

SPLASH PAD EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

January 2016



Photo 1 – Example only. Centennial Park, Las Vegas, NV



Photo 2 – Example only. Rotary Park, Wenatchee, WA

Introduction:

Splash pads come in many different sizes and shapes; they come with different water features and have various amenities. Typically splash pads avoid any water ponding. Water is sprayed through a nozzle. There's generally not so much "splashing" as there is "spraying". Chelan PUD staff has visited splash pad sites in Wenatchee, WA, Tacoma, WA and in the greater Las Vegas area.

Background:

During the last several months Chelan PUD has conducted surveys at various forums. The surveys provided a list of parks and asked respondents to select a park for which they would like to have a splash pad built. The overwhelming majority selected Walla Walla Park as their preferred location. Walla Walla Park is located in Chelan county's largest urban center and therefore appears to be consistent with the Public Power Benefit slogan: the best, for the most for the longest. PUD staff generally agrees that Walla Walla Park, of all PUD parks, is the most logical location for a splash pad. Determining where to site a splash pad within Walla Walla park would need to be studied further.

Primary Considerations:

1. **Amenities:** Splash pad amenities would likely be needed. These would include bathroom/changing room, shade canopies, benches, lighting and fencing to name a few.
2. **Parking:** The amount of existing parking was established based on existing amenities. If a splash pad is built then additional parking will be needed. The amount and location of additional parking would be a function of the size/capacity of the splash pad. How much parking to add would therefore also require additional study.
3. **Staffing and Resources:** A new park employee classification would be required to operate splash pad. The skill set required would be equivalent to a water treatment plant operator especially if water use is re-circulated.

4. Location: During 2015, public survey forms were collected at various events. The surveys provided a list of parks and asked respondents to select a park for which they would like to have a splash pad built. 744 surveys were collected. Of those, the overwhelming majority (284) selected Walla Walla Park as their preferred location. Wenatchee Riverfront came in second with 173 votes, and Rocky Reach Dam third, with 119 votes. A list of all votes is included in the Preliminary Findings Report.

Costs

O&M Costs - \$50,000 - \$100,000 annually

Operation and maintenance costs are dependent on the size of the facility and in large part the type of water system used (single vs. re-circulated). Preliminary research indicates that the minimum annual cost will be greater than \$50,000. That number could increase depending on life cycle costs. Because of the relative newness of spray pads there is very little data available on life cycle cost.

Capital Cost - \$800K to \$2M

Preliminary findings indicate the capital cost to construct a splash pad at Walla Walla Park would range from \$800K to \$2M. This value is very preliminary and is based on research gathered from other splash pad operators. Additional study is warranted to determine a more precise cost range.

Summary Table:

Project	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Comments
Splash Pad	Capital \$800k - \$2M O&M \$50k - \$100k annually	The cost range depicts considerations such as size of the splash pad feature, location, water source, etc.

Advisory Committee Input:

- Consider parking and public transportation to ensure the feature is accessible to the most people.
- Consider whether an educational value can be added (e.g. tell a story about fish or hydropower).
- Consider the cost and whether another option would provide more value for the money.
- Consider avoiding being on the cutting edge of something new. Let technology evolve and be tested before committing.

Next Steps: Based on outcome of pre-feasibility study and Advisory Committee feedback, put splash pad option back into Public Power Benefit project list for future consideration.

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SPLASH PAD FEASIBILITY STUDY - PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Introduction: Over the last several months Chelan PUD staff has been gathering information on splash pads. A formal feasibility study has not yet been conducted. The following bullet points provide a high level look at some of the information gathered by staff. Chelan PUD needs your input to ascertain the community's vision of a splash pad. In addition feedback is also needed to determine an acceptable level of cost. For example we would like to know if there's a dollar amount, if exceeded, that may influence the community to select a different park/recreation amenity than the splash pad. If the information gathered is consistent with the community's vision for a splash pad then the PUD will proceed with a formal, technical feasibility study to evaluate building a splash pad at a specific PUD park.

- **Naming** - Splash pads are also referred to as: spraygrounds, spray parks and water parks.
- **What is a splash pad?** Splash pads come in many different sizes and shapes; they come with different water features and have various amenities. Typically splash pads avoid any water ponding. Water is sprayed through a nozzle. There's generally not so much "splashing" as there is "spraying". Chelan PUD staff has visited splash pad sites in Wenatchee, WA, Tacoma, WA and in the greater Las Vegas area. Pictures of splash pads from those areas help illustrate a vision for what could be.
- **Popularity** – Splash pads have grown in popularity over the last 10 – 15 years. When given a choice many communities are opting to build splash pads rather than swimming pools. This choice is largely due to the more favorable economics of building, maintaining and operating a splash pad versus a pool. This doesn't mean that splash pads don't cost, it just means they cost less than swimming pools. Because splash pads are a relatively recent fad not much data is available about the true costs of splash pads. Opponents have expressed concern that having fewer pools available to the public will result in less opportunity for children to learn how to swim. Proponents argue that the better economy of splash pads means greater accessibility to larger percentage of the general public.
- **Location** - During the last several months Chelan PUD has conducted surveys at various forums. The surveys provided a list of parks and asked respondents to select a park for which they would like to have a splash pad built. The overwhelming majority selected Walla Walla Park as their preferred location. Walla Walla Park is located in Chelan county's largest urban center and therefore appears to be consistent with the Public Power Benefit slogan: the best, for the most for the longest. PUD staff generally agrees that Walla Walla Park, of all PUD parks, is the most logical location for a splash pad. Determining where to site a splash pad within Walla Walla park would need to be studied further.
- **Capacity** - The classic quote from the movie Field of Dreams, "If you build it, [they] will come" likely applies in this case. At times the existing "dry" playground at Walla Walla Park has seen as many as 100 kids at one time (more than one person can count). The size of a splash pad has a direct correlation with cost (ie. the bigger the splash pad, the more it costs). Budget will therefore likely control the size of the splash pad. If a decision is made to continue with a more technical feasibility study then the PUD would likely evaluate the costs of small, medium and large splash pads.
- **Parking** - The amount of existing parking was established based on existing amenities. If a splash pad is built then additional parking will be needed. The amount and location of additional parking would be a function of the size/capacity of the splash pad. How much parking to add would therefore also require additional study.
- **Utilities** - Development of a splash pad would require analyzing capacity of existing infrastructure specifically utilities (ie. domestic water, storm water, waste water and power including lighting). It's very

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likely that utilities currently serving the site would be inadequate therefore requiring utility work prior to any splash pad construction.

- Dry Playground - PUD staff has visited splash pads in other cities and noted that they all have one thing in common, all are built adjacent to “dry” playground. The construction of a “wet” playground adjacent to an existing “dry” playground will certainly expand use of both.
- Permits - If a splash pad is built in an existing park the impacts to environment are viewed as negligible. The PUD would need to obtain a water recreation facility permit administered through Washington State Department of Health. The PUD would also likely need to obtain building permits through the local municipality (if Walla Walla then City of Wenatchee). In addition there would be an annual permit with the Chelan-Douglas Health District to operate the splash pad.
- Amenities - Splash pad amenities would likely be needed. These would include bathroom/changing room, shade canopies, benches, lighting and fencing to name a few.
- Features - There are at least three companies that supply splash pad equipment: Vortex, Water Odyssey and Waterplay. Each company offers a unique line of products. Selection of a company and selection within their product lines could easily be an involved stakeholder engagement process of its own. The PUD would likely select a company based on their product availability and track record of maintainability.
- Water Use - A major design decision comes in selecting whether to employ a single use versus re-circulated water system. Both systems would require a mechanical building; however the re-circulated system would require a much larger building to house a much more complex treatment system. The PUD would likely pursue the re-circulated system based solely on the desire to conserve water and therefore be environmentally responsible.
- Surface Type - EDPM (Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer ie. rubber) provides a non-slip, non-abrasive, shock absorbing surface. Concrete would be less expensive to install and maintain than EDPM. In either case good water drainage is a must. Poor water surface drainage leads to increased maintenance costs.
- Staffing - A new park employee classification would be required to operate splash pad. The skill set required would be equivalent to a water treatment plant operator especially if water use is re-circulated.
- Risks - A splash pad is susceptible to waterborne illness. A splash pad has similar risks as a dry play ground in terms of risk for injury. All amenities in a public park are subject to vandalism. Risks cannot be eliminated but can be minimized through good design and operations.
- O&M Costs - Operation and maintenance costs are dependent on the size of the facility and in large part the type of water system used (single vs. re-circulated). Preliminary research indicates that the minimum annual cost will be greater than \$50,000. That number could increase depending on life cycle costs. Because of the relative newness of splash pads there is very little data available on life cycle cost.
- Capital Cost - Preliminary findings indicate the capital cost to construct a splash pad at Walla Walla Park would range from \$800K to \$2M. This value is very preliminary. Additional study is warranted to determine a more precise cost range.

Summary:

- What is the community’s vision of a splash pad?
- Are costs in line with expectations? Or is there a desire to consider other options?
- Is Walla Walla Park the preferred location?
- Should Chelan PUD proceed with formal technical feasibility study?

Appendix A

Chelan County PUD - Public Power Benefit – Recreation and Parks

Splash Pad Location Survey Results (2015)

Location	# of Votes
Walla Walla Point	284
Wenatchee Riverfront	173
Rocky Reach	119
Wenatchee Confluence	113
Lincoln Rock	70
Kirby Billingsley	54
Entiat	52
Chelan Riverwalk	35
Beebe Bridge	31
Manson Bay	30
Chelan Falls	18
Daroga	17
Chelan Falls Powerhouse	11
Old Mill	9
Orondo River	8
Badger Mountain	2
Nowhere	2