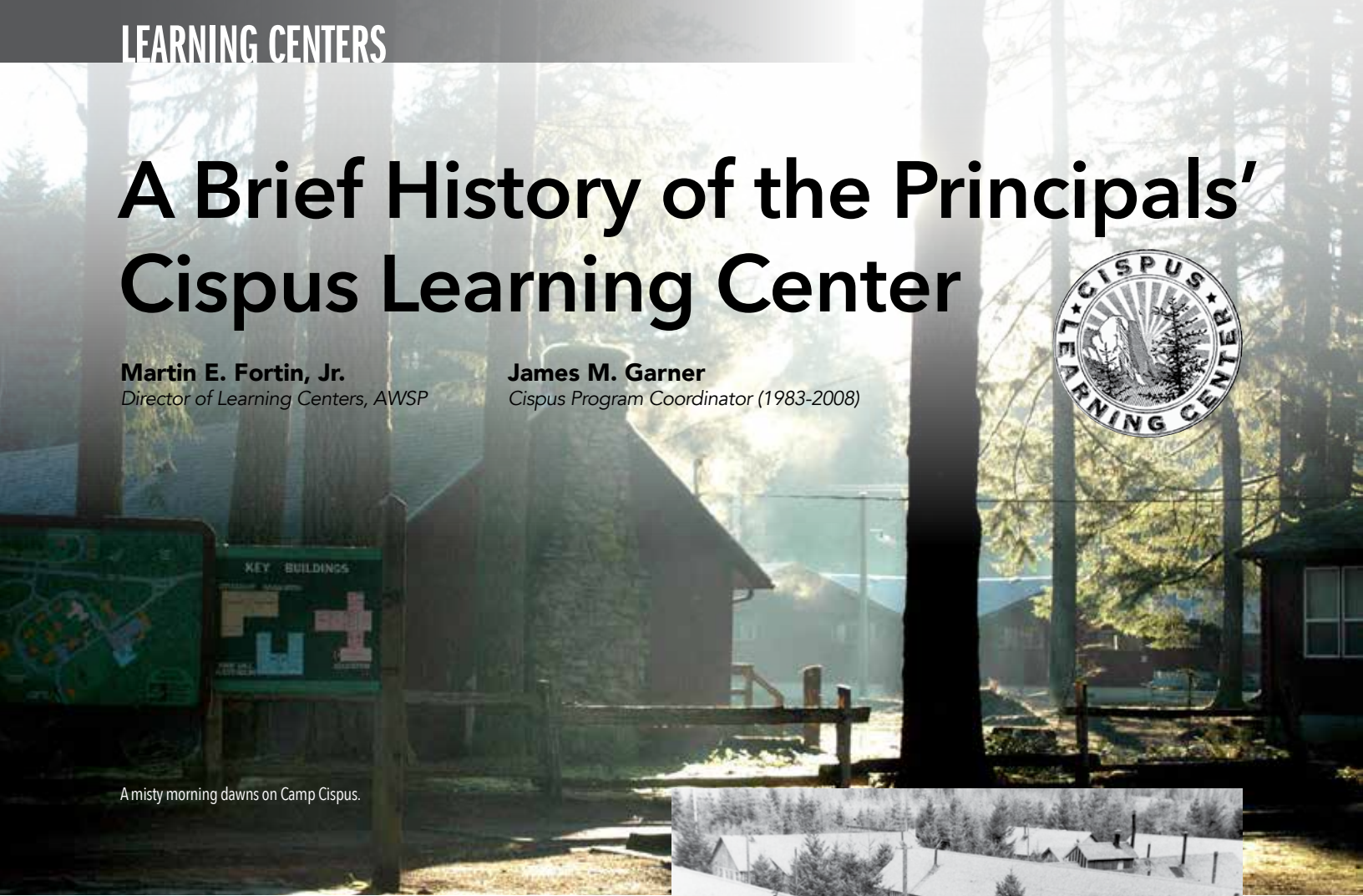


# A Brief History of the Principals' Cispus Learning Center

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A misty morning dawn on Camp Cispus.

PHOTOS BY CISPUS OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

**M**ost Washington principals and generations of Washington public school students are familiar with “Camp Cispus.” But not everyone is as familiar with the learning center’s origins and development.

The current site of the Cispus Learning Center served as a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in the early 1930s.

The chimney and shell of the building that is now called “Sasquatch and Little Foot” are all that remain of the original structures. In 1964, federal construction crews were put to work removing the remnants of those older buildings and clearing the site in order to build most of the present physical facilities which were designed to serve as a U.S. Department of Agriculture Job Corps Center. The

building program was completed in 1966, and young men in the Job Corps were trained to work in cooperation with Forest Service personnel.

Federal funding for the Cispus Job Corps program was cut in 1969, and it appeared that the new center might have to close. Then-Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction (and future AWSP Executive Director) Louis Bruno was asked to send a team



Camp Cispus in its original form as a Civilian Conservation Corps in the early 1930s.

investigate the site and determine if Cispus had any educational potential for students and teachers. The enthusiastic reports, and his own deep-seated commitment to quality education, led him to assume temporary responsibility for the administration of what was considered an ideal setting for all forms of environmental education.



Just 23 miles away, the May 18, 1980 eruption of nearby Mount St. Helens turned a beautiful sunny Sunday morning at the Center as dark as night, and dropped between one and two inches of ash on the buildings and grounds.



Campfires are one of the hallmarks of student visits to Cispus.

The Cispus Environmental Education Center subsequently opened in 1970 with the primarily purpose for use by public and private school students and teachers of all ages. In a sense, is owned by all the people since it is technically a portion of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

The U.S. Forest Service administered special use permit allows it to be a hub for educational initiatives. Bruno later transferred the oversight of Cispus to Educational Service District 113.

Just 23 miles away, the May 18, 1980 eruption of nearby Mount St. Helens turned a beautiful sunny Sunday morning at the Center as dark as night, and dropped between one and two inches of ash on the buildings and grounds. There were students and teachers at Cispus on that memorable morning, but all were comfortably protected and safe so long as they stayed inside the buildings.

Unfortunately, the eruption reduced the eagerness of groups to schedule visits to Cispus. Since the center operates primarily on funding from participants, serious economic problems confronted those dedicated to keeping the site open. Cispus actually lies in the Mount Adams watershed, not the Mount St. Helens watershed, so mudflow problems

resulting from eruptions of Mount St. Helens were not a threat. However, the site's proximity to the volcano did discourage quite a few who would have otherwise included a trip to Cispus to enhance their educational objectives.

In 1981, the Association of Washington School Principals formed the Washington School

Principal Education Foundation to acquire the federal special use permit to operate the learning center. In 1991, the name was shortened to the Cispus Learning Center to embrace all manners of learning opportunities. Since AWSP took the lead, many

On any given day more than one group at a time is the rule, rather than the exception. The center's 18 meeting rooms along with a first aid station, three campfire areas, a gymnasium, large playfield, extensive challenge or "ropes" courses, and the beginning of several extended hiking trails all lay within the 64-acre, tree-enclosed campus in the beautiful Cispus River Valley. The facility has the program and activity options to meet the needs of the many diverse visitor groups that come for a stay in the woods.

The Cispus Learning Center is currently thriving with a staff dedicated to helpful and courteous service to the many that come from the schools and organizations of the Pacific Northwest, and all over the world. For 34 years the vision of the principals of Washington state to make this facility ours has been successful because of the unwavering support of AWSP, its board and members. It has truly made a difference in the lives of Washington's students. ■

## CISPUS LEARNING CENTER

**64** Number of acres

**1970** Year Cispus Environmental Learning Center opened

**1981** Year AWSP/WSPEF began operating Cispus

**1991** Year the name changed to Cispus Learning Center

**461,000** Total number of visitors to date

**1.5 million:** Number of visitor days

schools and organizations with an educational mission have utilized the site to implement their programs and hold their conferences, retreats and workshops.

To date, we have welcomed almost 461,000 visitors who have compiled over 1,500,000 days of use! Most notably the Cispus Learning Center is the home of the Association of Washington Student Leaders, which hosts year-round student and advisor leadership development trainings.



A glimpse of Cispus and Tower Rock in the fall.