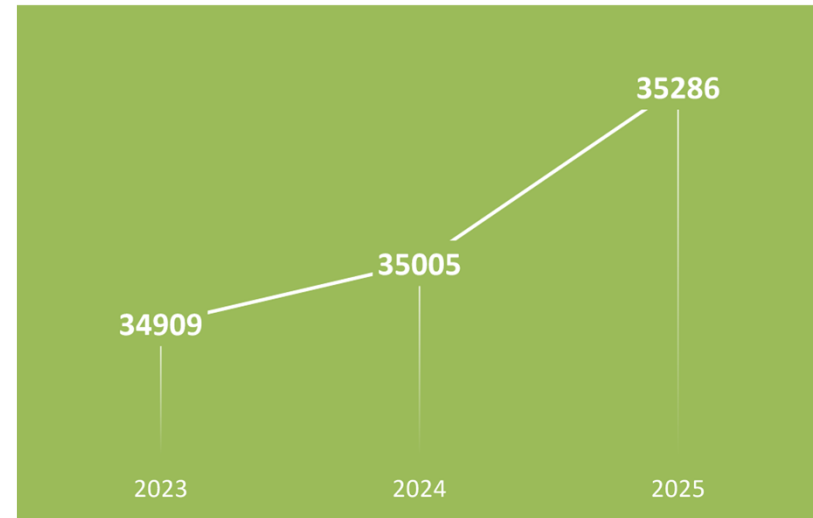
Nearly every 2025 weekend was booked in our facilities

“Run Forrest, run!” Jenny

Recreation Programming



Class Hours



Participant Hours

- Continual trend upwards in classes offered and participant registration
- Available programming space is near capacity

“I’m a fool to do your dirty work” Steely Dan

Operations

Eight staff maintained:

- Over 1,000 acres of developed park land
- 21 miles of trails
- Approx. 9,200 urban trees
- 8.5 acres of shrub and tree beds
- Cemetery
- City facility grounds
- Roundabouts & medians

Completed approx. 100 unplanned maintenance projects in 2025

Staff is at capacity yet community growth continues to increase demand for services



“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together” Vincent Van Gogh

Completed Projects

- South Lacamas Creek Trailhead
 - 30% increase in use since completion
- Water Safety Signage (Everett St Bridge)

Ongoing Projects

- Crown Park Improvements
- Legacy Lands Master Plan
- Citywide Sports Fields Assessment Report

South Lacamas Creek Trailhead Project Summary

Project Type: Park Improvement
Total Project Cost: \$1,198,540 (\$500,000 grant funded)
Construction Timeline: March 2024 - November 2025

Project Details and Benefits

- Installation of restroom building
- New paved parking and sidewalks
- Wood seating on low gabion walls
- Updated entrance, signage, and furnishings



“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all” Helen Keller

Department Challenges

Staff Capacity

- Staff, including director, are spending approx. 20% of time on admin duties
- Operations team is moving to a 7-day per week schedule

Deteriorating Assets

- 3 of 13 playgrounds closed for safety reasons
- Park assets, including irrigation, are nearing the end of their useful life
- Camas Community Center is becoming less desirable to the community due to neglect

Operational Pressures

- Older park equipment & amenities are requiring more maintenance time
- Unplanned maintenance requests are increasing
- Non-resident use of parks
- Green space in new subdivisions



“The secret to getting ahead is getting started” Mark Twain

2026 Commission Preview & Departmental Objectives

Departmental Policies

Brainstorm Special Events

RCO Grant Applications

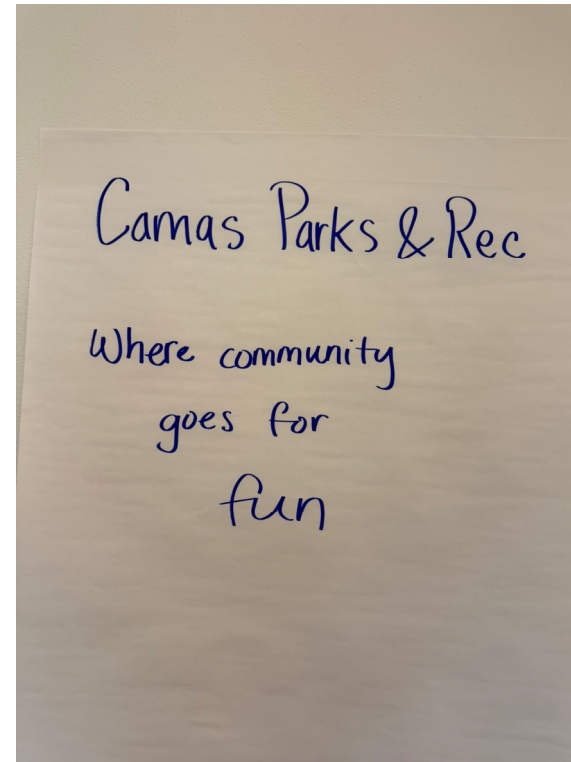
National Benchmarking Program

County Regional Parks Funding Model

2027/28 Budget Prep

Asset Management

Technology Upgrades



Wall chart statement from 2025/26 Department Planning Session

“Elvis has left the building” Horace Lee Logan

Parks & Recreation Commission Summary

- Parks & Recreation are a tourism and economic driver in the community
- All areas of the department are in a growth phase
- Staff and facilities are operating near capacity
- Investment in parks is resulting in positive outcomes
- Asset management and replacement strategy is a high priority

