



April 30 Advisory Committee **DRAFT** Meeting Summary

Columbia River Gorge Public Meetings III

**Date:** April 30, 2014

**Meeting Summary**

The purpose of the meeting was to update the advisory committee about our current planning process and share the current planning proposals for Oregon State Parks in the Columbia River Gorge.

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Presentation:
  - Overview of Planning Process, Schedule, Our Role in the Columbia Gorge,
  - Overview of our existing conditions: natural resources, cultural resources, VEA.
  - Values, Overview: Recreation analysis.
  - Preliminary proposals: summary of plan goals and actions, improving visitor experience.
  - Individual Park Proposals:
    - Portland Women's Forum
    - Rooster Rock
    - Bridal Veil
    - Ainsworth
    - Wyeth
    - Viento
    - West Mayer
    - Trail Proposals.

**Summary of General Comments**

- 1) What determines a slight or a major change in a park?

OPRD STAFF: The level, or scale of proposed projects. For example, there is a need to extend a trail at Dabney near the river several yards. This is a slight change and is not as complicated as some of the more intensive projects at one of the seven parks we have identified as having a more significant level of development.

- 2) How did you pick these parks? How do we connect different properties?

OPRD STAFF: We looked at where there are current needs in our parks and responded with proposals in those high need areas. Our network diagrams show where there is a strong

need for improvements. We focused on underutilized properties, underdeveloped places, and alleviating stress at overused areas.

- 3) Will there be additional detail in your next proposal? Will phasing be part of the plan?

OPRD STAFF: The plans will be expanded in some parts with more detail where needed. They will change to reflect the comments we hear during this round of meetings. We will address phasing during the next round of the planning process as well. We will also include programming components in the next series of meetings that overlay onto park facilities proposals. The final draft plan for the management units will identify and outline the projects at a feasible planning scale some of which will include the need for more detailed site planning efforts at certain parks.

- 4) Is there a strategy for having a unified approach for development in the future to preserve the aesthetic of the historic highway that people expect throughout the gorge?

OPRD STAFF: The Columbia Gorge Scenic Management Plan outlines guidelines that have shaped the ODOT standards for the historic Columbia river HWY and trail developments. OPRD will identify these standards in the draft plan.

### ***Rooster Rock***

- 5) Is there a reason that the Rooster Rock proposal doesn't have more major improvements such as increasing the amount of recreation or picnic areas near the river and moving parking somewhere near the highway?

OPRD STAFF: It is important that we work within our means, and relocating existing parking would not be cost effective. Rooster Rock is not a new park, it is an established park and really what we are considering here is a renovation building on existing facilities to meet future needs. This proposal reflects a discussion where we looked at two extremes: the possibility of making larger moves on the riverfront based on significant study of the hydrologic patterns of river, or alternatively proposing no improvements at this time and waiting to see what needs are in another 20 years. The proposal you see today instead attempts to maximize river front recreation experience, significantly reduce the impacts of pavement while maintaining the number of highly desirable parking spaces.

- 6) How intensive or expensive is the railroad crossing? And have you investigated what The Dalles did for their underground river trail?

OPRD STAFF: It would be in the 1-5 million dollar range. The Union Pacific line runs several cars a day and that cost reflects the necessity to shut down the system during construction. The way in which we cross the railroad, over or under, will need to be accessed further. Water levels often limit the ability to go under the railroad and this would be the case at Rooster Rock. When creating an overcrossing you need room on either side of the railroad to construct an accessible ramp. Considering the costs and constraints of railroad crossings

you can see why many other more mode4st improvement proposals will likely be higher priorities. That being said, we have identified the railroad crossing as a reach project incase the funds become available, this railroad crossing project has been proposed as it has the most benefit for the cost.

7) Why is the boat ramp at Rooster Rock not being dredged?

OPRD STAFF: Keeping the boat ramp functional requires a lot of money and it could be undone by one intense weather event. The marine board over the years has invested money at Blue Lake, and we have looked at extending a ramp into the Columbia but it would be extremely costly and also interfere with the shipping lane. It also creates visual impacts from Portland Women's Forum. The plan will include language stating that there will be continued coordination with the Marine Board to manage the boat ramp at Rooster Rock in a way that is cost effective and considers the long-term hydrological factors.

### ***Latourell Falls***

8) Is anything happening to the barn at Latourell?

OPRD STAFF: A new roof is currently planned and there are ideas circulating about turning it into an event space. These need to be further developed.

### ***Bridal Veil/Angel's Rest Trail***

9) TRAIL KEEPERS OF OREGON COMMENT:

- I like the proposal for a new trail connecting Bridal Veil to Angel's Rest because it will help with maintenance efforts in this area. Trails are being rebuilt because of overuse.
- Bridal Veil would be a great gateway to the network of trails in this area, and as an information/orientation stop.
- Using the existing paved area as a place to get Gorge-wide trail network information is a great idea.

### ***Wyeth***

10) ODFW QUESTION: Why is the boat ramp at Wyeth only non-motorized? Couldn't it be something that people go out with a small motorboat and go fishing?

OPRD STAFF: People already do use it for small motorboats and that use will continue.

OPRD needs to clarify the use at this boat ramp in the drawings.

### ***Trail Projects***

11) Do major improvements at Latourell Falls include rerouting trails?

OPRD STAFF: Slight rerouting may occur, mostly for safety concerns, but nothing significant that would need remapping.

12) NW TRAIL ALLIANCE COMMENT: Talking about bicycling in the Gorge, the plans address cyclists on pavement; however, how do we address the needs of biking on soft surfaces and multi-use? There is a need for more soft trails in the Gorge.

- A new survey from travel Oregon states that 50% of the cycling in the Gorge is on soft surface.
- There are not a lot of soft surface trails on OPRD property and if some of the trails that were proposed were multi-use it would help solve this problem.
- Make a connection between Post Canyon and the Mitchell Point trail.

OPRD STAFF: The trail system connectivity, soft surface included, is something we will certainly address in our continued conversations with the Forest Service. We will coordinate how trails feed into each other and show how a connection to those trails area being made on OPRD property. Per your comment, we have work to do on investigating and identifying opportunities for mountain biking trails in our plan. Coordinated efforts with the Forest Service are already being made to create a better connection between Post Canyon and the Mitchell Point trail. The project involves a patchwork of owners and property boundaries that make the process complex.

### ***Natural Resources***

13) ODFW COMMENT: How much will this plan go into the impacts these proposals will have on natural resources? If you get multiple river access sites developed, what will the impacts be on river? For example, how will the new cabins at West Mayer impact the wildlife? You might proceed with a smaller foot print.

OPRD STAFF: We will address these questions and concerns during the implementation process. We need to have a follow up conversation with our natural resource team about the West Mayer situation you mentioned.

### ***Hunting***

14) ODFW COMMENT: Waterfowl hunting in the Gorge currently needs to be addressed. Information about where it is permitted is not readily available and confusing. How do hunting areas interact with the proposals? Do/will hunting areas change? Is there new signage planned to clarify where you can hunt and not hunt? We would really like to see a clear brochure with mapping as we have in other areas of the state to clarify boundaries.

OPRD STAFF: OPRD will contribute to ODFW 's efforts to create a Gorge wide map for hunting and fishing areas.

### ***Capacity***

15) NATIONAL SCENIC AREA QUESTION: How much detail will this plan go into about the cumulative effects for neighboring recreations areas, natural resources, tribal fishing rights, etc. of what is proposed?

OPRD STAFF: Part of that will be addressed in this plan; however, first we need to understand the priorities for phasing. When we get closer to implementation there will be another level of detail for site level permitting review requirements.

16) How can OPRD parks become portals to forested land to help with controlling overuse? Should there be fees at certain parks?

OPRD STAFF: Implementing fees will continue to be discussed with all agencies managing land in the Gorge.

17) How do we address the increase in tourism within the Gorge? Is a shuttle a good idea?

OPRD STAFF: This is a regional issue that is being discussed by all agencies. The idea of a shuttle has been discussed and it actually being tested on the Washington side in Skamania County this summer, Thursdays through Sundays.