

Saltese Uplands/Saltese Flats Fact Sheet

For use when leading INLC hikes at Saltese

Authored by Todd Dunfield, April 2023

Gather Phase

- Arrive 20-30 min early (1305 S. Henry Rd, Greenacres WA 99260)
- Greet everyone as they arrive and learn their name, generally welcome them
- Let them know we will get started once more people arrive and the start time arrives
- Begin by introducing yourself, name, title maybe include some fun fact.
- As everyone to circle up and introduce themselves, potentially include an ice breaker question (skip this if it is cold)
- Show everyone the map on the Spokane County trailhead kiosk. Explain the route planned and distance/time estimates.
- Remind everyone of safety- sun exposure, wind chill, snakes on the trail are common, etc.

Beginning The Hike Phase

Preferred trail hiking route for Saltese Uplands (the steepness challenges many people)

Hike out uplands loop through the rocky uplift and into the meadow where you want to verge left onto the trail straight across the meadow to the start of the Turtle Gulch Trail. Take Turtle Gulch up to the Summit Loop and go clockwise on summit loop until you reach the summit near the beige water tank. Then descend westerly on the unnamed trails that go through the 55 acres that were conserved by INLC in 2021-2022. This is a steeper descent than your ascent and will put you back in the parking area quickly.

Preferred trail hiking route for Saltese Flats (park at the second trailhead, the one managed by Spokane County Public Works Department, TH located at 1906 S. Henry Road, Greenacres, WA 99016)

Hike out from the small parking lot bordered by ecology blocks and a farm gate and pass the TH kiosk and take the white gravel trail south out through the marsh. Great bird watching here. This is an out and back hike because all of the loops are 5-6+ miles long and most people don't want hike that far. This is a great birding hike, with lots of informational and interpretive signage along the route.

Both hikes are very exposed to wind and sun. I recommend communicating upfront to all hike participants that sunblock and/or a wind breaker are needed depending on the season. There are almost no trees that provide reliable shade on these walks.

Saltese Talking Points Laid Out in historical order:

The Peacemaker – Chief Saltese

- The namesake of this area and the lake that once was on this location is Chief Andrew Saltese. Chief Saltese was a chief of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in the late 1800's who passed in 1902. He lived in a home on what was the west bank of the Lake. He was chief for 37 years and fathered 23 children with his first and second wives. His son Joseph also went on to be chief from 1932-

49. While other tribal leaders were quick to conflict with European colonizers, Saltese is remembered for his ways as a peacemaker who was patient and forgiving.

- Chief Andrew Saltese (sometimes spelled Seltice- as in the road in Idaho) was rich by historical standards in the 1800's with a large number of horses and cattle. He was good friends with the namesake of Liberty Lake; Steven Liberty. At one point Saltese made Steven Liberty's family honorary CdA Tribe Members and invited them to live on the reservation. Which they did.

Timothy Hay and Litigation- the Morrison Family

- 1892 Peter Morrison purchased Saltese Lake and then spend 8-10 years draining it with horses and homemade "1899 Mud Shoes" fitted to the horses like snowshoes to keep the horses from sinking in the mud. These can be seen at the Spokane Valley Heritage Museum on display.
- Morrison wanted to be the first to grow Timothy hay out west in his newly drained lake made farmland, but squatters moved in and tried to claim the recently drained land as theirs almost immediately. The court battle went all the way to the US Supreme court and the Morrisons prevailed, but after Peter had passed. It went unresolved until 1923!
- The Morrison family descendants (Bud Morrison) currently live in the brown house on the treed knoll on the west side of Saltese Flats. They sold 584 acres of land to Spokane County Public Works in 2010. We know that land today as Saltese Flats.

Modern Conservation Story

- Three major events shaped why this is such a cool place.
- **2010** Spokane County Public Works bought 584 acres from the Morrison Family, the reasons were multifaceted, but largely due to the need for the county to have a new location to discharge treated water (aka effluent)
- **2011** Spokane county Parks acquired 552 acres from American West Bank for 1.3M through conservation futures
- **2022** – INLC purchased 55 acres from a willing landowner and then resold that acreage to Spokane County to expand the Uplands Conservation Area. This is a great example of how INLC can be nimble and work with willing sellers who are in a hurry and cannot wait until the next round of Conservation Futures (usually a 5-6 year cycle).

Conservation Values

- These two properties add up to a massive conservation win that provides a lot of ecosystem services to our region.
- Habitat
- Wetlands
- Restoration
- Waterfowl in droves
- Raptors
- Education Center assisting in developing the next generation of conservationists.

Other Properties you can view from this central location:

- From the ridge overlooking Liberty Lake you can view LLRP and INLC conserved the Cedar Grove as a partner project back in 1992.
- Across the valley to north you can see Antoine Peak – a massive conservation futures property that INLC partnered with the county on.
- Directly to the South you can see Mica Peak. Until 2010 there was a 1,000 acre middle section of the north side of Mica Peak that was owned by Inland Empire Paper. Through relationship building and the bringing together of partners at IEP and Spokane county Parks the missing link was purchased by Conservation Futures and now there are 5,500-acres of contiguous park from Belmont Rd. to Liberty Lake Regional Park.
- INLC holds a conservation easement on 80 acres of land located midway down the eastern side of the Marsh – making sure the land is left in a natural state that benefits all the dabbling ducks that make Saltese their home.
- Ducks Unlimited has been, and continues to be, a major restoration partner of the Saltese Flats. At the south end of the flats on the county property DU has spent great effort to create ponds and “topography” of mounded dirt with the right types of plantings that will provide for more nesting grounds for ducks and mallards.

Top 10 List of things to hit while on a hike at Saltese....

1. This area being conserved all adds up to clean drinking water for everyone who receives their drinking water from the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer.
2. Sunsets from Saltese Uplands are epic. As in grand. Wonderful. Picture perfect.
3. This can be a muddy place to recreate during spring and some winter thaw times. Best to stay away instead of leave big deep footprints.
4. During the Covid pandemic this conservation area (the uplands specifically) saw exponential growth in the daily usage numbers. Weekends, weekdays, trail running groups -all added up to this being a very popular location.
5. Tundra swans are new, this is a case of if you build it they will come. The tundra swans have not used Saltese Lake as part of their migratory flyway until the past few years. It is a much safer alternative to the chain lakes in the CDA river basin that are all contaminated and kill birds.
6. Saltese Uplands was slated to become an 18-hole golf course with surrounding housing developments. Due to the 2007-2008 real estate bubble bursting the bank foreclosed and the county bought the land from the bank.
7. The shiny new building with the sloped roof at the north edge of Saltese Flats overlooking the pond and marsh is the Doris Morrison Learning Center. Operated by Spokane County Public Works and named for Bud Morrison’s mother. An amazing woman of Spokane History.
8. The water that leaves Saltese Lake goes through a water control structure next to the Life Center Church at the NW corner of the basin. The water then continues to Shelley Lake in the Spokane Valley where it sinks down into the aquifer. Recharging our drinking water supply.
9. Saltese has become semi-famous for owls. The “turtle gulch” trail is seasonally closed due to a nesting owl and a colony of owls moved in to Saltese Flats in the winter of 2022-23.
10. If you have good binoculars or a spotting scope, you can find the bald eagle nest in the Ponderosa Pines near the Morrison House atop the knoll on the west side of Saltese Flats.