



Oregon

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Meeting Summary: Smith Rock State Park Master Plan Public Meeting II – Development Concepts + Public Comment

Date: October 24, 2017 Public Meeting (5:30-7:30PM) Bend PRD

OPRD Staff: Julia Cogger, Scott Nebeker, Jerry Winegar, David Stipe, Scott Brown, Josie Barnum, Ian Caldwell, Chris Parkins, and Carrie Lovellette.

Meeting Highlights:

- This was a well-attended meeting with roughly 45 participants
- The initial presentation was identical to that of the following evening and advisory committee presentations featuring a summary of the assessments completed, a presentation by Mike Yun from Anderson Krygier of the capacity assessment underway and a presentation of survey responses and working conceptual designs for the park
- Most of the detailed discussion topics were noted in the small group breakout sessions and can be found on a separate attachment
- Some general points discussed in the larger group included the need to accommodate for more parking and the details of calculating quantities of climbers within the capacity assessment

Meeting Agenda:

- David introduced OPRD staff and discussed the planning process and rules of engagement
- Julia presented the results of the assessments completed thus far
- Mike Yun presented the capacity assessment currently underway
- Julia concluded the presentation with a summary of survey feedback, precedent (example park) studies and a description of the three working concepts
- Some time was dedicated to large group questions
- The room broke into three smaller groups where visitors spoke with various OPRD representatives and noted their reactions to the working concepts via post it comments on large scaled maps

Post Presentation Comments:

Question: Is there a map with more detail because the decommissioning of trails is hard to see?

OPRD: There will be a map online with more zoomed in view. There are a lot of rogue trails and most of the decommissioned ones are the rogue trails.

Comment: Then you should make the remaining trails better.

Comment: Please give us more detail of the slide that has the trail counter data.

OPRD: Red is the Rim Trail, green is Wolf Tree Trail, and blue is Misery Ridge Trail. The contrast in user numbers at the different trail counters shows the concentrations of people hiking within the park.

Question: What percentage of visitors is crossing the bridge?

OPRD: 45% are taking Misery Ridge and 90% are crossing the bridge.

Mike Yun presented the capacity assessment report.

CLIMBING CAPACITY

Question: How did you come up with all of the climbers and the routes?

We calculated 3 climbers for small groups and 12 climbers for large groups on the more commonly used routes within the park. This gave us a number to start with. We needed to establish the parameters for a baseline.

We did not allocate any capacity to the climbing access trails. We did not want extra hikers getting in the way. The point is to enhance visitor experience and to preserve the natural resource. While we get more use in the short term, we risk losing the use in the long run.

Comment: (speaking to the photo rendering with blue colored people climbing) You think this is at capacity at more than 21 but the climbing routes on the left of the photo are in different areas.

Comment: The persons at one time should be changed from 3 to 2 as groups are usually in 2 people. This area of Morning Glory is usually filled with large groups that monopolize the wall.

Question: Climber side – what is going on in this photo? How are you getting to the density? If you walk up to a climb and there are a lot of people there, you go to another. There is no data in this photo that tells me if it is at capacity. My real question is: I don't understand how you are getting to a value for the density of climbing. Climbing routes are inert. You just keep walking if a route is already full.

Comment: If you have more people spreading out, it will disturb wildlife resources.

Answer: Climbers represent 23% and hikers come and go, but one climber can stay all day. Hikers are high 80's%.

Comment: The intent is not to restrict access to climbing it is to get to how much use the park can sustain.

Comment: I do not think this has been established on the climbing side.

Answer: The climbing side is the hardest to evaluate. We relied heavily on the established routes and appropriate numbers of people using them. The variables extend beyond that and with specific circumstances within the park. Some variables are difficult to control and they are also difficult to assess.

Comment: This is not an exact science but Michael will be around to answer questions.

Comment: You could have random day sampling with studies carried out over a long period of time. You can also take surveys over a long period of time.

Comment: This is an initial capacity assessment. We have built in the indicators and thresholds with strategies to employ over time and adjust. This is an example of adaptive management.

Comment: It seems like your numbers were established without a lot of public input. Not involving user groups seems like you are not getting the real answers.

Answer: The climbing experience is not going to be limited by this master plan. This is an opportunity to get feedback. We need the capacity numbers to be accurate and this is the opportunity to adjust them. It is also important to remember this is a master plan not a management plan. We have discussed the capacity process utilized at Yosemite and Acadia and was told it is a long process that can last a decade.

Comment: I encourage you to get better data on the capacity. I wouldn't be comfortable with you making recommendations on capacity. There are simple solutions to the issues. The large groups are creating the density or overuse problems.

PARKING AND CAPACITY

Answer: A lot of that falls on the management side of it and this is a master plan.

Question: Are you also looking at restricting people coming in the park?

Answer: That has not been determined at all. This is the first time we have included a capacity assessment in our master planning process.

Question: Is there a position from this group that lays out what you have found in capacity?

Answer: Yes we have a slide that will explain that.

Question: What type of parking capacity issues do you have because it is a huge issue?

Question: Is there equestrian parking at Smith Rock?

Answer: Yes in the overflow parking lot, but none designated specifically for equestrian parking.

Question: Visitor experience – have you done any visitor crowding surveys?

Answer: There are some questions in the survey and 62% thought they were crowded in the visit.

OPRD: In the survey, folks were asked, “What would you change at Smith Rock?” The top answers were: parking, congestion, camping, and nothing at all.

Several OPRD goals are to manage the bivouac and parking, improve trails, add bridges, and restrooms.

Comment: Lots of parks have multiple access points but Smith Rock only has one. If you had more access points a lot of your problems would be resolved because everything would be dispersed.

Question: Are you considering multiple access points?

OPRD: We are considering a couple.

Question: Are you going to keep the numbers of spaces the same?

OPRD: I will talk about that in the concepts.

Comment: I think there are concerns at a higher level. With all due respect, I am struggling with how you are not going to increase spaces. It doesn't seem very quantitative to me to do all of this work and end up with the same number of spaces.

OPRD: The result was that if additional parking was added then additional uses would increase. If more parking is added you will probably have more resources that are degraded.

Comment: If you look at the use, they are all accessing the park at the same place. If there were other options that provided other access points and increased the parking a little this could help. Recreation trends point at increased use in the future.

Small group breakout sessions.