



May 13, 2022

Mindy Brooks
Senior Long-Range Planner
Lewis County Department of Community Development
2025 NE Kresky Ave
Chehalis, WA 98532

Dear Mindy:

Thank you allowing us to participate in the Planning Commission's workshops on the YMCA's rezone application, and for the opportunity to provide additional information to address some of the questions raised by commissioners at the workshop on April 26, 2022.

Some of the questions address topics that are more germane to the binding site plan application that will be the next step in the review and approval process and more definitive and detailed responses will be developed and presented as plans for the camp solidify. Nevertheless, we wanted to provide initial responses based on what we know at this point and on our experience with camps and outdoor education facilities and experiences for youth and families in other rural areas.

We believe this approach is consistent with our continuing commitment to comply with state and county requirements for approval and operation of the camp, as well as our desire to be a good neighbor to the people of Mineral and Lewis County.

Here is the information on the questions you asked us to address:

Provide an example of a similar existing youth camp and stats such as campers, employees, use by wider community, etc.

The YMCA of Greater Seattle currently operates two camps in western Washington:

- Camp Orkila: Located on Orcas Island, Camp Orkila is the Y's oldest camp, having been founded in 1906. At approximately 280 acres, it is a significantly larger facility than what is being proposed at Mineral Lake. Orkila serves approximately 500 campers and 200 staff per week during summer sessions.
- Camp Colman: Located on the Key Peninsula is also over 100 years old. It serves approximately 200 campers annually with approximately 50 staff at full capacity during summer sessions. Many of the water activities at Camp Colman, such as swimming, canoeing, and kayaking, will be offered to campers at Mineral Lake. The camp is currently undergoing master planning for a major renovation as part of the state's large scale restoration of historical tidal channels and fish passage.

Two other facilities, not operated by the YMCA of Greater Seattle, also provide some useful comparisons:

- Lake Wenatchee: Located at Lake Wenatchee in North Central Washington and operated by the Wenatchee Valley YMCA, this camp serves approximately 100 campers with approximately 40 staff at full capacity during summer sessions.
- Cispus Learning Center: Located in Lewis County within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and operated for more than 40 years by the Association of Washington School Principals, this facility provides outdoor education and leadership training opportunities for youth (including at-risk youth) and adults involved in education. Its seven dormitory-style cabins provide housing for up to 364 visitors at a time, and it annually serves more than 12,500 visitors.

While local community usage varies from camp to camp, here are just a few examples of how these facilities are being used:

- Providing outdoor education opportunities for local schools
- Offering swim lessons for local youth
- Hosting first-aid and CPR classes to local community
- Offering use of the lodge/dining hall for community events, dinners and celebrations
- Fostering partnerships with local food banks to use commercial kitchen facilities

If known, what impact does the example camp have on the community? Traffic, waste, etc.?

This is one of the questions where more detailed answers will be developed and presented to the community, the Planning Commission, and the County Commission in the binding site plan for the project. Studies will be conducted on a number of these issues and their results shared as part of the project site plan application.

For now, we can say that we take our role as a good neighbor to nearby communities seriously. With that in mind, we provide shuttle services that deliver most campers and staff to the camp to reduce the traffic impacts of single-occupancy vehicle trips. Overnight youth camps are limited to participating counselors, staff and campers (without their parents or families). Our camps have on-site wastewater septic systems for processing waste, and we work hard to maximize composting and recycling while reducing trash generated at the camp. We contract with local refuse haulers to pick up recycling and trash on a regular schedule.

The project site plan application will include detailed plans for emergency services, including fire prevention and emergency medical response, in terms of both site access and service providers. We have made provisions for a consulting firm, Modern Volunteer Fire Services, to begin discussions with Lewis County Fire District #9 on some of these issues and we appreciate the department's engagement. It is also worth noting that staff in many of the facilities listed serve as volunteers in local fire departments, emergency response, and search-and-rescue teams. We anticipate that the staff at Mineral Lake would become similarly involved in local activities.

Finally, we will soon begin outreach to other local resources, such as EMT services and hospitals, and we will share the results of that outreach with the public during the project site application process. It is also worth noting that, once the camp is operating, we intend to pursue accreditation from the American Camping Association, which identifies best practices for camps and related facilities, including engagement with local community safety agencies and providers. Our other two camps have earned this accreditation.

Can you say more about hiring practices and where employees will be coming from?

There are two types of job creation and employment that will occur as the camp is constructed and begins operations over the coming years. The YMCA will be hiring staff (counselors, lifeguards, cooks, maintenance personnel, and others) required to operate the camp. As we do at our other camps, we expect to hire from the local area, the greater Puget

Sound region, and beyond as necessary to fill these positions with qualified individuals. Most of the operational staff are hired for the peak summer camping season, while a much smaller group remain living and working at the camp location year-round with school outdoor environmental education, family camps, and community events.

Additionally, during the development of the camp, individuals will be hired to prepare the small portion of the site that will be taken up by the camp, develop the necessary infrastructure, and build camp facilities. While the individuals hired to perform this work will not be hired directly by the Y, we will encourage our contractors to look for opportunities to hire Lewis County residents and businesses to perform this work when possible.

What is the Tribe's involvement?

The Nisqually Tribe has donated financial support that has been important in allowing the Y to move forward on the project. The Y is the owner of the property and will be responsible for the creation and operation of the proposed camp facility. The Nisqually Tribe will have access to the land for historic, cultural, and education purposes during agreed upon times of the year, and we have negotiated an easement to provide them with this access. This easement is in the process of being submitted to Lewis County for recording. We also plan to work with the Tribe to develop joint programming for native and non-native youth and families.

Will the camp be open to the wider community? What approximate percentage of the year?

The Y is committed to being a good neighbor to the Lewis County community and especially to the residents of Mineral. Local children and families are welcome and encouraged to attend camp. As with all our camp programs, financial supports will be made available to ensure that family resources do not preclude local youth from participating. Additionally, as discussed in the first question, we anticipate there will be opportunities for the community to access the camp and the property, and we look forward to working out the details for that access as the permitting process moves forward.

What is your anticipated timeline for construction?

There are many factors that will drive the timeline for construction, with two of the most significant being the Lewis County permit review and approval process and the success of the Y's fundraising to support the project. We believe that it will be a gradual construction process taking 5-10 years to complete the camp.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this information. We look forward to continuing to work with you, your department, the Planning Commission, and the County Commission on both this rezone application and the subsequent binding site plan application.

Sincerely,



Gwen Ichinose Bagley
SVP/Youth Development Officer
YMCA of Greater Seattle