



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
Portland District

# Albert Philippi Park proposed temporary closure

## Frequently asked questions

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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Philippi Park Camping and Day Use Area, located near Rufus, Ore., is operated and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is a boat-in park on the John Day River, with dock facilities, restrooms, a shower facility and 35 camp sites. Philippi Park receives approximately 13,000 visitors per year, about one percent of John Day Dam's annual visitation.



The Corps is proposing to temporarily close Philippi Park to camping and day use for the 2013 season due to budget shortfalls, which impact all aspects of operations, including sufficient ranger staff to manage and oversee visitors; safety and law enforcement; sufficient maintenance staff to mow and maintain the park; and failing infrastructure.

If the park closes, it will be managed under caretaker status. The Corps would post closure signs, barricade the restroom/shower building, remove the docks, turn off power and water systems. Patrols for safety, security and resource protection would continue.

We have provided some questions and answers you may find helpful in understanding our upcoming decision about and our plans for Philippi Park.

**Q: How long has Philippi Park been in operation?**

**A:** Philippi Park has been in operation for more than 35 years.

**Q: Why are you proposing to temporarily close Philippi Park?**

**A:** Reduced staffing, declining budgets and the high cost to run Philippi Park have made it difficult to operate and maintain. In addition, the John Day Lock and Dam recreation budget has declined by 18 percent since 2008, with a forecast of continued downward trends. This means we must make difficult choices, like closing Philippi Park. Philippi is the most expensive park to operate at the John Day-Willow Creek Project. The average cost to operate and maintain most John Day parks is less than \$2 per visitor, while the cost at Philippi is more than \$10. Some of the high costs are due to the park's remote location. For example, we must transport all equipment for operation and maintenance activities by boat and this can be very costly. Another concern is that the water and septic systems require frequent repairs due to age.



**Q. Will this be a permanent closure?**

**A.** We are proposing a temporary closure for 2013. If we can identify a viable option for managing Philippi during the 2013 calendar year, it could possibly reopen in 2014, but at this time we have no plans to reopen Philippi Park.

**Q. Can the Corps just charge a visitor fee?**

**A.** The Corps of Engineers has the authority to charge fees, but does not have the authority to retain those fees and use them for park operation and maintenance. Charging fees will not improve the efficiency of the park. There are also the larger issues of failing infrastructure and the time it takes to travel and transport maintenance staff and supplies to the site.

**Q. Are there other camping and recreation alternatives in the area?**

**A.** Yes, a couple of miles downstream from Philippi are LePage Park Campground and Day Use Area, a developed Corps-managed recreation site. LePage includes a swim beach, picnic tables and boat ramp with paved parking. In addition, within an easy drive you'll find Columbia Hills State Park, Maryhill State Park and Crow Butte Park in Washington and Arlington Park and Boardman Park in Oregon. All of these parks offer similar camping opportunities are all within about 50 miles of Philippi Park.

**Q. How does the Corps decide which park to close?**

**A.** The Corps evaluates recreation areas using criteria that include cost per visitor, visitation, conditions of infrastructure and whether alternative facilities are available nearby. Temporary closure decisions are made at the District level, while any permanent closure must be approved by the Northwestern Division office, our regional headquarters.

**Q. Have you considered using volunteers to run Philippi Park?**

**A.** The Corps has an active volunteer program, and we recognize them as valuable assets to our organization. Despite the term volunteer, the Corps still has responsibilities to train, supervise and ensure the safety of these citizens. Operating and maintaining a campground can be challenging. Volunteers must be qualified and physically able to perform the necessary work. Operating the campground is only half of the need, maintenance is the other piece. Based on the age and frequency of repairs to the Philippi infrastructure, significant financial investment in the park will be necessary in the coming years.

**Q: May I hunt at Philippi Park, since it will be closed to camping?**

**A:** In general hunting is prohibited in developed recreation areas. Although the park would be closed, we have not made any long term decisions on how the park will be managed in the future. We still have park infrastructure at the site that is under the Corps' care and custody.

