



Oregon Statewide Trails Plan

STATEWIDE TRAILS PLAN ISSUES WORKSHOPS

SOUTHWEST REGION

Grants Pass Public Recreation Provider Session (Daytime) 4/16/03

(Southwest Region includes Coos, Curry, Josephine, Jackson and Douglas Counties)

Motorized Trail Issues

A. There is a need to provide managed motorized areas within the region to better protect natural resources and reduce the number of neighbor complaints. Many impacts are the result of enthusiasts riding in areas not appropriate for motorized use. Managed areas will also provide safer riding opportunities (8 dots).

B. Regarding comment A, these comments are somewhat correct. More management of OHV use is needed. And many impacts are a result of OHV use in inappropriate areas. However, OHV use should be restricted to applicable roads and certain areas that can handle the OHV impacts such as abandoned gravel pits. I am sure that you are quite aware of the problems with OHV hangouts such as the Dunes of California. Consider what we are dealing with before constructing more trails for OHV use. And please send me any information that you make available to the public regarding future trail construction or designation. In southern Oregon, it would be unwise to designate trails for OHV use when the trail was not constructed for that use. Roads are properly constructed for that use (on-line comment).

C. There is a need for noise management standards and enforcement of those standards. Vendors should be involved in the process of educating users regarding compliance with noise standards (4 dots).

D. There is a need for improved safety training in the region (1 dot).

E. There is a need to provide good information (signing, displays, brochures, electronic) on trail opportunities to potential visitors during trip planning so they are not disappointed by a lack of opportunities after arrival. It is more effective to tell people where to go rather than later telling them where not to go for trail opportunities. It seems like agencies are not keeping up with the technology in relation to providing good information; perhaps it stems from an older generation of managers that do not have the skills themselves or the ability to acquire the skills because of time and funding constraints. Riding maps should be provided at the point of purchase by vendors (1 dot).

F. There is a need for information on what to do and who to contact when enthusiasts observe and wish to report a violation of area regulations to management agency personnel (1 dot).

G. Regarding comment F, this reminds me of what is needed—more law enforcement with the ability to levy stiff penalties to the OHV users engaging in illegal behavior. Illegal behavior and user conflicts are commonplace in southern Oregon (on-line comment).

H. There is a need for coordination and communication between public agencies (federal, state, and local agencies) regarding trail planning, funding and design and to facilitate the identification of multi-jurisdictional priorities. Communication within and between public agencies is difficult without a knowledgeable spokesperson on the subject. Motorized use on and off roads is an issue internally that is not well articulated in some agencies, which then becomes a major problem for the public when they hear the same information. Consolidation has been suggested in the past as a way of bridging this problem by creating a SW Oregon Motorized Recreation Center of Excellence. Such a center would act as a "clearing house" for planning and implementation of summer

and winter motorized recreation trails and uses. This would combine several agency specialists into one center to manage this growing activity. We should also consider establishing a shared interagency statewide goal to develop trail connectivity throughout the state (1 dot).

I. Regarding comment H, we tried to get this moving and had a good organizational meeting in Butte Falls with Private and with BLM and Forest Service. Everyone seemed to think it would be a great idea, but with the transfer of a key individual, it appears that the idea is now dead. MRA is going to try to get the agencies together again and see if we can't all work towards some regional planning and cooperation as to use of equipment and personnel. There are some good people down here, but there are also some obstructionists. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. A nice letter from OPRD suggesting the benefits of this cooperation might give us enough of a boost to get this back on line (on-line comment).

J. Regarding comment H, if organized OHV groups want a "clearing house" for planning and implementation for motorized recreation they can create it. No state dollars should be wasted on this concept. Organized OHV groups already receive millions in tax dollars to spend on OHV use. This is a radical idea that should be rejected. We need less motorized use in the backcountry, not more. OHV's continue to create user conflict in the backcountry. That is the issue you should be addressing (on-line comment).

K. There is a need for ethics education (0 dots).

Non-Motorized Trail Issues

L. There is a strong need for trail connectivity within the region. In Ashland, connectivity includes making trail connections within the urban area and to trails in adjacent public lands. There are also opportunities in the region to connect communities with nearby parks and open spaces (Gold Hill, Bear Creek Greenway, Rogue River, Valley of the Rogue) and to connect land-based trails with water trails. Connecting communities to outlying trails also creates opportunities for both local community recreation (no need to drive to outlying trails) and park connections to communities as recreation destinations. A trail connection is nearly complete between the Bear Creek Greenway and the Pacific Crest Trail that will serve as a major conduit between urban and forest settings. But, this in itself does not address the growing number of unmanaged trails in the interface on privately owned and public lands. Management needs to occur that develops sustainable trails in appropriate locations that are desirable while at the same time decommissioning trails in inappropriate locations that are not sustainable. The issue of unmanaged trails is directly affecting rare plants, introduction of evasive species, and to a lesser degree, water quality from soil erosion (5 dots).

M. Regarding comment L, OPRD staff members have proposed research of the Rails with Trails program for the Rogue Valley. Ashland already has used this method for part of their bike trail. By working out an agreement with the railroad we could connect the north and south sections of the valley via this conduit. Spur trails could be developed off this trail to connect to the other hiking/biking trails throughout the area. The City of Rogue River is currently researching this possibility. This could provide a firebreak alongside the rail bed, which is currently bladed off by small dozers in some stretches for just this purpose. OPRD proposes a spur trail to its current River's Edge Hiking Trail. We would entertain the idea of a hiker/biker camp area within the campground. The rail trail would be able to provide a safe corridor that could be signed and maintained by local county, state and federal agencies. This could be a win/win for all concerned with the usual property owner concerns needing active consideration. Ideally, there would be a countywide bicycle/hiker rule enforcement patrol (on-line comment).

N. There is a need for funding and technical assistance for easements, permitting fee title, and acquisition for trail projects. Population growth in the Ashland area has resulted in increased demand for trails. Population growth has also increased the cost of land acquisition and easements and reduced the supply of available land acquisition opportunities. A trail counter set up on a National Forest System Trail north of Ashland in 1999 had 12,033 hits. In 2002, that same counter registered 18,466 hits. Trail easements have been difficult to obtain throughout the urban interface. Property owners are not agreeing to easements because of perceived property devaluation, liability and risk of fire (5 dots).

O. There is a need for a variety of trail types (hardened to natural surfaces) within the region. If we are going to have an extensive regional trail system, we realistically cannot afford to pave it all (3 dots).

P. There is a need to look at trail design as a means of managing use to reduce user conflict and trail erosion. Proper trail design can be a more cost-effective trail management strategy than regulation. There is a need for separate designated areas for use by downhill mountain bikers (mountain bike parks). The more extreme mountain bikers are often incompatible with other trail uses. Downhill mountain biking is also resulting in extreme erosion problems on watersheds within the region. But, we should keep in mind that "extreme riders" look for the "knarliest" route possible, which then attracts them to trails (managed or unmanaged) not suited for their use. Even off road (bushwackers) use by downhill mountain bikers is growing rapidly. Braided trails are becoming an issue as riders develop side trails along the main routes. Separating uses is a difficult option to reduce user conflict. Dogs are even an issue within the hiker community (2 dots).

Q. Regarding comment P, we need a statewide trail etiquette and ethics brochure and sign program. This would be able to proactively state the reasons why domestic pets are allowed while leashed or are not allowed at all on specific trails. There is a need for a statewide hiking/biking trail map similar to the statewide ATV map currently available (on-line comment).

R. There is a need for coordination and communication between public agencies (federal, state, and local agencies) regarding trail planning, funding and design and to facilitate the identification of multi-jurisdictional priorities. We should also consider establishing a shared interagency statewide goal to develop trail connectivity throughout the state. Communication is more important now than ever between agencies and the public. It is critical that the public be involved in trail development, design, and maintenance to preserve the long-term viability of a trail. Lesser-used trails are being abandoned to divert energy and resources to higher use areas, resulting in the loss of some recreation experiences. As agencies reorganize to be in line with reduced budgets, they should look at opportunities to combine services. Agency stability needs to happen as quickly as possible because the public is not being served with good information, nor can agencies be responsive with mounting workloads and uncertain futures (1 dot).

S. There are considerable economic benefits associated with developing trail connectivity within the region. There are many active people in Ashland who own or work in bike shops who are keenly aware of the importance of trails in the area. Their bike shops are dependent on good trail systems. The Ashland Chamber of Commerce is also very interested in the trail systems and are quite interested in information that can be prepared and cleanly displayed (0 dots).

T. Trails provide a safe alternative route for bicycle and pedestrian commuting within the region (0 dots).

U. There are several local trail development opportunities on land and water at and around Rogue River (0 dots).

V. There is a need to provide good information on trail opportunities to potential visitors during trip planning so they are not disappointed by a lack of opportunities after arrival. It is more effective to tell people where to go rather than later telling them where not to go for trail opportunities (0 dots).

W. There is a need for trail ethics information, especially on multi-use trails (0 dots).

X. There is an increasing amount of vandalism occurring at trailheads (0 dots).

Y. There appears to be an increasing need for regional and "local" tourist information. Several area long-time residents are unaware of opportunities existing in the present parks/trails system (on-line comment).

Water Trail Issues

Z. There is a need for identification and promotion of water trail opportunities within the region (5 dots).

AA. There is a need for information related to the class of waterway, conditions and regulations on water trails within the region (4 dots).

BB. There is a need for designated areas along water trails to allow paddlers to get out of their boats. Such areas should be included on maps and brochures with a listing of on-shore facilities available (2 dots).

CC. The publication "Fishing in Oregon" should be used as an information source during the inventory of existing water trails within the region (1 dot).

DD. Threatened and Endangered Species impacts will need to be evaluated in planning water trails within the region (1 dot).

EE. Seasonal water flows will impact when water trails will be usable over the course of the year (0 dots).

FF. There is a need for safety education and training within the region (0 dots).

GG. There are opportunities to connect land-based trails with water trails within the region (0 dots).