



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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**Meeting Summary: Smith Rock State Park Master Plan
Advisory Committee Meeting I – Park Values + Public Comment**

Date: January 17th, 2017 Advisory Committee Meeting (1-4PM) Redmond
OPRD Staff: Scott Brown, Ben Hedstrom, Julia Cogger, Paul Patton, Dave Slaght, Josie
Barnum, Ian Caldwell, Jerry Winegar, Chris Parkins

Meeting Highlights:

- Despite tough weather conditions, attendance at the first Advisory Committee meeting was quite good with roughly 20 confirmed attendees;
- There was some discussion on the Survey data from the park and the process of selecting appropriate questions and collecting responses;
- The group was in general agreement that Smith Rock is an iconic natural wonder with a multitude of recreational and natural assets;
- The current ease of access to the park was valued by many;
- There was much discussion about overcrowding at Smith Rock, visitors off hours, and parking issues;
- Proposals for dispersing use geographically and relative to time of day/year; were well received;
- There was discussion on the need for additional park staff and the desire to provide more avenues for volunteers to contribute;
- Planning process will need to determine how many people/cars are acceptable without further degradation of this unique natural site

Meeting Agenda:

- Welcome; kick off of Smith Rock Master Planning Process
- Planning Context
- Park Overview
- Park Assessments
- Survey/Park Values Discussion
- Next Steps

Complete Meeting Summary:

Scott Brown began the meeting with introductions.

Presentation

OPRD: Julia Cogger is the new point of contact; Contact info on Smithrockparkplan.com
Meeting goal is to establish current conditions at Smith Rock and begin to envision what we should strive for in the future;
PowerPoint presentation:

- Planning context + Park Overview
- Presented Park Assessments: habitat types for plants;
- Historical summery 9000 years ago first people, 1,100 N Paiute, 1852 John Smith 1863 Volk Smith, 1909 Wallenburg homestead, 1991 park plan.
- Park use numbers; huge jump in last 3 years.

Question: How do you count people?

OPRD: Traffic counters and bivouac fees.

Question: What caused the huge increase?

OPRD: Deschutes County increased population, Smith Rock is an icon of central Oregon

- Terry Bergerson lead the development and collection of park surveys; 400 camping and 400 day use responses;
- Surveys featured: activities, where visitor was from, whether it was their first time at the park, other similar destinations, which trails visitors hiked, 99% would recommend to others, over 80% did not like the overcrowding
- All OPRD properties have seen significant growth in user numbers

Comment: It's a tough balance to achieve all things stated in the Mission.

OPRD: Conducting Impact Assessment to help define if/where there is crowding

Comment: Are you collecting park data and comparing it with public data to tease out impacts? Best method is to limit public access and increase fees; Is there an environmental psychologist on staff or will you hire one? Could recommend two people from the University.

Comment: Is there a rule that a certain part of the park had to be in preservation mode?

OPRD: Not that we are currently aware of.

Comment: Are you going to have different levels of resolution? Will you address transportation issues? Do you have infrastructure in place to limit people? Can you do something with user fees?

OPRD: It's difficult to change user fees as it must go through the legislative process; Are any of you aware of other ways to limit people? Today we are hoping to get your feedback and ideas.

Comment: Did the survey ask if people would be willing to pay a higher fee? Survey may not be statistically validated unless you have a professional.

OPRD: Terry's survey methods are professional, effective, and he has significant experience in conducting recreation surveys. Confident the process is valid.

Both the advisory committee and public meeting comments have merit in addition to survey data.

What do you think of when someone mentions Smith Rock?

Comment: Diversity of recreation, climbing, hiking, the iconic photo, wildlife photos, natural icon, unique, easy to access, mountain biking, slacklining, It's close to the highway making it easy to access; It's being loved to death; Used to be a nice quiet place, not anymore.

OPRD: How would you have answered this question 30 years ago?

Comment: Quiet, beautiful

Comment: I live there and find quiet places every day. Need to use it better. Not just where to go, but how to go. Way to work with public and reality.

OPRD: Implemented 5 principles of Leave No Trace at Smith Rock. Helping to educate people, stay on trails, be prepared.

Comment: Loved to death. Do you have surveys from the past?
Have you looked at pros and cons of concentrating use vs dispersing use?
How about more remote sensing to document changes?

OPRD: We have installed trail counters to count people.; 4 trail counters, foot bridge, wolf tree, rim trail. Misery ridge is busiest trail by far. Picks up people who are not driving into the park, such as on Wilcox when full.

Comment: Any thoughts about Travel Oregon campaign?

OPRD: Was not in coordination with state parks; Currently limiting number of events and commercial filming. What do other people think of the park? They have seen it in many locations, not just travel Oregon. Many people just drive into the parking lot and take a photo or two.

Comment: Has more use than Crater Lake, but only 1 square mile. Not so much the number of visitors but how people are using it. Need to get the information out in the media.

Comment: Camping use has doubled (more than day use)

What do you value about Smith Rock?

Comment: Internationally known high-lining opportunities, also climbing and wildlife.

I go out to escape. How such a small area is so special.

Composting toilet.

Have a really good relationship between Staff, SAR and Fire.

Accessibility, close to 97 and close to Bend.

Comment about Crater Lake. Use would be much higher without seasonal (snow) restrictions.

Close to the Cascades.

Close to BLM and USFS lands.

Light show; Sunrise and sunset; Clouds, weather, stars.

Can see birds of prey year round.

Habitat diversity.

Year-round use.

Cultural background from native tribes to pioneers.

Use to have a trail you could see wagon tracks.
Simon Ecological function.
Geology....it rocks.

What would you like to stay the same about Smith Rock?

Comment: Accessibility to climbing Ability to set routes and allow climbers manage routes; Have climbers work with staff to fix trails and erosion.
Being able to work close with park staff and other park users
Accessibility; Don't want to restrict people due to economics
Trails have gotten better. Rescues are not as bad as increased use.
Horse use has gone down because it is too crowded.
Want to still see eagles.
Want keep education components of the park for kids.
Want to be able to take groups of kids out for climbing, Guiding,
Staff awareness; Staff doing well, but should increase number of staff.

What would you like to change about Smith Rock?

Comment: More alternative access options;
Transportation; Want to do a recreational access transit service; Scope what would make sense;
Take measures to prevent private vehicle uses.
Roads are not able to handle the use; Would like to avoid people parking on Wilcox and surrounding roads.
Don't want to see bike races (road) to use the park; Just using the park as a backdrop.
Post or guard to regulate traffic; Concerned about where people are parking and safety.
Would like to see people out of the park when park is supposed to be closed; People are hiking up Misery Ridge at 1 am; Campfires

OPRD: Recently doing more night patrols.

Comment: Improve native vegetation; remove weeds
More funding for more staff; 2 full time and 3 seasonal rangers are not enough.
Park needs additional funding

OPRD: Pilot Butte has over 1 million people with no ranger; Smith Rock just added a seasonal.
Many parks need more positions.

Comment: Should we write letters to director? Need to write Oregon Legislature?
What do we need for FTE to run the park?

OPRD: Ideally another full time and seasonal ranger and dedicated office staff person

Comment: What is the Sheriff's office's jurisdiction?

OPRD: We have an agreement with Sheriff's office. SAR responds.

Comment: Can you use volunteers more?

OPRD: We have doubled from 4000 to 8000 volunteer hours and it is more than the current park staff can manage; Camp hosts from 1-4 sets through the year; Smith Rock Group.

Comment: Other options than Misery Ridge; Other access points (parking); Other bridges; Other loop options.

Comment: Want to stop parking on Wilcox; People are parking under No Parking signs.

OPRD: Created a temporary parking lot was that effective?

Comment: No, the view is worse now. A jeep tipped over leaning against a fence.

Comment: Landscape management zone. Regulate plantings. Parking impacts views.

OPRD: Park is trying to address Wilcox

Comment: Need a capacity analysis. For best interest in park, for neighbors, (glad someone is looking out for neighbors)

Comment: Would like to see the way the park is advertised. Smith Rock is on the cover of all kinds of products. People see it and want to go. They don't realize the difficulty. People get lost in the dunes all the time. "This is not Disneyland." Problem is people don't understand what they are getting into.

Comment: Highline community would like to see better accommodate of the activity. Have a 9 page document about.

OPRD: Working on temporary measures.

Comment: Need a better sign about actual conditions of trail, why it is difficult, such as number of steps, steepness, exposure;

Comment: Would like to be able to ride their horse into the park; Have some sort of loop away from trailhead and other users. Parking area on BLM land?

Need to disperse people. Everyone parks in one spot.

How about use on USFS/BLM for parking, trail access.

Need to consider where you are pushing other users.

What types of recreation activities do you participate in at Smith Rock?

Comment: Climbing, hiking, birdwatching. High-lining, Camping; Have a need for RV Camping.

Would be nice to have a community campfire space.

People accessing the river needs to be addressed.

What is difference between camping and day use?

Issue about people with vans and trucks to be able to sleep in there vehicles.

Wrap up.

Comments on website. Have a survey tab and map to make comments on.

Next meeting in the summer.

Will present park assessment data

Share Draft values, goals.
Draft concept alternatives

Comment: Can you explain the difference between Public meetings and Advisory Committee.

OPRD: Committee is more focused on stakeholders and management issues. Public is more about general issues.

Comment: When will we be done.

OPRD: Final product sometime next year. Usually takes about a year.

Comment: Is there a budget and approval process?

OPRD: Will have phases for different levels of funding. Also need to tie staff to what you are doing, such as an interpretation center.

Comment: Is updating plans on a normal rotation or by demand?

OPRD: Both. Next plan will likely be 20 plus years. Still have some properties without a plan. 20 years is the target. 10 year plan vs 20 year plan. 10 years is more based on biennium development outlook and project funding.

Meeting Adjourned