



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

## Parks and Recreation Department

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

Date:                     January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Public Meeting (6-8PM) Redmond  
OPRD Staff:             Scott Brown, Ben Hedstrom, Julia Cogger, Paul Patton, Dave Slaght, Josie  
                                  Barnum, Ian Caldwell, Jerry Winegar, Chris Parkins, David Stipe

**Meeting Highlights:**

- Despite tough weather conditions, attendance at the first public meeting was very good with roughly 70 people present;
- 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](http://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:

Comment: Is the PowerPoint available?

OPRD: Yes, it will be online at [smithrockparkplan.com](http://smithrockparkplan.com).

Comment: Who is on the Advisory Committee and how is it different than the public meeting?

OPRD: Land managers and others involved with the park; Both meetings are held on the same date, but the advisory committee just allows more discussion about management issues.

OPRD: Park Assessments. Currently working on Recreation, Cultural and Natural Resources; will be conducting a trails assessment with the Professional Trail Builders Association to look at the condition of the trails.

Comment: Are the GIS data files available?

OPRD: Not really, potentially if you contact OPRD for specific data. There will be an interactive mapping program on the website.

Comment: Will there be maps on sensitive wildlife species?

OPRD: Yes. Will have a 4 level scale system from development to protection.

Comment: Are you doing an assessment of the impact to the neighbors?

OPRD: Sort of; Looking at the impacts to neighbors and parking issues, taking input.

### ***Park User Numbers and Survey Results***

Comment: The seven wonders. When you did the survey, did you actually ask people if they came due to that?

OPRD: Yes.

Comment: There was a huge increase at the same time, larger than just population growth. Do you have numbers who are there primarily for climbing?

OPRD: Yes. Terry Bergerson did conduct surveys.

Comment: How were the people selected to do surveys?

OPRD: At various locations, such as the footbridge or yurt. Survey was conducted during late spring/early summer.

Comment: Concern about the 21% number for climbing use. But Climbers tend to stay longer vs hikers for shorter trips. Climbers 4-6 hours; Hikers 1-2 hours; Difference between number of visits and hours using the park.

Comment: It would be interesting to see difference between people using the park vs adjacent land. Does this survey include Skull Hollow?

OPRD: No.

Comment: Is BLM on Advisory Committee?

OPRD: They have been invited.

Comment: What does higher end camping mean?

OPRD: Car camping, cabins, yurts, RV's etc. We can investigate this more.

Comment: Discussion about people using parking lot vs trails. Many people are just stopping for 5 min to take a picture. Others feel the trails are crowded.  
Neighbor concerned about camping next to his property.

Comment: How were surveys administered?

OPRD: At Bivi, footbridge, at northern point

Comment: Some experienced visitors do not hike during peak hours. Park has more trash now. A lot of cigarette butts on the private property side of the road.  
OPRD is self-insured; think their liability is only \$50,000. OPRD needs to be responsible for what the park visitor is doing. The park needs to be responsible for their users.

Comment: Want to know how many tickets have been written for being off leash. Should put a sign up that says how many tickets have been issues last month.

Comment: People have seen a change in dog use and it is getting better. Others want to see more enforcement. Someone stated dogs need to be on leash because of disease.

Comment: Need to control drones.

### ***Measuring Impacts***

Comment: As a resident, concerned about impact of 700,000 people driving to the park and the quality of life. Don't want to try to "stuff as many people into the park" but reduce use numbers to protect the serenity.

Comment: Concern about using ROS Impact Analysis process on a small 640 acre park, which is a model for large scale areas.

OPRD: Discusses different 1-2 acre natural resource zones and how models are applied.

Comment: Need to go back to the 70's and 80's models. Need to start running cattle to manage landscape model. Need to manage water hemlock. Park has created a huge fire hazard. Too many grasses. Need to better manage for fires. Climbers have been respectful. Newest park visitors are not respectful. Need to keep park small and prevent more use. Limiting use will force people to go away.

Concern about traffic on 2 lane roads with no bike lanes. Concern about major emergency access (fires). People will park in the road to wait for a parking spot. Parking is better on Crooked River Drive and now they are on Wilcox. People are now driving up Smith Rock Loop. Need signs to say park is full. Need a sign to state how many vehicles are towed/ticketed.  
At first meeting when park was first getting started. Fire chief said they will be there in 15 min.

Comment: Park has had a long reputation for not writing tickets for parking. Glad it is being enforced now. Think we should double the price for day use parking. People don't pay the fee for parking on Wilcox.

Comment: Discussion about permitted rivers for limited access on the rivers. Need to make reservation.

Comment: Several climbers in the room disagreed and used the system in other areas.

Comment: Concerned about climbing group wanting to develop land for climbers to have special group. How does the limited entry impact landowners? Can work around it with landowners stickers. Park use is largely dependent on weather. You have to jump through a lot of hoops to use. Other parks had entrance stations.

OPRD: Tried an entrance station, but it did not work.

Comment: Deschutes County said they have been in discussions with landowner but they have not submitted a permit. These issues will be addressed with planning process.

Comment: Concerned about use at night.

OPRD: Are there other possible solutions? Open to options. Want to know what the public thinks.

Comment: Park is allowing people to park on easements.

Comment: Can we stop advertising? Need to talk to marketing groups to shift use.

Comment: Travel groups are very sensitive to the overcrowding and recommending other locations for interested visitors.

Comment: Can we start advertising on the website that it is busy and there may not be any parking on the weekends.

Comment: Smithrock.com is encouraging people to use the park not on peak hours.

Comment: Suggestion to increase parking fees on busy days.

Comment: Suggestion to spread people out and use other access points. Look at other land owners USFS/BLM.

Comment: Should have short term parking with ADA hiking trails so people can get a quick hike and take photos.

Comment: Everyone is using one access point at the footbridge. Need west side access point. Use access at 17<sup>th</sup> and Wilcox.

Comment: Should eliminate bikes.

Comment: Is the temporary parking really temporary or is it going to get paved?

OPRD: Just trying to deal with emergency lack of parking.

***What do you think of when someone mentions Smith Rock?***

Comment: Too many people

I think it is beautiful.

Very special. Remember pictures of climbing in 86 from the east coast.

Climbers have different experience every time. More than just climbing.

Community setting for the climbers. See many friends while climbing.

Eagles, otters, swallows.

Lived there 35 years. Real climbers are very respectful. Wanna-bes are destroying it (entitlement). Pay a lot to live there. Don't need bed and breakfast or gyms.

Appreciate to be able to access the park with kids. Teach kids about being responsible. Essence of state parks needs to remain.

***What do you value about Smith Rock?***

Comment: Save it.

Don't need to make it accessible to everyone.

Climbers are good. But tourists are out of control

I like it because it is easy to get to. I can get there after work really easily.

I think it is really well managed compared to other areas.

Love the rural area around the park.

Smith is unique for climbing in Oregon. Very few climbing resources that are similar.

Would like to see climbing community to self-police themselves.

Would like to continue to be drone free.

Continue recreation uses that are there now.

Like the doggie bags.

I like the yurt.

Like to keep it as a dog friendly on leash park.

Need to keep as a public space. Most parks go through some of these issues such as capacity.

"Parks cannot be loved to death. They will die when nobody cares." Public parks are to serve the public.

Park could benefit from a volunteer ambassador group.

Agree that having volunteers to greet people is good. Need to have volunteer uniform.

Remind people to sign in.

[Smithrockparkplan.com](http://Smithrockparkplan.com)

**Meeting Adjourned.**