

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

June 29, 2016

Agenda Item: 11a

Information

Topic: Recognition of 30 year Milestone of the ATV Program

Background

The All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Program has been serving motorized recreationists in Oregon since 1986. The program began as a grass roots effort by concerned riders over funding and consistency in the management of motorized recreation. Originally managed by Oregon Department of Transportation, the program was reassigned to OPRD in 2000. The program's original focus was on grants to provide funding to land managers for operation and maintenance, law enforcement, emergency medical services, planning, development and land acquisitions. As the sport of motorized recreation grew in popularity and new off-highway vehicles were introduced by manufacturers, the ATV program adapted to meet new challenges. The ATV program has expanded with the addition of a safety education program and the addition of a fourth class of ATVs in Oregon. In January of 2009, a mandatory, free on-line education course was implemented to address concerns with youth safety and rider awareness of land use and rider ethics. Riders of all ages in Oregon are required to possess a safety education card to ride on public land. Riders under 16 years of age must take the on-line course and complete a hands-on rider's skill test before riding on public land.

Recognition

The intent of this project is to recognize the people, accomplishments and milestones of the ATV Program over the last 30 years. In the past sixteen years, there have been three projects that demonstrate the accomplishments of the ATV program. Representatives from Coos, Morrow and Union Counties approached the program with the idea of developing new riding and camping opportunities for motorized recreationists. All three involved land acquisitions, two provided new riding opportunities and the third filled the need for additional camping with access to the Oregon Dunes.

Three low key events are planned during the months of June, July and August to recognize these counties and the people who were responsible for their success. A presentation to the Commission providing a short history of the program will be the final portion of the recognition event. The presentation will include an overview of how funding has been allocated, economic impact to communities, salaries for operations & maintenance and law enforcement, land acquisitions, development, planning, safety education, and emergency medical services.

Prepared by: Ron Price

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

June 29, 2016

Agenda Item: 11b

Information

Topic: Succor Creek State Natural Area Post-Fire Rehabilitation

Background:

The “Soda Fire” burned approximately 280,000 acres in southeast Oregon and adjacent southwest Idaho in August of 2016. An approximately 692-acre portion of Succor Creek State Natural Area (SNA) burned in that fire, and Succor Creek itself within the Succor Creek SNA was used as a primary fire-line to stop the advance of the fire to the west. Fire severity and speed of spread were primarily due to unnaturally high abundance of invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass and medusahead rye. The role of invasive annual grasses in exacerbating the severity and frequency of fire cycles in arid rangeland is well documented in the American west. Native bunchgrass and shrub-steppe habitats have much less continuous and highly flammable fuel than invasive grasslands carpeted with dense, dead, and dry annual grasses. As a result, native grassland and shrub-steppe fires tend not to burn as many acres, and tend to burn less severely and rapidly. Controlling invasive annual grasses and restoring native bunchgrass dominance on degraded rangelands makes these habitats both more resistant to catastrophic wildfire and more ecologically valuable for preservation of biodiversity.

The severity of the fire season in eastern Oregon in 2015 resulted in a disaster declaration that has made Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds available to Oregon and Idaho for the purpose of managing the increasingly intense and risky fire cycles. OPRD staff have been scoping a project with Oregon Office of Emergency Management staff to potentially use FEMA funding to control invasive annual grasses and restore native bunchgrass steppe structure and ecological function at Succor Creek State Natural Area. Potential funding amounts in consideration are in the vicinity of \$220,000. The OPRD and non-federal match requirement would be 25%. To date, OPRD preparatory work completed includes: 1) preparation of a post-fire rehabilitation and monitoring plan; 2) installation of permanent vegetation monitoring transects to gauge treatment effectiveness and vegetation trends over time; 3) surveys of critical resources to be protected in applying treatments – including rare plant populations and rare or particularly sensitive habitats that could be harmed by treatments; 3) coordination with the Vale District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding treatment methodology and timing; 4) Collection of BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to be used as a template and guide for FEMA NEPA analysis; and 5) Endangered Species Act consultation with the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s Plant Conservation Program (which has jurisdiction over Oregon’s Endangered Species Act for plants).

Next Steps:

Oregon Emergency Management will submit a proposal to FEMA in June. If the proposal is accepted, FEMA will begin NEPA analysis and potentially provide funding to support weed management treatments in the fall of 2016. Weed management would consist of spraying herbicide with a high degree of selectivity for control of annual grasses by helicopter. Seeding would follow in the fall of 2017. Annual monitoring would continue until at least 2018 to gauge effectiveness and trends. OPRD would meet some of the grant's match requirement through property boundary survey, livestock exclusion fencing, and on-going monitoring.

Prepared by: Noel Bacheller and Trevor Taylor