



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Parks and Recreation Department

725 Summer St. NE, Suite C

Salem, OR 97301-1271

(503) 986-0980

Fax (503) 986-0792

www.oregonstateparks.org

Meeting Summary: Smith Rock State Park Master Plan Public Meeting II – Advisory Committee

Date: October 25, 2017 Public Meeting (1:30-4:00PM) Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center, Redmond

Advisory Committee: Mark Warren, Kit Dicky, Cliff Agog, Todd Coulter, Adam Bayler, Peter Gentosky, Nancy Coleman, Luis Elenes, Ian Yurdin, Chris Gannon, Alan Unger, Kristin Heins, Dylan Corbin, Calvin Landrus, David Byrne, Kirk Hofcomb, David Potter.

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

Meeting Highlights:

- The initial presentation was identical to that of the public meeting 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
- Management Plan versus Master Plan details were discussed as well as developing a system for registering outfitters who use the park for business
- Some general points discussed in the larger group included the need to properly prepare for emergencies, consider options for bivi camping, and to consider locating the visitors center at the south end of the park.

Meeting Agenda:

- David introduced OPRD staff and discussed the planning process
- 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 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: Are there any other proposals in regards to management. Obviously all of these physical proposals are meant to push people into different spots within the park. I was wondering if there are other methods as well?

OPRD: There is a difference between the master plan and the management plan and this doesn't get into too much detail related to the management plan. We try to keep the two plans separate. There may be management objectives that need to be revised as master plan suggestions evolve.

Question: If the overall concern is capacity it is kind of hard to gauge capacity without considering all of the other tools used to address capacity. I don't know how you could get at the whole scenario without it.

Comment: If we were to be allocating permits or other management strategies we would factor that into the capacity figures. We are currently looking at it at a higher level. We also are looking at it with an adaptive management lens where we plan to adjust numbers related to changes we witness over time.

OPRD: Turning people away has not been a management strategy in the past. We are considering trying some physical, on the ground strategies to see how that may affect capacity, while balancing the potential natural resource values of the site.

Question: Is the adaptive management plan written into the management plan in some way? I would like to highlight a problem that isn't captured in this data. I think this should be written down somewhere.

Comment: We started to draft indicators related to adaptive management. This is our first time using this approach and we expect it to evolve as we work through the process. Some of these efforts have taken a decade at other parks as it is an ongoing process.

Question: Have you measured how many people have used the park to go off park land to use BLM land?

OPRD: We have not done that study.

Comment: I would estimate that a significant amount of people who walk by Wolf Tree would be going off park land to go to the marsupials.

Comment: There is no clear marking to show when you walk off park land onto BLM land.

Comment: Parking is a huge concern for survey takers. Managing the bivouac and long term parking were other issues.

Questions: What types of bridges are you taking about?

OPRD: We are talking primarily footbridges.

Question: You suggested a reservation system for control of capacity of the bivouac, how would it compare to the current system?

OPRD: We had a pilot project of 14 spaces with numbers, and where you put your tent will have a number. We will use natural shrubbery and rocks to create natural spots, kind of like pods.

Question: Will the capacity change?

OPRD: Not at this time.

Question: Physical changes are meant to push people to other places. Is there more?

OPRD: We are looking at the difference between a master plan compared to a management plan. A management plan may not be developed as an outcome of a master plan.

The concerns you have should be discussed in the public meetings so it will help the outcome of the master plan.

Comment: If the overall concern is capacity you cannot get to it without taking everything else into account. If you are talking about allocating permits etc., we would associate it with the capacity. But we are not talking about those kinds of things.

Managing capacity is an ongoing conversation. This is the first time we have done a capacity study within the master planning process. We will continue to have conversations with our field staff and headquarters on how to use these improvements to incorporate the changes within the master plan and through any management plan.

Question: Is the adaptive management plan written into the management plan?

OPRD: I think there are things to include in the adaptive plan.

We have been referring it to a framework and trying to integrate the information coming in these meetings. We have posted them online as well. You can look at the indicators and thresholds. It is an ongoing process with lots of different perspectives/

CLIMBING VISITORS

Comment: Issue – you refer to two user groups—public and commercial climbers. But there is actually a third group—non-commercial guided groups or illegal guiding. That is a significant component of the crowding issue.

OPRD: What is your definition of illegal guiding?

Comment: The State Marine Boards says that anyone who accepts payment to take people on land they do not own. It could be kids, classroom type, etc. Smith Rock should not be

responsible but it seems to be a free for all and folks come from all over the region. Smith Rock has a regional reputation for being a free for all for guiding.

My concern is that there is this group that we are not getting any data on. It is unclear the difference between the guide companies who I came to represent and other services. These other service providers threaten the potential for guides and other users. I would like to see some means in which OPRD tries to collect data regarding this. I would like to see written into the plan to collect data on that and decide what to do. Adaptive management plan might be a good place to collect this data.

OPRD: I confirm there is a difference between different guiding operations and other service providers within the park. We are seeing more and more of the “others” climbing groups. OPRD policy is that they can come to the park and guide as long as they obey the rules. There are about 25 different groups that are coming to the park.

Comment: I am not interested in putting regulations on them, just identify them.

Question: Is there a law they are actually breaking?

Comment: Marine Board regulates it and they need to get licensed through them. Typically the licenses relate to water, but it could be applied to guided climbers. I wanted to highlight this idea of groups who are currently accessing the park.

MANAGEMENT AND MASTER PLAN

Comment: I think a management plan should be written in conjunction with the master plan because without that you are limiting users. The management plan will be as important as the master plan.

OPRD: We do not want to put together a management plan within the master plan because of the permanence of the master plan. A management plan is much more dynamic. Correct, we cannot tee up a bunch of physical improvements without some sort of commitments via the management strategies. We are working closely with the park staff who are familiar with the everyday operations of the park to be sure these proposals would coincide with management strategies for the park.

PHYSICAL PROPOSALS

Question: Have you had any discussions about having a visitor center at the south point? No matter how you design that building, it is going to stick out visually.

OPRD: We did discuss that idea last night. We have not drawn up plans for the visitor center in the south end. We have looked at putting the visitor center where the Rex House currently is. We located it near the overflow lot with the intent of allowing those short term visitors a taste of the park that will leave them with satisfied with their experience. That said we can look at the potential of developing a visitors center on the south end of the park.

Question: Why are you proposing a road in a high preservation area? That seems like a counter goal.

OPRD: The entrance road does look like it is in the preservation area but it is flood-irrigated land so if we stop the flood irrigation that area is not very significant. It is not necessarily a high resource value area. We will revisit the area with the botanist and wildlife biologist in greater detail.

Comment: If you can tuck the visitor center away visually that would be ideal. The yurt is hidden right now, so another location would be a good idea. Tucked into the existing road or other side of the parking lot would be a good move.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Question: Where are most people injured and how will emergency responders (ER) get them out?

OPRD: Trails assessment has ATV access on trails which helps speed up evacuation process for teams. We are including separate access points and roads to the park for emergency evacuation in concept c. A concept includes two more bridges to allow for easier hiking loops for people to reduce the number of people taking on challenging hikes such as Misery Ridge.

Question: I do like the idea of additional bridges. In the capacity study did you look at the capacity related to including these additional loops?

OPRD: That is an additional phase for the study in which we plan to calculate capacity once a preferred concept is identified.

Question: Have you considered an ER notification system within the park?

OPRD: At this point we do have an emergency plan. It is extremely difficult because of low staff and volunteers to get work to folks as to where they need to go. We do rely heavily on Redmond Fire. Obviously we do have all hands on deck and we do use a bullhorn on an ATV.

Comment: Sirens would be a good idea.

Comment: A ranger on an ATV with a bullhorn could be enough?

OPRD: The interesting thing about the park is it is relatively small, but once in the canyon you are somewhat in the wilderness and topography can make it challenging during an emergency. We have yet to review the roads with the county fire marshal but have proposed these alternative ways in and out to avoid a single long dead end access to the park.

CAPACITY

Question: Do you have a map of the access trail survey so we can look at closer? It looks like some climber access trails are being eliminated.

OPRD: Yes, it is all online. And when we develop the maps included in the master plan we will make it a lot easier to read. It is safe to say we will not remove trails to destinations. Routes to a destination may change slightly to concentrate users on fewer trails to eliminate braiding. There are a lot of repetitive routes and we would like to consolidate routes.

Question: Do all three concepts address growth for the visitation in the next 20 years?

OPRD: That is always a challenge. No matter how much parking we add we will be able to fill the lots with cars. Trying to employ some other management strategies will help address visitor numbers. We do not know if we will be able to address demand in the long-term.

Comment: You could self-control by turning folks away. Not what you want necessarily, but essentially these three concepts address the current need.

Comment: The current user numbers are at capacity.

Comment: There are significant overflow challenges. The County roads do not have shoulders and the County could cite vehicles for parking on the shoulders but this is not a priority.

Comment: It does not sound like you are addressing the parking issue.

OPRD: We share the county road, but we have very little control over it where we can tell folks the park is full. We try to balance other areas in order to accommodate visitors. The control factors will have to be added because of the county roads. Same with the campground, we are talking about having numbers of visitors that can get into line for a spot. An example is that we put signs out when campgrounds are full sometimes even out to the highway. Visitors tend to think the state park staff has some control over that issue, but we do not.

FUNDING

Comment: There will be a budget with the hope that we can get feedback and meld the concepts into one concept. Then we phase in the pieces of the master plan, looking at a 5, 10 and 20 year window. We are careful with what funding numbers we attach to a master plan as they will likely change with time.

It is important to remember that there is not funding on the heels of the adoption of this master plan. We go through an evaluation process. The conflicts are well known and those portions to improve them will be a high priority. Parking conflict issue resolution will be a high priority.

Question: So the proposals featured would be carried out in a 5, 10 or 20year period?

OPRD: We have plans that have been around for a long time that have yet to see completed improvements.

Question: Bivouac site – I love the tradition of the bivi site and have it not be an RV site. What about accommodating those who want to sleep in their cars?

OPRD: If we wanted to allow that, we would have to go through a new permitting process with the county.

Comment: The bridge at the southern tip is great because of the hiker view to the monkey and sends climbers there. It would be great to pair it with day use parking.

Comment: The field by the bivi area is a great resource for the highlining and slacklining community. Also, I like the idea of putting the visitor center at the southern end of the park to allow those short term visitors a chance to just peak over the rim or hike to the monkey face and the longer term visitors to park at north point.

Small group discussions.