

Winchester Lake State Park

Introduction: Winchester Lake State Park will come as a complete surprise to those who have never been there. Thousands of people drive right by it on any given day traveling Idaho's main north/south Highway 95. This highway traverses from Grangeville to Lewiston across a huge expanse of grasslands and farms on the Camas Prairie. This open land is occasionally punctuated by some forested canyons that cut into the flat plateau. But unbeknownst to the typical traveler, just 2 miles west of the highway at the foot of the Craig Mountains is the start of a densely stocked ponderosa pine forest. The state park is adjacent to the town of Winchester. It surrounds a 103-acre lake, and for the most part is completely forested.. The park offers year-round recreation activities and has a modern campground. Although it started primarily as a fishing access area, today it is so much more in terms of scenery, recreation facilities, and outdoor fun.

Getting There: From north bound Highway 95, turn left on the exit that leads to Winchester. Follow Business 95 for about 2 miles into the town of Winchester and turn left on Camas St. Follow Camas St. as it curves left and becomes Olander Road. The park entrance is on the left. From south bound Highway 95, turn right at the Winchester exit. Follow Business 95 for about 1 mile into the town of Winchester. Business 95 will become Clark St. Turn left on Joseph Avenue and go about 3 blocks to Camas St. and turn right. Follow Camas St. as it curves left and becomes Olander Road. The park entrance is on the left.

Major Features:

The Lake: There is little doubt that the primary attraction of Winchester Lake State Park is the lake. This scenic lake surrounded by forest makes for a scenic setting for outdoor recreation. But Winchester Lake is a manmade reservoir, created by the damming of Lapwai Creek in 1910. The Lake was formed to serve as a mill pond, but by 1963 most of the marketable large-diameter timber in the area was harvested and the lake ceased to be used as a mill pond. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) purchased the lake from Potlatch Corporation in 1966. The lake has a surface area of about 100 acres. The primary stream that feeds into the lake is Lapwai Creek which drains a watershed of 7,800 acres. The lake acts as a settling basin for the watershed. The watershed includes approximately 3,419 acres of forest and range land, 3,295 acres of non-irrigated cropland, and 697 acres of pasture. Land uses in the Winchester Lake watershed consist of dryland farming, grazing, timber harvest and recreation. The Lake hosts populations of rainbow trout, largemouth bass, black crappie, and black bullhead, yellow perch and tiger muskie.

But because the lake is man-made and the flow of water from Lapwai Creek is often intermittent at best, the lake actually takes on attributes more related to a pond. Because the streams running into the lake are seasonal and dry up when the weather gets hot, there is no natural source of cool water to bring the temperature of the lake down in July and August. An Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) report indicated that Winchester Lake is severely eutrophic.

Because of overloading of nutrients, the lake was on the ragged edge of trout habitat in June 1999. Each summer phosphorous carried into the lake by erosion, was causing algae blooms to explode. The algae in combination with the hot summer sun shrinks the amount of

cold water habitat available for trout. The nutrient rich environment is a doubled edged sword. It allows fish to grow big fast but it can also choke the cold water of its oxygen and lead to fish kills. When algae dies and rots, it uses up dissolved oxygen as it sinks to the bottom. That causes the deeper areas of the lake to be deficient of oxygen. When the summer sun beats down on the water and warms the upper layers above 66 degrees, it creates a temperature - oxygen squeeze. The upper water layers are too warm for the trout and the deeper water doesn't have enough oxygen. It was shutting the trout out of 85% of the water volume in the lake.

In 1998, Winchester Lake was one of 962 waters in Idaho on EPA's polluted waters list. An effort was launched to come up with a plan to clean the lake by the end of the year. A federal court action required it to be done in five years.

One of the first ideas was to try to cool the water running into the lake from sources such as Lapwai Creek. Much of the watershed had historically been denuded of forests in favor of farms and grazing lands. It was thought that trees could be planted along the edges to shade and cool the creek. But in reality, not much can be done to cool the water coming into the lake, but the amount of algae growth could be reduced by reducing the amount of phosphorous coming into the lake.

A Lapwai Creek Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) was formed in 1998 and they developed a plan for the watershed in February 1999. A big part of the plan was coming up with limits to the amount of sediment Upper Lapwai Creek is allowed to carry into the lake. Also, local land owners in the upper Lapwai Creek watershed started to fence off the creeks that feed the lake from grazing cattle. Sediment basins were also installed.

In May 2002, The IDFG began on a project to attempt to cure the chronic summer malady that robs the water of oxygen. The IDFG installed an aeration system to pump water from the lakes depths, mix it with air and let it settle back to the bottom. A \$164,000 grant was obtained from EPA and IDEQ to implement this project. Eight aeration units were placed throughout the lake. Those boxy looking structures floating out in the middle of the lake are the aeration units.

Old Growth Ponderosa Pine: Although much of the forest in the park is second growth, on part of the park includes a spectacular grove of old growth ponderosa pine. The Craig Mountain Lumber Company started logging the area in 1909 to feed the lumber mill at Winchester. But community residents wanted to save a little bit of the old forest to serve as a town park and picnic grounds. The mill manager's wife who loved the trees on that peninsula and refused to let them be cut. So thanks to these early residents the beautiful grove of ponderosa pine can be found in the park at the Ponderosa Point Picnic Area. Ponderosa pine is the most common and widespread western conifer. The distribution of Ponderosa pine is sometimes said to outline the American West. It is the most economically important pine in the west and the only pine tree of significant commercial value. As with most pines, it is a sun-loving species that grows rapidly and has the ability to survive ground or surface fires. In the Rocky Mountain region, the needles are typically 3-6- inches long, in groups of three, and cones are usually 4-5 inches in length. The largest trees in the park began their lives approximately 220 years ago and today are among the largest of their kind in Idaho. Some reach heights over 180 feet, as tall as a fourteen story building.

The Park: Winchester Lake State Park is situated at 3,900 feet in elevation and consists of 418 acres. About 120,000 people visit the park each year. The park has four day use areas and three campground loops. Near the dam are found the Craig Mountain Fishing Access parking lots.

These facilities are provided by the IDFG at no charge. There are five parking lots and three fishing docks available here. Two vault toilets are also available here.

The Ponderosa Point Picnic Area and its spectacular grown of trees is located just outside the park entrance. Even though it is outside the entrance fee collection station, the \$5.00 per day motor vehicle entry fee is required for using this area. This area includes a parking lot, a group shelter, two vault toilets, a playground, 5 benches, a fishing dock, and 5 picnic tables.

The campground in Loop A include 22 standard campsites (no-hook-ups), 4 yurts, a vault toilet, and a fishing dock. At the end of Loop A is located a day use area that includes a parking lot, a vault toilet, 2 fishing docks, and three picnic tables.

The campground in Loop B includes 23 campsites with water and electrical hook-ups, one vault toilet and an improved restroom with flush toilets, sinks, and showers. The Loop C campground has 22 campsites with water and electrical hook-ups and two vault toilets.

The Boat Ramp Day Use Area has a gravel parking lot, a boat ramp with one courtesy dock, three fishing docks, one vault toilet, and 17 picnic tables.

The park includes an interesting trail system that encircles the lake. One of the prominent features of the park is the long trail bridge that crosses over the Lapwai Creek arm of the lake near the Boat Ramp Day Use Area.

Geology: Winchester Lake State Park is within a geologic area known as the Clearwater Plateau. This plateau is part of the Columbia River Basalt Group. Prior to the Miocene Epoch, the Clearwater Plateau was constructed of Permian and Triassic sedimentary and volcanic rock from the Seven Devil's Complex, as well as Cretaceous granite from the Idaho Batholith. The basement rock is composed of the Precambrian Belt series metasedimentary complex.

Dominating the geology of the Clearwater Plateau are the Columbia River Basalts. The Columbia River Basalt Group is composed of basalt erupted from 300 identified high volume basalt flows over a period of 11.5 million years. Eighty-seven percent of these eruptions occurred over a period of 1.5 million years. Underlying the Clearwater plateau are the Saddle Mountains, Wanapum, and Grande Ronde Basalts. These basalt flows erupted from fissures during Miocene times (6-17 million years ago) and covered much of eastern Washington, northern Oregon and adjacent parts of Idaho.

Following the formation of the Columbia River Basalts, the Clearwater Plateau experienced a period of structural deformation from the late Pliocene to early Pleistocene time period. Deformation from tilting and faulting created such features as the east trending Lewiston syncline and the northeast trending Craig Mountain anticline, which is dissected by the Limekiln Fault (also known as the Lime Point Fault and the Waha Escarpment).

Ecosystems and Plant Communities: At 3,900 feet in elevation, the lake is surrounded by conifers and brushy hillsides. This creates a situation where four ecosystems can be found: (1) ponderosa pine-Douglas fir forest; (2) riparian; (3) lake; and (4) wetlands..

Ponderosa pine-Douglas fir forest. The park is situated primarily in a ponderosa pine-Douglas Fir forest ecosystem. The ponderosa pines are dominant in the park, but scattered stands of Douglas fir are numerous as well. The plants found in this forest are: ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, western red cedar, western larch (tamarack), western hemlock, western white pine, Engelmann spruce, aspen, mountain ash, alder, and rocky mountain maple. This forest has an

under story of Utah honeysuckle, bunchberry, huckleberry, serviceberry, elderberry, dogwood, mock-orange (syringa), Oregon grape, wild rose, chokecherry, snowberry, blackberry, currant, dogwood,, black hawthorne, and oceanspray.

The keynote species is the western larch (*Larix occidentalis*) . The western larch is commonly known in Idaho as the tamarack. Although it is not rare at Winchester Lake State Park, it is certainly not as common as ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. It can be found in isolated stands in the park. Western larch is a species of larch native to the mountains of western North America, in Canada in southeastern British Columbia and southwestern Alberta, and in the United States in eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, northern Idaho, and western Montana. It is a large coniferous tree reaching 98 to 197 feet tall, with a trunk up to 4.9 feet in diameter. The crown is narrow and conical. The main branches are level to upswept, with the side branches often drooping. The leaves are needle-like, light green, ½ to 2 inches long, and very slender; they turn bright yellow in the fall, leaving the pale orange-brown shoots bare until the next spring. It is the only conifer in Idaho that loses its needles in the winter and the bright yellow color of the needles of the individual trees bears a sharp contrast to the sea of green of the surrounding coniferous forest. The seed cones are ½ to 2 inches long, with 40 to 80 seed scales and each scale bears an bract. The cones are red when immature, turning brown and the scales opening flat or reflexed to release the seeds when mature, four to six months after pollination. The old cones commonly remain on the tree for many years, turning dull gray-black. It grows at elevations of 1,600 to 7,900 feet, and is very cold tolerant, able to survive winter temperatures down to about -58 °F. It only grows on well-drained soils, avoiding waterlogged ground. The seeds are an important food for some birds, notably pine siskin, redpoll, and Two-barred crossbill. The wood is highly prized as firewood in the Pacific Northwest where it has been commonly and mistakenly called "tamarack." The wood burns with a sweet fragrance and a distinctive popping noise.

Riparian. There are some intermittent streams that run through the park that have some riparian vegetation such as: black cottonwood, alders, aspens, and willows. Since the water level of the lake does not vary greatly, this riparian vegetation can also be found along the lake shore.

Lake: The 105 acre lake is a man made reservoir. As such, it has had problems related to sedimentation and eutrophication. There is not a good flow of water coming in and exiting the lake, so circulation is poor. During the summer when temperatures rise, the lake suffers from a chronic algae blooms can affect the oxygen levels in the lake. But the IDFG has placed eight aeration units on the lake to remedy this situation and promote a healthy fishery. Fish known to be in the lake include: bluegill, pumpkinseed, sunfish, bullhead catfish, catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, rainbow trout, tiger muskie, and yellow perch.

Wetlands: The park includes several marshy inlets and two ponds. A variety of cattails, sedges and rushes can be found here.

Wildlife:

Mammals: The mammals known to be present in the park include: whitetail deer, muskrat, black bear, raccoon, and gray wolf.

The gray wolf (Canis lupus) is the keynote species. This is because not only is the Wolf Education and Research Center nearby, but also because it is believed that the gray wolf has now re-populated the Craig Mountain area as some sightings have occurred. So some individuals may occasionally be in the park. The gray wolf is also known as the timber wolf. It is a canine native to the wilderness and remote areas of Eurasia and North America. It is the largest extant member of its family, with males averaging 95 to 99 pounds, and females 79 to 85 pounds. It is distinguished from other Canis species by its larger size and less pointed features, particularly on the ears and muzzle. Its winter fur is long and bushy, and predominantly a mottled gray in color, although nearly pure white, red, or brown to black also occur. The gray wolf is the second most specialized member of the genus Canis as demonstrated by its adaptations to hunting large prey, its more gregarious nature, and its highly advanced expressive behavior. It is nonetheless closely related enough to smaller Canis species, such as the eastern wolf and coyote to produce fertile hybrids. It is the only species of Canis to have a range encompassing both the Old and New Worlds, and originated in Eurasia during the Pleistocene, colonizing North America on at least three separate occasions. It is a social animal, traveling in nuclear families consisting of a mated pair, accompanied by the pair's adult offspring. The gray wolf is typically an apex predator throughout its range, with only humans posing a serious threat to it. It feeds primarily on large ungulates, though it also eats smaller animals, livestock, carrion, and garbage. The gray wolf is one of the world's best known and well researched animals, with probably more books written about it than any other wildlife species. It has a long history of association with humans, having been despised and hunted in most pastoral communities because of its attacks on livestock, while conversely being respected in some agrarian and hunter-gatherer societies. Although the fear of wolves is pervasive in many human societies, the majority of recorded attacks on people have been attributed to animals suffering from rabies.

Wolf Education & Research Center

About 1 mile from the Winchester State Park entrance is the Wolf Education & Research Center. It is located on tribal trust lands of the Nez Perce Tribe. The Wolf Center is located on 20 acres of rolling timberland with meadows and streams. There are very spacious enclosures built to house wolves who have been rescued from other places. This is the largest wolf enclosure of its kind in North America. There is a small visitor center and you may choose from a mile of various trails to explore and learn about the flora and fauna of the region. The Wolf Center is open to the public between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends annually and by reservation. The Wolf Camp Trail enables you to explore trails and areas that are home to the Owyhee Pack. For a brief overview of the property, stop at observation deck and walk to the Meadow after passing the Weyekin Trail or visit Raven's Roost and where the Owyhee Pack lives. There is no time limit but you must leave before dark. If you give the center at least 24 hour advanced notice, you can enjoy a 90 minute tour conducted by staff where you can learn about wolf history, the threats they face and the benefits they offer to ecology.

Birds: The birds known to be present in the park include: Canada goose, osprey, great blue heron, bald eagle, Stellar's jay, raven, belted kingfisher, spotted sandpiper, killdeer, grey partridge, wild

turkey, wood duck, American widgeon, American coot, northern shoveler, mallard, common loon, western grebe, pied-billed grebe, white pelican, double-crested cormorant, tundra swan, trumpeter swan, snow goose, gadwall, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, bufflehead, common merganser, and greater yellowlegs.

Reptiles: The reptiles known to be present in the park include: painted turtle and garter snake.

Fish: The fish known to be present in the park include: bluegill, pumpkinseed, sunfish, bullhead catfish, catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, rainbow trout, tiger muskie, and yellow perch.

Cultural History: Prior to arrival of Euroamericans, the North Fork of the Clearwater River was long inhabited for more than 8,000 years by the ancestors of the Nez Perce Indians. They called themselves the Nee-mee-poo. The horse was acquired in the mid 1700s and the Nez Perce became excellent breeders of the well-known Appaloosa Horse.

From 1700 to 1830 the name “Nez Perce” was given to the tribe by early Euroamericans. Their horses enabled them to travel to the plains, and many elements of Plains Indian culture were adopted. Also, items from Euroamerican culture were traded to the Nez Perce. By 1880, some Nez Perce adopted Euroamerican technology, dress, language, and religion while others maintained their traditional lifeways.

In 1855, the Nez Perce signed a treaty with the U.S. Government reserving 7.5 million acres of land. The Nez Perce Indians were the only tribe in the Northwest to ally with the Americans even before the 1855 Treaty. The reservation established by this treaty included parts of Washington and Idaho and much of what would later become Clearwater County.

Then gold was discovered in 1860 by E. D. Pierce, bringing gold-hungry miners onto the reservation illegally. Rather than try to keep non-Indians off the reservation a new treaty was proposed. The 1863 Treaty took away about 90% of the reservation land and created a split in the tribe between Treaty and Non-Treaty Indians. Winchester Lake is within the 1863 reservation boundaries.

In 1887 the Dawes Act opened the reservation to homesteading that resulted in non-Indians owning parcels of fee-patented land within the reservation next to Indian trust allotments. The land was first allotted to each tribal member according to age, status in the tribe and gender. The land not allotted to an Indian on the reservation was then opened for non-Indians to homestead.

History: Missionaries like Henry H. Spalding and Marcus Whitman brought Christianity into this region in the 1830s. Spalding started a mission on present day Lapwai Creek at Spalding, Idaho. Whitman established a mission in Walla Walla Valley in Washington State. Henry Harmon Spalding (1803–1874), and his wife Eliza Hart Spalding (1807–1851) were prominent Presbyterian missionaries and educators who would become missionaries to the Nez Perce. They traveled overland where only fur trappers and Native Americans had tread. They reached Fort Hall on August 3, 1836 and Old Fort Boise on August 19. Eleven days later they were at Fort Walla Walla. They journeyed to Lapwai and settled into their new home on November 29, 1836. When the Spaldings established their mission to the Nez Perce, they also established the first white home in what is today the state of Idaho. They were also responsible, in 1839, for bringing the first printing press into the territory. Spalding was generally successful in his interaction with

the Nez Perce, baptizing several of their leaders and teaching tribal members. He developed an appropriate written script for the Nez Perce language, and translated parts of the Bible, including the entire book of Matthew, for the use of his congregation.

William Craig was born in 1807 in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. He was an American frontiersman and trapper. In 1840 Craig and former trapper friends Robert Newell and Joe Meek acted as guides to a missionary party to Fort Hall, Idaho and went on to the Whitman Mission near Walla Walla, Washington. While Newell and Meek and their native wives and children sought a new life in the Willamette Valley of what is now Oregon, Craig joined his Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) family along the Clearwater River and Lapwai Creek of what is now Idaho. Craig had, in 1838, married Pahtissah (he renamed her Isabel), a Nez Perce woman who was the daughter of Hin-mah-tute-ke-kaikt also known as Thunder Eyes. Craig was friendly with the Nez Perce tribe. Rather than assisting Spalding in working towards converting the Nez Perce to the Euroamerican lifestyle, Craig encourage the Nez Perce in maintaining their lifeways. Craig served as an Indian agent at Fort Boise and on the Nez Perce Reservation. He also ran a ferry across the snake River at Lewiston and was postmaster at Walla Walla. Craig served as interpreter between the Nez Perce leaders and Isaac Stevens at the Treaty of 1855 held in the Walla Walla Valley, and again at the Treaty of 1856. The Treaty of 1855 granted to William Craig and his wife, Isabel, 640 acres of land in the Lapwai Valley, then part of the newly formed Nez Perce reservation. William Craig died of a stroke in 1869. William Craig, his wife Isabel, and others of his family are buried in the cemetery at Jaques' Spur in the Lapwai Valley, Idaho, just north of Craig Mountain, which carries his name.

On May 4, 1863, Lieutenant Colonel Maury of the cavalry was assigned to command an the expedition against the Snake Indians. The expedition was intended to punish the Snakes for atrocities committed in 1860 as well as to protect settlers moving into the area.. At the same time there was need of troops on the Nez Perce Reservation, where trouble was threatened between two political parties among the Indians, a portion, under Lawyer, being favorable to Americans, and another division under Big Thunder, opposing the passage of miners across the reservation. A complaint was received about two white men that had erected a house laid claim to a portion of the reservation lands. Captain Currey took his company twelve miles down the river to the squatters' cabin, which his men demolished and threw into the river. In this impartial manner military government maintained something like order over this wild and lawless region. On June 13, 1863, Maury's expedition left Lapwai for the Snake-river country. They journeyed up Lapwai Creek and through Craig Mountain and undoubtedly through the area that would become Winchester Lake. They traveled through broken ridges to the Salmon River where a ferry enabled them to cross with the train of a hundred and fifty pack mules without swimming. In crossing the high ridge between the Salmon and Snake rivers, however, several of these animals lost their footing, and were fell down the rock-ribbed mountain sides.

In 1887 the Dawes Act opened the Nez Perce reservation to homesteading that resulted in non-Indians owning parcels of fee-patented land within the reservation next to Indian trust allotments. First land was allotted land to each tribal member according to age, status in the tribe and gender. The land not allotted to an Indian on the reservation was then opened for non-Indians to homestead. The Nez Perce Reservation allotments were completed in November 1895 and homesteading on the unallotted land started Nov. 18, 1895.

The Town of Winchester was established in 1899. Charles Krohne made a claim under the Homestead Act and was granted a patent to 320 acres in 1905. The Craig Mountain Lumber

Company began purchasing land at the site in 1907 and would receive an Indian Fee Patent in 1909 to 101 acres. They bought up several other tracts and began building a sawmill.

The mill brought prosperity to the county, and in 1910 the town of Winchester relocated from approximately three miles north of the current site to take advantage of the economic boom. By 1912 the town included six boarding houses/hotels, a hospital, restaurant, two barber shops, a bank, two hardware stores, two theaters, grocery and mercantile stores, a feed store, a livery stable, a pool hall and a pharmacy.

The Camas Prairie Railroad reached Craigmont in December 1907. This only after construction of some spectacular bridges and trestles. The lumber company constructed a branch railroad from Craig Junction to bring the logs from surrounding camps, and built a forty-foot concrete dam to form a millpond for storing the logs. The dam was constructed across the lower end of what was called Anna Luke's Meadow to hold the flow from Lapwai Creek. The millpond, known then as Lapwai Lake, is called Winchester Lake today. As early as 1924, sections of the lake were used for recreation including camping, swimming and fishing.

The dam included a spillway and a wagon road that crossed over to the newly relocated town of Winchester. Later an elevated footbridge was built to make it easier for town residents to get to their jobs at the mill. During this same time Craig Mountain Lumber Company built several railroad spurs to lumber camps in Mason Butte and Soldiers Meadows. Horses were used to haul logs down to the railroads until tractors became available around 1938.

At the rail heads logs were loaded onto empty flatcars pushed underneath the steam powered loader. Timber supplies in the Winchester area lasted about 30 years with as much as 6.730 board feet of lumber sometimes available from individual logs.

The mill had began sawing lumber on July 4, 1910, using two single cutting band saws with a capacity of 120,000 board feet per ten-hour shift. Except for temporary shut-down during the depression (1930-35), the mill operated under the Craig Mountain name until 1950 when it was sold to Hallack and Howard, who sold out to Boise-Cascade in 1960. The mill was closed for lack of lumber in 1964.

In 1967, what was left of the mill burned to the ground and the IDFG bought the property. In 1969, the IDPR assumed management of the land and developed Winchester Lake State Park.

Park History: In 1909, when the Craig Mountain Lumber Company was formed and construction of the mill began, the trees at the Ponderosa Point Picnic Area were set aside as a community park for the Town of Winchester.

In 1967, the IDFG bought the mill site and lakeside properties. They transferred management of the site to the IDPR in the following year. The IDPR continues to operate the park under agreement with the IDFG. The park office and visitor center building was built with funds from Governor Kempthorne's "Experience Idaho" initiative in about 2008.

Recreation Activities:

Camping: The park has 69 campsites available in three campground loops. Water and electrical hook-ups are available in 47 of these campsites. The campground has an improved restroom with flush toilets, sinks, and showers and 4 vault toilets are conveniently situated throughout the campground. There are 4 yurts located lakeside that are tucked in among the conifers. Yurts provide a unique camping experience. They are furnished with a bunk bed, futon, table and

benches. There is an electric light inside, and they are heated. Outside, you can cook on a the fire ring. Each yurt sleeps five. The park does not have an RV dump station, but there is one in the town of Winchester.

Picnicking: The Ponderosa Point Day Use Area has a group shelter, two vault toilets, a playground, 5 benches, a fishing dock, and 5 picnic tables. There is a small day use area at the end of Loop A that has a vault toilet, 2 fishing docks, and three picnic tables. The Boat Ramp Day Use Area has three fishing docks, one vault toilet, and 17 picnic tables. The Day Use Area has picnic table pads that protrude into the shoreline of the lake as an added amenity for enjoying the scenery.

Fishing: The most popular activity at Winchester is fishing. While many anglers bring small boats with electric trolling motors, many others choose to fish from the shoreline. A total of nine fishing docks have been placed for this purpose in various locations around the lake. The Craig Mountain fishing access area near the dam is provided by the IDFG and there is no daily fee for use of this area. Trout are planted annually by the IDFG. Fishing for bullhead and large-mouth bass is popular also. The lake provides excellent nutrients and supports populations of: bluegill, pumpkinseed, sunfish, bullhead catfish, catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, rainbow trout, tiger muskie, and yellow perch.

Boating: There is a boat ramp on the lake and small boats are allowed but gasoline engines are not. The lake is basically a “no-wake” lake where passive water sports such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, etc. are encouraged. Canoes are available for rent.

Swimming: While swimming in the lake is allowed, there are no developed or designated swimming beaches.

Trails: The park has 5 miles of trails available for hiking. One unique feature is the long hiking bridge over the Lapwai Creek cove. The 3.3 miles Lakeshore Trail goes all the way around the lake and can be used by hiking and mountain biking. In the winter, this trail can be used for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. ,

Nature Study: The discovery interpretive trail shows you that healthy forests are alive with many different kinds of interdependent life forms and natural processes. The trail takes an easy 30-45 minute walk. Total length is 3/4 mile. The Wolf Education and Research Center is located about

Please Remember

- There are no designated swimming areas. Swim at your own risk.
- Open fires are not allowed on the shoreline.
- Park in marked stalls only.
- Personal floatation devices are required for any water craft on the lake or river.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times, and are not permitted in the buildings.
- All vehicles must pay the \$5.00 per day entry fee even when there is no entrance station or the entrance station is closed.
- The lake is generally a “no-wake” lake and only electric motors are allowed on watercraft.
- All watercraft must display a current invasive species decal.

1 miles from the park entrance. It offers a number of opportunities for nature study. Winchester Lake State Park is on the Idaho Birding Trail. There is an abundance of bird watching opportunities in the park.

Biking: The Lakeshore trail is open to mountain biking. Other bicycles may be ridden on the park roads.

Winter Sports: Snowshoeing, ice fishing, ice skating, and nordic skiing may be enjoyed.

Playground: A playground is located in the Ponderosa Point Day Use Area.

Visitor Center: The visitor center at the park entrance has some displays and exhibits. Souvenirs, t-shirts and selected outdoor equipment is also for sale.

Resource Management Issues: The park does not have a master plan available.

Suggestions for the Future: Winchester Lake State Park is probably one of the more complete state parks in the Idaho State Park System. But as complete as it is there is still some unfinished business. The following are suggested improvements to the park.

- The Ponderosa Point Day Use Area is currently outside the vehicle entrance station and perimeter of the main park. This necessitates the park staff to check compliance and conduct fee collection at the site, even when the entrance station is open. IDPR should consider a developmental project that would result in construction of a park road that starts between the visitor center/office and the yurt loop. The road should extend down and around the cove that separates the main part of the park from Ponderosa Point. The road would then lead into the Ponderosa Point parking lot. Rip/rap and fill may be required for the project. The entrance to Ponderosa Point from Olander Road would then be eliminated. Placement of a barrier fence between this new park road and Olander Road would be required to prevent unauthorized access. It is also suggested that a paved ADA trail be installed parallel to this park road to provide a connection for walkers, hikers, and bicyclists from the main part of the park to Ponderosa Point. A hiking trail should then be extended along the edge of the lake shore from Ponderosa Point that connects to the IDFG fishing access site
- IDPR should consider exploring the possibility of developing a joint use agreement with the Nez Perce Tribe for Nez Perce trust property to essentially expand the park to the southwest. This proposal should include the trust property in section 6 that is east of Olander Road and Forrest Road. And would include about ½ mile of Lapwai Creek above Winchester Lake. The purpose of the joint use agreement would be for watershed protection, wildlife habitat protection and a buffer zone to the west of the campgrounds. The only development that would be proposed would be a more extensive hiking trail system.