



DRAFT STATEWIDE WATER TRAIL GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES



Goals, Objectives and Strategies For Top Statewide Water Trail Issues

The chapter focuses on a set of long-range goals, objectives and strategies for the top six Statewide Water Trail Issues as identified through the water trails planning effort. A brainstorming session during the September 24, 2003 Water Trails Steering Committee Meeting reviewed and evaluated information gathered at the statewide workshops and produced an initial set of goals, objectives and strategies for resolving these top statewide issues and concerns.

For the purposes of this plan, goals are general, broadly stated, desirable conditions toward which all outdoor recreation providers in the state should direct their efforts. Objectives, for the purposes of this plan, are the proposed long-range solutions to the issues and the discrete problem areas involved. Objectives do not represent the complete solution to the identified issue, but are aspects of the solution identified during the planning process. Finally, strategies are what need to be done to accomplish each objective and identify which specific outdoor recreation providers would be responsible for the strategies within the state's ten-year planning cycle.

Statewide Water Trail Issue A: Need To Address Conflicts Between Non-Motorized Boaters And Adjacent Landowners To Waterways

Recreation providers and other workshop attendees consistently reported in the planning workshops that non-motorized boating in the state of Oregon has increased substantially in recent years. This perception of non-motorized boating participation was also confirmed in the 2003-2007 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). A comparison of non-motorized boating participation estimates from the 1986-1987 Pacific Northwest Recreation Study and the 2002 Oregon Outdoor Recreation Survey showed a 138% statewide increase in annual non-motorized boating participation (from .9 to 2.2 million annual user occasions).

Privately owned lands account for 4,075 miles (76%) of the 5,375 miles of lands (above normal high water) lying along the approximately 165 rivers and streams used for recreational boating and fishing in the state of Oregon.¹ As a result, any discussion of developing water trails to better manage for a growing number of non-motorized boaters on the state's waterways must take into consideration adjacent landowner concerns about impacts of recreational river use on their property.

¹ Oregon State Marine Board. (1998). Managing River Recreation: A Statewide Assessment of Needs for Boating Access, Facilities, Enforcement, and Education. A Report to the Joint Legislative Interim Committee on Navigability.

Recreation providers and other workshop attendees clearly stated a need to proactively address potential conflicts between paddlers and adjacent landowners to waterways. Several strategies were mentioned in the issues workshops including:

- Providing a sufficient number of public access points at reasonable intervals along designated water trails.
- Developing and disseminating an appropriate assortment of information resources (signs, maps and brochures) to inform the public of all available water trail facilities.
- Incorporating water trail guidelines that emphasize a proper respect for private property.

According to recreation providers, there is a need to better inform the public about the extent and limitations of the public's interest in the state's waterways. The primary objective is to better inform non-motorized boaters on where they legally can launch or access the water and shore to ensure long-term access to boatable waterways in Oregon in a way that is considerate of the interests and concerns of private property owners.

Goal #1:
Promote a better understanding of issues and concerns related to recreational use of waterways between/among non-motorized boaters and adjacent property owners.

Objective 1: Increase the number of non-motorized boaters who understand that the actions of paddlers often cause tension with adjacent property owners and are informed on ways to minimize those conflicts.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Develop and distribute information to inform the paddling public of the primary causes of non-motorized boater/property owner conflict (e.g. trash and litter, vandalism, trespassing, illegal fires).
- Review existing "good boater" safety and user conduct information (e.g. materials from the Marine Board and Leave No Trace) and repackage these materials as a voluntary code of conduct for responsible water trails use (with emphasis on respecting the resource including the rights of adjacent landowners).
- Include this voluntary code of conduct in all State Designated Water Trail brochures, guides, maps, site signage and on the State Water Trails Website.
- Inform non-motorized boaters on where they legally can launch or access the water and shore on boatable waterways in Oregon (e.g. common rules of the trail).

Objective 2: Develop and disseminate water trails information to enable non-motorized boaters to make informed decisions on where to paddle.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 2:

- OPRD will inventory existing water trails in the state and develop a website to disseminate information on State Designated Water Trails to the general public.

- Develop the appropriate combination of printed and placed (sign) information to clearly indicate which shoreline areas are open for public use and which are not (e.g. similar to highway rest areas).

Objective 3: Recognize the importance of sound planning and public involvement in the development of water trail routes.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 3:

- Water trail planners and managers should develop and implement a Water Trail Management Plan for existing and proposed water trails to reduce conflict along and manage non-motorized boater use of the waterway along the extent of the water trail.
- Water trail planners should identify and engage stakeholders in the water trails planning process.
- Water trail planners should engage property owners early in the water trails planning process.
- Water trail planners should engage public land managers and regulatory agencies in the water trails planning process.
- Develop a toolbox component including a process for effectively engaging landowners in water trails planning.
- Develop case studies that showcase successful efforts to involve landowners in water trail development projects.
- Develop a brochure to better inform landowners, public officials, and enforcement personnel about water trail issues.

Objective 4: Define the publics' right to use waterways.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 4:

- Educate and inform non-motorized boaters of the current laws relating to public access to boatable waterways.
- Encourage the state to more clearly define the rights of the public and riparian landowners regarding the beds and banks of waterways of the state for which navigability has not been determined.

Goal #2:
Promote and encourage responsible water trail development and use.

Objective 1: Develop a statewide approach to water trail development.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Create a state-administered Water Trails Program to manage water trail planning, designation and management in Oregon as a way to address recreational watercraft use of waterways.

- Hold a discussion among officials from state agencies including the Marine Board, Division of State Lands, Department of Fish & Wildlife and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and key members of the state legislature to provide direction for implementing the plan.
- Develop a description of the Water Trails Program using information included in the Water Trails Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies.
- Create an official "State Water Trail Designation" within the Water Trails Program to promote good planning, public involvement and design of water trails throughout the state.
- Revise appropriate Oregon Administrative Rules pertaining to Non-Motorized Trail use to direct the Oregon Recreational Trails Advisory Council to provide coordination between OPRD, other agencies and non-motorized boating stakeholders in the implementation of the 2005-2014 Oregon Water Trails Action Plan and support and enhance statewide non-motorized boating opportunities and programs.

Objective 2: Provide the appropriate framework and support for a state water trails system.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 2:

- Develop a set of water trail evaluation criteria to identify requirements that must be met in order for a water trail to become a State Designated Water Trail. As many trails take years to fully develop and may have changes over the years, the criteria will also determine at what point a trail is "open" and recognized as a State Designated Water Trail and at what point it may have lost the characteristics that make it a viable water trail and be removed from the list.
- Develop an official nomination process for water trail sponsors to apply for State Water Trail Designation and a process for determining the readiness for acceptance of new water trails as State Designated Water Trails.
- Develop a set of grant criteria for evaluating water trail project applications eligible for OPRD administered grant programs.
- Provide funding priority for grant proposals on State Designated Water Trails or for projects designed to meet specific State Designated Water Trail qualification requirements.

**Statewide Water Trail Issue B:
Need For More Public Access To Waterways**

Recreation providers and other workshop attendees across the state consistently reported a need for more public access to waterways to accommodate the needs of a growing number of non-motorized boaters. Both providers and other workshop attendees argued that additional public access is needed at the starting point, at reasonable intervals along, and at the final take out point of paddling routes throughout the state. Since paddling routes often cross multiple jurisdictional boundaries, there is a need for increased coordination and communication between land management agencies to properly address jurisdictional and easement issues associated with developing public water access and parking facilities.

Attendees at the general public workshops in several regions stated that there are opportunities to work with private landowners to allow recreational access/easements to accommodate non-

motorized boaters. According to other workshop attendees, there is a need to explore recreation opportunities on private timberlands and work with private landowners for access. Some keys to success for securing use on private lands are user education (respect for private property) and the purchase of recreational easements, permits or fee title.

Finally, recreation providers reported that it is often difficult to manage where people access waterways due to conditions that vary with flow on a seasonal basis. Non-motorized boaters typically access the water where conditions allow. As a result, there is a need for design guidance to assist with water trail access, site selection, design and management that is compatible with the natural environment and changing water conditions.

Goal #3:
***Facilitate the development of public access to waterways
for non-motorized boaters.***

Objective 1: Determine where access to waterways currently exists.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Collect information provided by the Marine Board on existing public water access sites on public and private lands and water-based recreational facilities found at these sites (this inventory is a part of the Marine Board's Six-Year Boating Facility Plan).
- Make this information available to public, non-profit or grass roots organizations interested in developing water trails in the state.
- Assist public, non-profit or grass roots organizations to inventory their significant waterway corridors to identify water trail development opportunities.

Objective 2: Identify ways to develop new access to waterways.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 2:

- Develop a set of basic criteria for water trail planners to acquire and technical assistance for developing high-quality access sites along water trails.
- Develop a set of water trail site and facility design standards.
- Inform water trail proponents of existing funding sources for acquisition and development of water trail access sites.
- Develop additional funding sources for agencies to acquire, develop and maintain water trail access sites.
- Encourage interagency partnerships to address jurisdictional and access issues and better share resources among agencies.
- Create incentives to encourage property owners adjacent to waterways to allow public access to the waterways along water trails (e.g. providing property tax breaks).

Statewide Water Trail Issue C: Need For Adequate And Consistent Information Resources Including Signs, Maps, Level Of Difficulty And Water Level Information And Available Paddling Opportunities.

Recreation providers argued that trails are a key economic development tool in many areas of the state. There are opportunities to develop partnerships with local chambers of commerce, the Oregon Tourism Commission, and the tourism industry regarding water trail marketing. There is a need for maps and information to promote paddling opportunities throughout the state.

Towards this end, both recreation providers and other workshop attendees made a strong case for developing a central web-based repository for interested non-motorized boaters to get information about existing flat water and white water paddling opportunities available throughout the state of Oregon. The site should be designed for trip planning and include information about water access locations, permits required, level-of-difficulty, current water conditions, navigational maps and descriptions of the type of experience visitors can expect. Such information will assist non-motorized boaters to make informed river use decisions on their trip. River guidebooks can also be used as marketing tools for drawing paddlers to a particular water route.

Goal #4:
Provide user-friendly, easy-to-find information resources for non-motorized boaters to help them engage in appropriate water trail activities.

Objective 1: Develop water trail information standards.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Develop minimum-standard requirements for water trail guides².
- Develop minimum-standard requirements for water trail informational brochures³.
- Develop minimum-standard requirements for water trail signage.

Objective 2: Encourage the use of water trail information standards in water trail development projects.

² The main purpose of a Water Trail Guide is to assist trail travelers during their trip. Water Trail Guides are multiple-page documents that typically include a trail map and describe the route of the trail and suggest paddling approaches. Water Trail Guides may also list campsites and other facilities and other information directly pertinent to the trail such as information on low-impact camping, stewardship, permits and equipment required and user safety.

³ The main purpose of a Water Trail Informational Brochure is to serve as a promotional tool to attract new users to a Water Trail. Water Trail Informational Brochures are one-page multiple-fold documents that typically include a trail map, description of trail facilities and a brief description of the route.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 2:

- Provide additional scoring points in trail-related OPRD administered grant programs for grant requests for water trail guides, informational brochures and water trail sign projects including minimum-standard requirements included under strategies for addressing Objective 1 (above).

Objective 3: Develop a web-based approach for providing water trail information.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 3:

- Develop a water trails website to house general information (geographic location, length of trip, level-of-difficulty, etc.) about the Oregon Water Trails Program and State Designated Water Trails.
- Develop a website template for water trail providers to share more site-specific information about water trails on their agency/organizational website.
- Develop a map template for water trail providers to post water trail maps online.
- Include web links from the Oregon Water Trails website to the sponsoring agency/organization's (water trail manager's) website to allow the general public to get more site-specific information about the State Designated Water Trails and water trail planning.

Statewide Water Trail Issue D: Need For Safety-Related Information, User Education And Outreach.

Both recreation providers and other workshop attendees stated that there is a strong need to adequately inform people of conditions they may encounter on Oregon waterways before actually getting onto the water. Specific strategies mentioned included:

- increased non-motorized boater education,
- increased safety training specifically designed for running rivers,
- increased training to ensure compliance with existing federal and state regulations,
- increased promotion of safety-related information,
- additional safety-related outreach programs,
- creating vendor/rental training courses requiring equipment renters to show competency to operate equipment, and
- coordinating information development delivery with other agencies including the U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Board, etc.

In addition, search and rescue efforts on isolated river stretches are often very difficult, time consuming and costly. There is a need for emergency response training to ensure that the necessary skills and knowledge are in place to avoid and properly respond to water-related emergency situations. To proactively address this problem, we need to educate people before getting on the water.

Recreation providers stated a need to establish some sort of classification system to address such things as level of difficulty (using the International Scale of River Difficulty), setting type (e.g. ROS setting), services and improvements for use in marketing water trails. They argued

that the statewide water trails inventory should gather such classification information during the data collection process.

Finally, recreation providers stated that there is a need to reduce visitor impacts to the environment along paddling routes. Environmental impacts occur from such things as improperly disposed human and solid waste, disturbing wildlife, camping or landing on private land and using soap too close to the river. As a result, there needs to be more information available on how to reduce visitor impacts such as providing programs like Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! to develop an appropriate user ethic. There is a need for consistent, quality information, which is simple to understand and includes a distinct regional flavor (e.g. need for different information on the coast as opposed to information needed in an area such as Bend).

Goal #5:
Encourage the safe and low-impact use of water trails.

Objective 1: Inform the public on the inherent risks and dangers associated with water-based recreation.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Develop a universal non-motorized boating difficulty rating scale (for white water, flat water and moving water conditions) with individual descriptions for the inherent dangers associated with the use of such types of waterways and include this rating in all water trail brochures, guides, maps and on the State Water Trails Website. Since river conditions change due to flooding or closed due to tree snags, the applicability of rating scale information will always be subject to current water conditions.
- Develop a set of basic skill requirements for non-motorized boating for each of the rating types included in the universal non-motorized boating difficulty rating scale and include this basic skill requirement information in all water trail brochures, guides, maps and on the State Water Trails Website.

Objective 2: Provide safety-related information and services for State Designated Water Trails.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 2:

- Create a regional forum process (including input from state and federal agencies, local recreation providers, State Police, County Sheriffs Departments, Coast Guard, retailers and paddling organizations) to encourage the development of regional safety plans for State Designated Water Trails to leverage limited resources.
- Work with emergency service providers to develop appropriate response standards for State Designated Water Trails.
- Identify organizations currently providing paddling skills training in the state and develop partnerships to increase the publics' access to paddling certification programs already in place.
- Include a current list of organizations providing paddling skills training on the State Water Trail website.

- Develop an "Adopt-A-Site Program" to encourage volunteers to distribute safety and stewardship information at State Designated Water Trail access locations.
- Where applicable (e.g. on loop trails close to population centers), create a free-of-charge "Life Jacket Loan-Out Program" to encourage each person to wear a personal floatation device while using a State Designated Water Trail. (Could be a component strategy of the Adopt-A-Site Program.)

Objective 3: Provide low-impact recreational use information for State Designated Water Trails.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 3:

- Using existing resources such as Leave No Trace, develop a water trail code of ethics outlining simple universal principles of conduct when accessing or using State Designated Water Trails.
- Include this water trail code of ethics in all State Designated Water Trail brochures, guides, maps, site signage and on the State Water Trails Website.
- Work with manufacturers and retailers to distribute code of ethics information for water recreation to non-motorized boaters at the point of sale.

**Statewide Water Trail Issue E:
Need A Dedicated Funding Source For Water Trail Development.**

Across the state, recreation providers and other workshop attendees strongly argued for a designated funding source for water trail facility development. Currently, there are grant programs funding motorized and non-motorized terrestrial trail projects and a motorized watercraft facility grant program, but no resources specifically designated for non-motorized watercraft facility development. As a result, there is a need to explore funding opportunities/sources such as a non-motorized boater registration fee to fund water trail development.

**Goal #6:
*Pursue a dedicated funding source for a State Water Trail Program.***

Objective 1: Educate key stakeholders on the need for a dedicated funding source for water trail development.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Develop and distribute a set of tangible benefits that non-motorized boaters would receive for their investment in water trail development.
- Develop and distribute a set of tangible benefits that adjacent landowners would receive as a result of public investment in water trail development, easements, etc.
- Distribute information about the economic benefits of water trails to local communities.

Objective 2: Identify the most effective funding mechanism for water trail development in the state.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 1:

- Investigate the non-motorized boating publics' level-of-acceptance of various water trail funding mechanism options such as non-motorized watercraft registration, a boater pass, parking fees or launch access fees.
- Identify non-motorized boating funding programs or related programs successfully used in other states and examine their applicability in the state of Oregon.
- Investigate potential legal questions associated with using various non-motorized boating funding models in the state.

**Statewide Water Trail Issue F:
Need For Information Describing The Social And Economic Benefits Of
Water Trails.**

Recreation providers stated that there is often local resistance to developing water trail opportunities and encouraging more visitors to the local area. Community members often view increasing use of nearby waterways as potentially harmful to their local quality of life. As a result, recreation providers need information to better educate communities about the social and economic benefits associated with water trail development.

**Goal #7:
*Educate key stakeholders about the economic and community
benefits of water trails.***

Objective 1: Develop and disseminate information on the benefits of water trails.

Strategies/Actions For Addressing Objective 4:

- Compile and summarize information describing the physiological, economic, environmental, social, psychological and educational benefits associated with water trails.
- Distribute benefits information to a wide variety of local consumers such as policymakers, landowners adjacent to waterways, public works departments, public recreation providers, planners, business owners and leaders, chambers of commerce and developers.