



JIM CREEK

Navy Community Recreation Area

NAVAL RADIO STATION (T)

JIM CREEK

A
SPECIAL HISTORY
A
SPECIAL PLACE

By P. Hollister - April 2000
Updated by R. Leavy & M. Yates
September 2016

© Copyright MWR Jim Creek

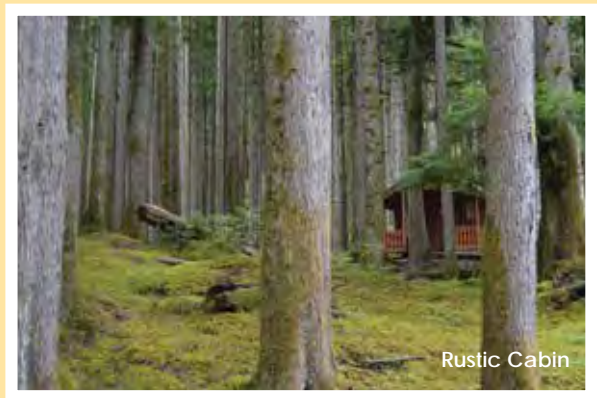


World War II taught the Free World many lessons; not the least of which that constant vigilance is the price of freedom. Thus, the United States Navy recognized the need for a facility to provide instant communications with the Pacific Submarine Fleet. A survey was conducted for suitable sites in the Pacific Northwest and the perfect place was found here at Jim Creek. In 1949, the Navy purchased 5,000 acres in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains near Arlington, Washington, and construction began on the world's most powerful military radio transmitter.

When it was finished in 1954, the giant antenna towers stretched from mountain peak to mountain peak, and an indispensable link was forged between our Navy personnel and their homeland. Brigadier General David Sarnoff, who was at that time Chairman of the Board of Radio Corporation of America (RCA), pressed the transmitter key at the dedication ceremonies. This sent the first message to naval units everywhere, on the sea and under the sea, from Admiral Robert B. Carney, Chief of Naval Operations: "With this message, we forge another link between you and your homeland. With it, we build a new security channel from America to the naval units which form its outer ramparts of defense."

The valley below the 200-foot tall towers has 3,000-foot high sides and stretches a little over a mile long. The sides of the hills are kept bare of vegetation and are crisscrossed with buried cables, which are tied into overhead cables, strung across the valley between the towers. This turns the valley into a giant dish antenna. Because of its important to national security, the transmitter has survived.

When it was first built, the area where Jim Creek's Recreation Offices and Lodge now stand, was filled with barracks and support buildings for a large station of 150 personnel.



Rustic Cabin

In 1972, the transmitter station was scheduled to be replaced by a station in Hawaii, but that facility never got off the ground and the Jim Creek Transmitter Station was retained. Since that time, it has been operating with reduced staff.

It is still state-of-the-art in producing low-frequency transmissions. Its function remains to provide communications for the command, operational control and administration of the Naval establishment. In addition, it manages and operates the facilities of the Defense Communications Systems.

The land surrounding the transmitter was mostly old-growth forest and was owned by Soundview Pulp Company, which had begun clear-cutting the timber. When the Navy purchased the land from Soundview, it received the title to the land, but not the timber. By the end of 1954, the entire property had been logged off except for a narrow strip of old-growth forest around Twin Lakes and Cub Creek, about 225 acres.

Soundview Pulp Company sold out to Scott Paper Company. Scott also acquired the timber rights to the old-growth area, and in 1969, it began to clear-cut all the remaining timber. However, because the forest was considered part of a mission-essential watershed for the transmitter (the water from Cub Creek is used to fight fires and to cool equipment - the watershed itself is the base's water supply), the Navy stopped the cutting of trees in the area. While Scott could cut its own trees, it was prohibited from cutting any of the Navy's trees, as defined by the original deed.

The wording of the deed granted Scott (formerly Soundview) the right to harvest merchantable timber that was standing or lying on the land, as of April 12, 1950. Any trees that were 11.9 inches in diameter or smaller, on April 12, 1950, belonged to the Navy. The estimated value of this timber was \$2.9 million. The steepness and inaccessibility of the terrain made it difficult to harvest and helped spare this section of the forest.

In 1983, Walter Briggs, the Engineering Field Activity Northwest Forester, began his fight to save the old-growth timber for posterity. When, in 1989, Scott Paper again stated its intention to clear-cut all its remaining timber, Briggs' efforts were instrumental in spurring Congress to create and fund the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program. This program began in 1991, with the mission to "protect isolated military land containing national treasures like ancient rock carving, unique geologic formations and rare, intact, ecosystems."

Jim Creek's old-growth forest is special. Most of the trees are 650 to 900 years old, and the oldest range in age from 1,500 to 1,700 years, and are 11 and 12 feet in diameter. This is the only old-growth lower-elevation Sitka Spruce forest in the Northern Puget Sound region.

In 1992, through the Legacy Resource Program, the Navy obtained \$900,000 to save these trees, and received an additional \$2.1 million from military appropriations legislation. The Navy then purchased the timber rights to the old-growth forest for \$3 million dollars. This gave the Navy clear title to all of the Jim Creek Wilderness Area.

In 1996, the National Awards Council for Environmental Sustainability presented Jim Creek with a Certificate of Environmental Achievement for its Old-Growth Forest Conservation Program.

In honor of Walter's decades-long effort to save the old growth forest, the forest was designated by the Department of the Navy Chief of Naval Operations the Walter R. Briggs Old-Growth Forest Area in March of 2005.

The rest of Jim Creek has become covered with large, second-generation timber, and has become a haven for wildlife and recreation.

In the 1990s, the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Department at Naval Base Seattle recognized the Jim Creek area as a unique asset to the quality of life for Naval personnel stationed in the Puget Sound area. Tom Jelcick, Regional MWR Director at COMNAVBASE, Seattle, spearheaded the development of the Jim Creek Wilderness Recreation Area to allow active duty, retirees, and reserves—as well as Department of Defense civilians—affordable access to this beautiful spot. In 1992, efforts began to establish the Jim Creek areas as a regional outdoor recreation asset. The campground was developed with 18 tent sites, two log cabins, picnic and group camping areas and seven miles of trails, along with fishing and



boating at the beautiful Twin Lakes. Coho and Coyote campground were the original campgrounds. Grouse, Cub and Doe Campgrounds have been added in subsequent years.

Mike Petrowski was the first hire, in 1992, as a temporary intern to help with the lakes' visitors—at that time, civilians were also allowed to fish. He was hired on a full-time basis a month later with the title of Recreation Specialist. Doug Buell came on board as the MWR Director/Site Manager of Jim Creek in January 1994, overseeing all the activities on station and responsible for developing programs and improvements. He was succeeded by Dave Hymer, Ryan Kimball, Steve Zak, and Aaron Johnson. Michael Yates is the current Jim Creek Site Manager. Jim Creek is currently staffed with a combination of Custodial Workers, Maintenance, Laborers and Recreation Assistants. They all take tremendous pride in their work and in ensuring the facilities and grounds are well maintained and ready for guests.

The building where the MWR offices are now located, was originally the recreation center and store for the base and included a barbershop, package store, club and a two-lane bowling alley. The front counters in the Recreation office are the remains of that bowling alley. In 1996-1997, four RV sites were completed. Additional renovations have added 12 more RV sites, log cabins, pavilions and hiking trails.

The Student Conservation Association, a group of high school and college students, which volunteers its time, in cooperation with the Navy, began in 1993 to build Jim Creek's hiking trails, with the trail to Twin Lakes and the three remote campsites being completed in 1997.

October 1994 saw the completion of Jim Creek's salmon hatchery. It was built at a cost of \$51,000 with the joint resources of the Stillaguamish Tribe, the Navy and other conservation interests. This was the culmination of a project begun in 1992 to rebuild the local salmon run. In 1994, 10,000 fingerling salmon were introduced to the new hatchery. They were the offspring of four males and four females captured in Jim Creek the previous fall. When the fingerlings were released in the spring of 1995 to make their way downstream to the Pacific Ocean, it was hoped they would return to Jim Creek in greater numbers than in the past. This hope was become a reality and the returning salmon have been increasing in number each year. While no longer active today, it played a large role and salmon are still seen in the creeks as a result of the hatchery.

In 1994, it was discovered that the old-growth forest is the home of the Marbled Murrelet, an endangered species of sea bird that nests only in the limbs of old-growth trees. Over 140 species of birds have been spotted in the Jim Creek Wilderness Area, along with blacktail and whitetail deer, otters, coyotes, beavers, squirrels, raccoons, cougars and black bear.



In 1997, NS Everett Morale, Welfare and Recreation took oversight of Jim Creek from COMNAVBASE Seattle. The jewel in Jim Creek Recreation Area's crown was finished in 1998, when the enlisted men's barracks, built in 1950 and abandoned in the 1970's, was extensively remodeled into the beautiful Jim Creek Lodge. The large kitchen and dining area remain, as do the bunk-rooms, with the addition of three guest suites and a large living-room area with gas-fired fireplace.

The most recent addition to Jim Creek is the Deluxe Cabins, located in Steelhead Camp. Completed in July 2015, these 2-bedroom cabins include a living room, kitchen, loft and bathroom. Featuring cable TV, kitchenware, full linens and an Adirondack backyard, these cabins have become some of the most sought after accommodations in the campground.



Jim Creek hosts approximately 40,000 visitors annually. In an effort to continue offering top-notch lodging and recreational activities, improvement projects are in the works for upgrading the day-use, dog park, and playground areas, construction of additional all-inclusive accommodations, upgrades for a portion of our RV spots, and renovations for the Bear and Bobcat Dens. These projects will ensure Jim Creek remains a modern and viable destination for years to come.

Where did the name Jim Creek come from?

In the 19th century, there were many small homesteads along the banks of the creek.

Well known to the homesteaders was a Native American member of the Stillaguamish Tribe called Old Jim. He ran trap lines and spent his days walking up and down the creek checking them. The creek came to be called “Old Jim’s Creek” because he was such a familiar figure there. One day, Old Jim walked up the creek and never came back down—but, the old-timers along the creek kept the name alive.

The history of Jim Creek is not yet finished. With ongoing partnerships with organizations such as the Navy Engineering Field Activities, Construction Battalions and Reservist “SeaBees”, the Student Conservation Association, Boy Scouts of America, and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, we continue to build and enhance our resources to serve our military family with an ever-improving wilderness experience.



Sources:

Seattle Times, Seattle, Washington
Everett Herald, Everett, Washington
North Snohomish Weekly, Smokey Point, WA
Everett Navy Dispatch, NAVSTA Everett
Arlington Times, Arlington, Washington
Marysville Globes, Marysville, Washington
The Outdoor Network, Boulder, Colorado
Trident Tides, Naval Submarine Base Bangor
Time Magainze, January 18, 1954



50' Alpine Tower



Rock Wall

JIM CREEK

Navy Community Recreation Area

21027 Jim Creek Road
Arlington, WA 98223-8599
(425) 304-5315/5363



Jim Creek Lodge