

# NORTHWEST LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL



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Snoqualmie Falls Park • By Ohno Construction Company

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## Ohno Does It Again

### Visitors Dazzled By Improvements At Snoqualmie Falls



*This staircase leads visitors to the upper overlook.*

Ohno Construction has appeared many times on these pages with news about award-winning work on some major projects. At the 2012 WALP Environmental Landscape Awards ceremony, they took home yet another Grand Prize for the stellar work they did for Puget Sound Energy (PSE) at Snoqualmie Falls Park.

The work on the iconic site in East King County was part of a major three and a half year, multi-million dollar effort at Snoqualmie Falls' Upper Park. The purpose was to increase PSE's power-generating infrastructure, as well as provide enhancements to the public recreational facilities and falls viewing area at the park – which draws more than two million visitors annually.

Ohno's work was focused on the recreational and visitor improvements.

First was the demolition of the old park that involved re-grading the entire site and then expanding it to include additional space at the visitor area and more parking across the highway. Fifty-year-old storm water systems and utilities were also upgraded throughout, which allowed for better lighting and security at the wooded park site.

Once the grading was finished, Ohno installed ADA-compliant walkways, handrails, and ramps, as well as connectors to the retail area and pedestrian bridge. Visitors with special access needs can now park next to the entrance, rather than across the street.

The visual components of Snoqualmie Falls Park were designed to have a native Northwest flavor in keeping with the heritage of the area. Boulders from the site were incorporated into the new landscaping features. Plants that might have otherwise been destroyed during the project were also salvaged, stored, and replanted at the site to conserve native vegetation. Since native plants consume less water than their fellow introduced-species, only low-flow irrigation was required.

According to Barbara Ohno, there were several hurdles that had to be overcome.

“Because of permitting issues with the Federal Government, work which would normally take 90-120 days was bid with a 55-day completion time frame. The major construction firms said it could not be done, and there was only one other bidder who took on the challenge,” she said.

Grading was difficult because most of the site was solid rock beneath the surface. That required no small amount of jack-hammering. Additionally, fence removal and guard-rail installation required full protection tie-offs for every worker.

“Even on sunny days, the overspray from the falls often made the cliff area slippery, and working conditions were difficult,” she added.

The project had its interesting twists as well. Since the Snoqualmie Nation has a long history in the area surrounding the Falls Park, Puget

*Cover: The new railing and ironwood cap helps keep visitors from getting fully involved in the “falls experience.” Always a breathtaking view.*



**Photo 1**

*This photo shows the finished entry with thinned wooded area complete with native plantings, directional signage, and new stairways.*

**Photo 2**

*The new railings at the overlook provide safe access to view the falls.*

**Photo 3**

*To be more ADA-compliant, these switchbacks were incorporated to allow improved access to the upper lookout.*

**Photo 4**

*The new lower overlook features sitting boulders.*

Sound Energy provided an on-site archeologist who identified the artifacts as they were unearthed during the excavation process and during planting. Items that were found had to be returned to the indigenous owners.

“Extra care had to be taken so as not to damage any buried artifacts or burial sites that might have been uncovered,” Ohno explained. “And, it was PSE’s policy that all demo materials had to go to approved recycling locations – no landfill.”

The results were, not surprisingly, spectacular. Just another day for

Ohno doing the near impossible. Congratulations on another award-winning project.

Ohno Construction Company has been in continuous operation since 1966 and has evolved from two brothers working their way through the University of Washington to an organization focused on public works projects including parks, wetland mitigation, habitat restoration, shoreline enhancement, and athletic facilities. Co-founder and President of the firm, Yoshio Ohno, is actively involved in the management of every project.