



OPRD: Integrated Park Services Division

Meeting Discussion Notes January 15, 2014 The Dalles 5:30-7:30pm

Columbia River Gorge Planning Meeting II: Assessments

What follows are notes from the open discussion portion of the public meeting. For more information on what was presented see presentation notes and presentation slides at www.gorgeparksplan.com

Question: What constitutes a high resource value?

OPRD STAFF responded that a number of things do, including the river. And that also several aspects of the studies overlaid, like wetlands too.

OPRD STAFF added, there are two elements. What is the habitat and what is the health of the habitat. They have standards that measure the conditions. We focus on preserving diminishing habitats and valuable habitats.

Question: When you show Mayer park is that a summation of east and west?

OPRD STAFF answered yes.

Question: What does connectivity mean?

OPRD STAFF replied and said that we found connectivity to be a continuous theme. Habitat connections, wildlife corridors, the wind, cultural resources and native peoples traveled to trade goods, the wagon train came through, the old Columbia River highway. Motion and connection was a strong piece of experiencing the gorge.

Part of experiencing the gorge is going from one place and then another. A series of experiences, not just a single event. A journey from one end to the other.

Comment: This sentence (natural resource value) needs to be shorten and rewritten. Uniquely assembled is something that isn't needed. OPRD STAFF explained that it is a natural resource term.

Comment: I think the thought is fine, but needs to be simplified.

Comment: I wonder if the land shaped the cultures as well.

Comment: This statement links to a negativity about the land today.

OPRD STAFF replied that she think we can see negatives and positives.

Comment: Yeah, but the railroads and the dams.

OPRD STAFF said, Maybe it's the stories that we value then. The Dams and railroads were certainly considered good things when they were built and we still see them now, its an important story to understand and tell. Its sounds like we need to clarify. The cultures/communities and the land have certainly shaped each other.

OPRD STAFF: One comment we've had is that our statement for recreation doesn't capture the highly active recreation activities in the gorge.

Comment: It seems understated. Access for lots of those opportunities in the parks could be emphasized more.

Comment: I think you're missing the piece of how state parks and recreation interact with the people and how they live and work. There is a balance there.

OPRD STAFF replied, two different perspectives

Response: And two different needs.

Comment: And each community can be a springboard for the next community. And how parks can do something best within itself, but also provide an access to the next thing that can help in a positive way. We want to know how parks fit into the needs of citizens and government employees.

Comment: The trails and this building are great, but there are other trails that are outliers.

Comment: Can you go back to recreation (value)? Somethings missing about the vitality of the recreation that happens in the gorge that isn't in this sentence. I don't feel the energy here.

OPRD STAFF agreed that there is a difference.

Comment: a personal enrichment.

OPRD STAFF suggested there is a personal health and exercise

Comment: And make people feel vital.

Comment: Where does the economic component fit within these goals?

OPRD STAFF replied that there is a connection between economics and the connectivity vlaue.

Comment: And we see that the connectivity of bike trails, that we'll need additional bike trails. I don't know how you quantify it until it is done, but it is an intended effect rather than unintended.

Comment: When you say water recreation, do you mean areas where people can access boat ramps?

OPRD STAFF replied and said there are places for swimming access, boat ramps, wind surfing.

Comment: One of those values that you put up was access. It seems that there isn't a lot of access within the gorge.

OPRD STAFF said that we focused on access in general, and access to water is implied. Access to water is also significantly limited due to the railroad and the expense to create crossings.

Comment: Maybe you can explain more about where we can, we do. Makes it sound like you only do what you can.

OPRD STAFF Response: With the limited resources we have, it makes it difficult to make connections, like getting off I84. The railroad is king when it comes to access. The newest access is at Wyeth because of the in lue fishing location. It took a lot of federal dollars and multi-agency negotiating. I don't know if state park has the ability to pull that off.

Comment: There is access to the Columbia on the back side. Also on exit 35, butcher property could be someday open to the public. Just for the Wyeth bridge, it cost over a million dollars.

OPRD STAFF responded and said that these maps show our existing conditions. And it becomes a list of priorities of if we make a few major improvements like a railroad crossing or many smaller improvements throughout the parks we already have. Even then, a railroad crossing may be just too expensive.

Comment: and vehicle access is only one type of transportation. Access underneath the railroad could give access to the water to pedestrians only.

Comment: access to the other side of the railroad could be just access by boat and not just car.

OPRD STAFF responded and said that access that isn't open to cars could open up other opportunities.

Comment: Does state parks still own lands by tulle lakes, near grace point? Oregon state parks owned land there. I tried to get access there for years...but I wonder if OSP still owns the land, and maybe in 20 years it could be a spot for water access.

Comment: It's Swalee Point.

OPRD STAFF Response: But we can't access it with the railroad.

Comment: but there are existing trails there that could connect.

OPRD STAFF Response: We should definitely look at that.

Comment: It could be a great place for families. It could be a huge resource.

OPRD STAFF Response: Connecting to other resources would be great as well.

Comment: and then they'd be able to walk in.

Comment: It would have been wonderful to have access to that, and put the dalles on the map

OPRD STAFF Response: There are certainly projects that are up here. We have acquisitions with purpose. We also have to balance the cost of new properties with the cost of managing those we already have.

Comment: Can you access the water from Memaloose?

OPRD STAFF responded and said that no, there is a railroad issue there. It's a well-used campground.

Comment: Huge obstacle for campers. They've come back for 30 years. And we've had some scary experiences. And why can't we find a walk over bridge or a safe way to get down to the river?

OPRD STAFF said that Memaloose could be considered.

Comment: It wouldn't be a huge cost. There is a huge rock and the foot bridge. And the customers that would use the bridge would be happy to pay for it.

Comment: and there are other options like metal steps that go across.

OPRD STAFF said that it also needs to be accessible for all people, ie universally accessible. And closing down the railroad for a day for construction would be a huge cost.

OPRD STAFF Response: The national corp of engineers would have to do the scenic side of a project.

Comment: isn't there a way to access the water from the other side?

OPRD STAFF said that yes it is challenging when you can only access a park from one side of the freeway. We need to look at how to access around the railroad and the freeway.

Comment: People get redirected by GPS to highway 30, and they can't find the campground.

Comment: access should be written in bold.

Comment: places that have less visitation like starvation creek, access is less of an issue, even though you access it from one side.

OPRD STAFF said that part of the existing layout that we see of our parks is due to the history of state parks as part of ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation) many of these parks were thought of as rest stops and waysides.

Comment: Is there an acknowledgement of connected to the mountain bike trail east of cascade locks and Wyeth?

Comment: It's the south side of 84, and a bike system. I know it's a priority for the forest service. Does it have any interaction with that?

OPRD STAFF Response: We're working with the service. And then have a grant to develop the area. And they're working to create a hiker biker and equestrian service area.

OPRD STAFF responded and said we're looking at it, the bicycle network supports the mountain biking network.

OPRD STAFF Response: The Oregon state parks are the gateway to the forest service land. And what we want to work together. We're trying to create a seamless transition within the gorge.

Comment: I'm still trying to understand the bridge over the railroad and why it does have to be ADA access when there are trails on forest service land that aren't accessible.

OPRD STAFF said that the way universal access is approached is that if a similar quality experience can be had we work to offer it. There are trail loops that are graded and paved to be more accessible for example. Many trails are accessible for different levels of ability as well. But, with so few river access points in the Gorge, and considering the cost to build even just one new crossing, that crossing would need to be accessible to all abilities. It's just the right thing to do and it benefits everyone in the long run. It's also important to remember that older rec facilities were not built with universal facilities and were grandfathered in. New projects are expected to be designed better. (OPRD STAFF is also looking at where to make Universal access improvements in our day use and overnight camping areas in the Gorge)

Comment: It's also important to note that if the funding is from federal grants, and it would be for such a project, it has to be designed for Universal Access by law. You just have to think that it has to be universal access.

Comment: Do you know what is going to happen to the stairway at Eagle Creek?

OPRD STAFF Response: ODOT is spearheading.

Comment: I know friends of the Columbia are working on pro bono options so that it can be accessible for all people. There are many cyclists who are unable to carry bikes down the stairs.

OPRD STAFF responded and said universal access is just the right thing to do.

OPRD STAFF asked if there are any other comments about facilities and programs.

Comment: The bird of prey is very popular. The wildlife vet comes down and brings her birds and has a program.

Comment: I think we need cabins or yurts at Memaloose. People come from international areas, and they buy all this camping gear so that they can camp, but how can they camp without buying tons of gear? Maybe yurts?

OPRD STAFF: asked about how that type of structure looks in the gorge. We have yurts at the beach, but what about the gorge influences?

Comment: How can those structures block out noise, would be cool. Sound proof walls in those structures.

OPRD STAFF said that OPRD STAFF will post the content online and email you with updates.

Comment: When they start to do this project, are they going to start from the west and move east?

OPRD STAFF said great questions. It will be a lot about what are the priorities. We'll make proposals about what the phasing will be like. And it is also influenced by communities and involvement.

OPRD STAFF Response: it does have to be approved.

OPRD STAFF said it is about where there is a need, and money, and what needs to happen in what order.

OPRD STAFF Comment: There is a balance we go through between building campgrounds here, or some other project. Sometimes it is just driven by needs and other people telling us that. There are a lot of different ways we make those decisions. The pace of making decisions is outpacing our funding for building our projects. We need to decide which projects to develop first. And what we do and create new, there is a pushback somewhere else to accommodate that. It takes a lot of time and thought.

Comment: we really appreciate all the work you're doing. The presentation tonight and being so open. I think you're doing a great job. I think getting partners along the ways. Partnerships and getting communities involved is key.

OPRD STAFF Response: we know that the gorge is special, and that every community is connected to the next.

Comment: yes, passion runs deep in the gorge.

Comment: Part of the reason I'm here tonight is access. And access for waterfowl in the wintertime. We have a letter that we hand out for people so that they know they can do these activities at certain times. If you can accommodate this in the plan, and increase ability to hunt waterfowl.

OPRD STAFF Response: There were six sanctions...Oregon state parks didn't have the authority to tell you what to do in the gorge.

Comment: And certain areas are submerged.

OPRD STAFF Response: and we're allowing water hunting all the time in areas where it is allowed.

Comment: is it going to be codified in the plan?

OPRD STAFF Response: It is a ODR and fish and wildlife lands issue so it would not be addressed specifically in the plan, use will be mentioned but not an outline of the rules.

Comment: My response to people who would want to from the Bonneville dam to the Dalles dam— don't even think about it. It's off the table as a recreational use. There are a lot of limitations...boating access, restrictions by city limits.

Comment: We have restrictions of recreational land use. And we have a demand for it. Let's not lose what we have and how can we do more.

Question: Could you please fix the boat ramp at West Mayer?

Comment: There is probably not a boat ramp that is better in Oregon than the Deschutes ramp.

OPRD STAFF Response: Marine board can be a partnership with this too.

Comment: there are much low elevations at certain times of the year, but it is hard.

OPRD STAFF Response: we could more gravel down for you.

Comment: Please work on that. We appreciate the opportunity to talk tonight.