



OPRD STAFF: Integrated Park Services Division

Meeting Discussion Notes January 14, 2014 Cascade Locks 5:30-7:30pm

Columbia River Gorge Plan Presentation: 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 was the timeline for this survey?" and "How was the question framed?" Ben Hedstrom replied that the question asked if the return visit was within the last year.

Question: "What is connectivity?" OPRD STAFF replied that connectivity means connected habitats, and that the gorge is also seen as a transportation corridor that includes cars, boats, bikes. OPRD STAFF thinks that connectivity is a theme throughout our other values as well.

OPRD STAFF asked if anyone had any feedback about the value of scenic beauty. Jamie English replied that we're trying to understand if the draft guiding values for the plan reflect what we heard from the public in the first set of public meetings.

Comment: I live in the mouth of the gorge. It defines Portland more than the coast does. The gorge is a defining factor in Oregon, and in the region. The artists that I talk to that live in the gorge do so because of the inspiration it provides.

OPRD STAFF asked if there was any feedback on the value of natural resources

Comment: Repair the damage and enhance the habitat as stewards of the land.

Question: What does uniquely assembled mean? OPRD STAFF responded that it means that the combinations of habitats found in the gorge are unique and not found elsewhere.

OPRD STAFF asked if OPRD STAFF's approach to recreation types reflects how you feel about the gorge.

Comment: Is there a way to increase access to the river for overnight camping and water play? Areas are currently limited by the railroad. OPRD STAFF responded that increased river access is something we'll look closely at.

Comment: You haven't mentioned anything about public transport. With increase population and use, what can we do in terms of planning transportation in the future?

OPRD STAFF replied that there could possibly be a transport shuttle, or ferry boat.

Comment: I'm really interested in bike sharing in the gorge. I'm not sure how it would work, but it could be really great.

Question: Parking is an issue in the gorge. Are you working with the forest service on these issues?
OPRD STAFF responded that yes there is collaboration and that ODOT is also part of an ongoing conversation.

Comment: Sandy River Delta is busy in the summer, and people are interested in getting to the water, and then they park everywhere. I'm suggesting parking enforcement, not more parking.

Comment: If you add too much parking it gets out of control.

OPRD STAFF responded that those comments from the public help us make that a priority.

Comment: State Parks can fill that role, rather than other groups.

Question: Is this meeting about all the possibilities we could do?

OPRD STAFF said that this is about looking at the values and refining them, and then proposing a realistic plan in the future. It's okay if we throw some big ideas around in the process.

Comment: Years and years ago, Trimet used to stop in cascade locks. Hood River and the Dalles could be serviced as well.

Comment: Connectivity also includes economic development for the towns along the gorge. Partnerships with Amtrak and Trimet to bring people through the gorge can help towns and tourists.

Comment: We have visitors all over the world.

Comment: We need additional services that cities can provide to tourists—like if I'm visiting the gorge and my bike breaks down and where do I go? We need to integrate the services cities can provide into our plan for the gorge.

Question: The gorge trail is linear compared to other trails that are circular (or loops)...can we include ped trails in addition to bike trails?

OPRD STAFF responded that people can walk along the bike trail.

Comment: Parts of the trails that are along the shoulder of the road aren't ped friendly.

Comment: We need to be educating tourists about parking, and other things they shouldn't do in the gorge.

OPRD STAFF responded We have to consider, “how do we communicate to our visitors about being a good guest when they’re here?” this is a question the entire scenic area is trying to deal with.

Comment: For the hiking network, it seems there is a need for a linear connection for pedestrians along the entire gorge. And not something that is a shared path with roads. I’d also like there to be path connections at low and high elevations. There are also parks in the gorge you can’t get to...I’d like you to examine access to those. It would be nice to make loop trails in more parks rather than out and back trails. Loop experiences in as many places as possible. For the bike experience I think there is a missing component about the bike trail connection from Troutdale and Latourell. Also, a new state park at the low elevation of Crown Point that visitors can access, but there is a service road by women’s forum. Finally, the transit connection would be great and it could stop at Troutdale, Hood River, Cascade Locks...it could be a great boom for towns out here. Connecting to Portland would be awesome.

Question: Isn’t there a tradeoff of bringing in more people/additional transportation? Couldn’t it create more damage or wearing down resources? Isn’t it good to a degree that some properties are isolated?

Comment: For me, the really big take away is that it is a fine balance between too many people and having good accessibility.

Comment: The plan also needs to reflect how the parks engage the public with the resources we have in the gorge. There needs to be a change in our ethics.

OPRD STAFF responded by asking, “Are you suggesting programs that promote stewardship and educate and actively practice stewardship?” The response was yes.

Comment: I would like to use the word development...I remember being an 18 year-old and driving to the beach and my friends saying my fourth grade class planted those trees on that hill. So, it’s about engaging schoolkids in being stewards and passing along that ethic to the next generation. OPRD STAFF responded by saying, “Yes, we do work engaging students and teachers with stewardship programs.”

Question: Do you have a robust volunteer program? OPRD STAFF responded by saying, “8,000 volunteers around the state. There are also hosts and community groups.”

OPRD STAFF also stated, “we have a variety of organizations. We have groups that come to Rooster Rock. Friends group. Earth day volunteer groups.”

Comment: Volunteerism...we could have a more visible connection between internet and technology and our parks. We could have aps that allow us to connect people with activities in the gorge via technology.

OPRD STAFF responded by saying it would be cool if people could post their gorge volunteer experience on facebook and people could read that story...and that could connect to additional opportunities.

Comment: Being close to Portland, the volunteer potential could increase a lot.

Question: How are you going from the analysis and goals stage to strategies/objectives/alternatives...and the next step?

OPRD STAFF responded by saying that OPRD STAFF will be discussing some of that with you tonight in the need for a plan and updates slides.

Comment: There is the issue of coal and oil transportation through the gorge. Do you have an approach or detailed response for that situation?

OPRD STAFF responded by saying it was a great comment and that OPRD STAFF could have the natural resources department have a discussion about it.

OPRD STAFF said that there are degrees to what we can have a hand in that as well...if it's in the Oregon State Parks ownership. OPRD STAFF wants to make sure that it's planning for the future. But bigger facilities are not in the gorge's plans.

OPRD STAFF responded and said that OPRD STAFF is not doing one big master plan, but making interventions throughout the state parks in the gorge to improve the overall experience.

Comment: Like at rooster rock there is a ton of parking, but the beach is no longer there.

OPRD STAFF responded by saying it's a matter of looking at the uses and having a balance between providing parking for our visitors, or providing a means to get out to the gorge.

Comment: You charge fees for visiting the parks?

OPRD STAFF responded by saying at some parks we do and some we don't...it gets vetted through intergroup and public meetings where which parks we charge fees at get approved.

Question: Are any of your partner agencies on a similar planning page with you?

OPRD STAFF responded by saying that OPRD STAFF does have partners we meet with. The gorge commission plan needs to be updated, but is struggling to find funding to do so...currently we're trying to bring everyone into our process so that it's as comprehensive as it can be.

Comment: Connecting Rooster Rock to the rest of the parks is an important connection that is something to call for in a state park plan for everyone to work for.

OPRD STAFF replied by saying that they have a bridge at rooster rock...but the costs become great and we have to pick and choose.

Comment: Well it would be good to make a priority list of projects in the gorge plan, that could be gotten to later down the road when you get federal funding.

Comment: Visitors come through and there is no parking, so they only get to see it from their car.

Comment: There are many other spots that are accessible and they could take some pressure off the high usage sites.

Comment: There is social media that can play into how that is communicated. An app could show where parking is full and where there are availabilities, so people can go to another site and still experience the gorge. And this connects back to partnerships with transportation agencies to relieve parking issues.

OPRD STAFF responded by saying that partnerships allow opportunities for funding in addition to opportunities for coordination.

Comment: Most people that come here just stumble into the parks without knowing much. It would be cool if there were information like sharing stations, etc. so people know what they can do before they get into the park. Also, you need a way to have a vision about how you're going to get to your goal. And to appropriate it clearly, whether you're doing the quick stop or the day-long visit and how that directs the parking usage.

Comment: Shuttle stations that come through at set intervals...try to get a good number of the cars off the road.

OPRD STAFF replied and said that OPRD STAFF would certainly want to be at the table for those discussions.

Comment: Maybe there could be an idea of parking permits.

Comment: There is also an equity issue of all people being able to access the gorge whether they could afford to get to the parks or not.

OPRD STAFF said that the social justice issue comes into play by allowing all people that own the parks to access them.

OPRD STAFF added that addressing equity and justice is essential to serving the regional user group that includes the Portland metro area.