



*Oregon Parks and Recreation Department:  
Integrated Park Services Division*

*East End Public Meeting IV – Draft Plan Review*

*Columbia River Gorge Management Units Plan*

**Date:** October 23, 2014

**Time:** 5:30-7:30 PM

**Location:** Gorge Discovery Center, The Dalles

### Meeting Summary

OPRD staff introduced the purpose of the meeting and presented the Draft Plan.

There was concern about general boat access to the river bank at Rooster Rock, given the Plan's recommendation to allow the shoreline to fill in naturally. Jaime English noted that there will still be boat access up to the shore in several locations.

There was support voiced for the trail between Portland Women's Forum and Rooster Rock as a "lovely idea."

It was noted that car lights in the parking lot at Portland Women's Forum interfere with stargazing, which is popular there. Jaime English responded that OPRD will look at ways to reduce light pollution at both Rooster Rock and Portland Women's Forum and to emphasize stargazing as an activity in this area, although Rooster Rock was a much more appropriate place to host stargazing events.

Regarding the proposed mountain bike connection between Post Canyon and the Historic Columbia River Highway, there was concern on the part of equestrian representatives that the Wygant trail is steep and dangerous for hikers if mountain bikers are coming down at high speeds. They felt that the term 'multi-use' amounted to 'bikers only' because of the reality of user conflicts with bikers, and pointed out that allowing mountain bikers would effectively exclude horses. Ben Hedstrom with OPRD pointed out that the multi-agency trail plan for Post Canyon identifies several trails as horse-friendly, but not the Chetwoot connection trail. Equestrian representatives countered that the Post Canyon Trails plan was never adopted, so there was no formal decision that the trails would be used as defined in the plan. Jaime English indicated that OPRD could make it clear in the Plan that the Wygant connection is intended to be a connection to the HCRHST for mountain bikers to address their desire for such a connection rather than a downhill route for "bombers."

It was asked what percentage of OPRD trails are equestrian-friendly. Staff responded that most equestrian trails in the Gorge are on USFS property because OPRD properties are generally too small to accommodate equestrian uses.

As in the previous day's meeting, the point was raised that the Mitchell Point / Post Canyon trails have a 100+ year history of use by equestrians and that it is important to keep multi-use trails in Post Canyon to allow continued riding of horses. Kevin Price with OPRD agreed that park managers need to work with adjacent property owners to maintain horse access.

Concern was raised about the lack of security at Dalton Point. It was asked whether OPRD had considered using cameras or taking other measures to increase safety. Jaime English noted that no cameras have been proposed, but that the idea of trail stewards could potentially benefit Dalton Point. There was an additional suggestion to clear and limb trees to increase visibility from the road, but others noted that if vegetation were cleared it would harm the attractiveness of the site.

There was a comment that boat ramp improvements at West Mayer are important and should be a high priority. Staff agreed.

Several attendees, including State Representative Huffman asked about whether river access to Squally Point would be included in the plan. Kevin Price noted that OPRD is waiting for official confirmation from ODOT that a parking lot at Squally Point is something they support before the agency evaluates the feasibility of access there. He also noted that the agency has concerns related to natural resources at Squally Point because of a listed plant species that occurs in the area. Jamie English noted that prior to identifying potential restrictions based on natural resources, scenic areas standards, and the impact of development on recreation, a planned feasibility study was identified in the plan to evaluate if the location (along with several other pedestrian river access areas identified throughout the Gorge) was even feasible for a pedestrian crossing, given ODOT's response.

It was emphasized by several attendees that there is a strong desire for access to Squally Point.

One attendee identified herself as a member of the Northwest Area Committee Rapid Response Team for oil disasters by rail (a draft report is now online). She noted that people and resources in the Gorge are in jeopardy if there is an incident, including in state parks, and wondered if OPRD has plans for evacuation of park users in case of emergency. She wondered also whether the railroad had committed financial and other resources in case of a disaster, and noted that the first response to rail incidents is currently dependent on local fire departments. Kevin Price responded that this issue is not necessarily something that needs to be addressed in the planning process, but rather in day-to-day park operations, and that staff currently have emergency evacuation plans for all parks. Jaime English suggested that the Plan could reflect that this is a significant issue in the Gorge.

Jamie English then read a comment from the OPRD Communications Department on the matter: State parks will be included in a broad range of emergency response plans in different ways through our upcoming work with the Oregon Office of Emergency Management. We're not yet sure how this applies to the Gorge specifically, or to different kinds of cargo, but we will address visitor and staff safety, and resource protection. Specific emergency response plans are not something that are typically addressed in OPRD state park master plans, however the agency prioritizes providing safe places for our visitors to enjoy through park management practices.

