

Eastern Washington Veterans' Cemetery

Paying Tribute to our Region's Veterans



Introduction

On Memorial Day 2009, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to honor the start of a project for the first state cemetery for veterans of the armed forces. The project began when Washington State legislators were asked to sponsor House Bill 1292, which authorized the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to establish a State Veteran's Cemetery in eastern Washington. The site is located near the city of Medical Lake in Spokane County. Currently, 37 percent of all veterans living in eastern Washington live in Spokane County.

Project highlights

The most important highlight of this project is that families will have a local resting place for their loved ones. The closest veterans' cemeteries are federal cemeteries located in Kent, Washington and Boise, Idaho. Families and friends are often unable to travel the long distances to visit the deceased. There are 143,000 veterans in eastern Washington that will be served by the cemetery. The cemetery will also serve veterans that reside in northern Idaho.

The WDVA was surprised to discover that although the site was adjacent to a lake, it was also located in an area that has a seasonally changing water table. The lack of adequate groundwater supply presented an environmental obstacle for obtaining the water needed for grounds maintenance. At the urging of Ecology staff, the parties began to explore using the reclaimed water from the city of Medical Lake's water reclamation plant. This facility produces Class A reclaimed water for the primary beneficial use of augmenting lake levels in West Medical Lake. The reclaimed water is also used in the city's system for irrigating the grounds at the treatment plant and at the adjacent city-owned park. The cemetery grounds will withdraw water from West Medical Lake to use for irrigation. This will provide the cemetery with an efficient, reliable source of water, as well as help conserve the region's groundwater supply.



Location of the new Veterans Cemetery site near West Medical Lake and Medical Lake, WA

The facility is being designed by JGM Landscape Architects, who previously worked on both the Tahoma National and Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries.



Partners

Many people devoted their time and expertise to getting the project started. The staff at the city of Medical Lake has successfully operated their reclamation facility since 2001, and has shown strong support for this project. The city's wastewater reclamation permit was written by Ecology and the Department of Health to allow and encourage extending future reuse in accordance with the state's commitment to our water resources.

Lucy Peterschmidt, a reclaimed water engineer for the Department of Ecology, and John Covert, a hydrogeologist for the Department of Ecology, worked many hours and provided thoughtful and innovative ideas. John provided the initial idea of using reclaimed water and Lucy was instrumental in working with the WDVA and the city to provide assistance with the implementation of John's idea. Michele Vazquez, from the Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance, coordinated with all the agencies to ensure necessary permits were obtained and facilitated between all involved.

Other agencies and entities involved were:

- Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Washington State Department of Health
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Washington Department of Social & Health Services



Members of the Armed Forces at the Groundbreaking Ceremony

Funding

Funding for the project was provided through a Veteran's Administration Cemetery Construction grant. The grant paid for all design, construction, and equipment costs. The state of Washington purchased the land and will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the cemetery. Money from the sales of armed forces license plates will help pay for the ongoing maintenance and operation of the cemetery.

For more information

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