

Initiative for Rural Innovation & Stewardship

Connecting People, Place & Possibility

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Listening Post Network to Help Tell the Story of Our Region

You can use them to take photos, check the stock market and send text messages. Starting this summer you will also be able to use your cell phone to go back in time through the Listening Post Network, a new project the Initiative for Rural Innovation & Stewardship (IRIS) is launching with museums and other partners across North Central Washington.

Visitors will be able to access stories about the history of Mansfield, Rock Island, the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center and fire lookouts in Entiat through a variety of digital media including cell phones, smart phones, and the IRIS Gathering Our Voice website www.gatheringourvoice.org

“The Listening Post Network will help our visitors go deeper into the stories we tell at the museum,” said Brenda Abney, Director of the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center. “They will be able to use their own cell phones to access video, audio and historic photos that enhance the exhibits they see here.”

Darold Wax serves as the president of the all-volunteer led Mansfield Museum, one of the Listening Post sites in Douglas County. “We are delighted to be part of this new project and to have the chance to share the story of Mansfield through a broader story network for the region,” he said.

Rock Island Mayor Russell Clark agreed. “Many people don’t know much about the history of Rock Island,” he said. “Having a Listening Post site at City Hall will help people get a better sense of the changes this place has seen.”

High school students, including CJ Wall of Mansfield and Sky Merriman of Entiat, have helped produce audio and video content for the new Listening Post sites, a practice that the museum and interpretive site managers plan to continue.

“Not only are the students connecting with the history of their community, they are also connecting with an older generation that has a story to tell,” noted Dave Spies, board president of the Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center. As a result, he added, they are

“becoming a part of institutions in their community with whom they normally would not have much contact.”

The number of stories available at each of the Listening Post sites will grow through the summer, noted IRIS Coordinator Nancy Warner. “We are starting with a few stories from each of the participating sites and expect that they will add more stories to the Listening Post, many from oral histories already collected as part of the Gathering Our Voice program.”

Additional Listening Post sites are planned within the coming year including those at Entiat, Twisp Works, the David Thompson Interpretive Site at Rock Island and the Apple Capital Loop Trail in Wenatchee.

Founding sponsors of the Listening Post Network include the Icicle Fund, Port of Douglas County, City of Rock Island, Entiat Chamber of Commerce, Wenatchee Valley Visitor’s Bureau, Mansfield Museum, Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center, Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, and the Wenatchee Row & Paddle Club.

Contacts for the Listening Post Network sites include:

- Wenatchee Valley, Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center: Brenda Abney, Director, (509) 888-6240
- Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center: Dave Spies, Board President, (509) 884-4139
- City of Rock Island: Russell Clark, Mayor, (509) 884-1261
- Mansfield Museum: Darold Wax, Board President, (509) 665-6456

The mission of IRIS is to foster sustainable rural communities by connecting people, place and possibility. We believe that thriving communities in a healthy environment create success.

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