

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

June 29, 2016

Agenda Item: 7a

Action

Topic: Metolius Scenic Bikeway designation removal

Presented by: Alexandra Phillips

Background:

The Metolius Loops Scenic Bikeway was among the first designated Bikeways in September 2011, along with several others in eastern and central Oregon. Several years after the Bikeway was designated, the Forest Service and OPRD became aware of a conflict between the Bikeway designation and the federal Metolius Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.

The Bikeway program is based on promotion to attract visitors. The federal Metolius Wild and Scenic River Management Plan preserves the natural qualities of the Camp Sherman area by calling for protecting the area's primitive, historic character and preserving "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" by not giving federal approval to projects that promote increased use of the area. The plan also calls for reducing congestion, managing signage to perpetuate historic character, and adhering to other standards.

Since the conflict was discovered two years ago, the Forest Service, OPRD, local bikeway proponents, Camp Sherman residents, and the Friends of Metolius worked to find ways to resolve it. No solution could be found because of the direct and inherent conflict in the federal plan and the bikeway designation. The volunteer local proponents and the residents spent many hours examining this issue, but were unable to find a resolution aside from withdrawing the scenic bikeway designation.

The Friends of the Metolius originally wrote in support of keeping the designation. After further examination of the issue, the group submitted a second letter asking for the designation to be removed. Their letter is attached to this brief.

There are two other designated bikeways near Wild and Scenic Rivers. None of these management plans have promotional limits and some speak to purposely promoting to cyclists. The roads currently part of the Metolius Loops would still be open to bicyclists even if the Commission follows the staff recommendation and withdraws the designation, but the route would no longer be part of the official Scenic Bikeways promotional program.

Prior Action by Commission: none

Action Requested: Remove designation from Metolius Loops Scenic Bikeway

Attachments:

Friends of the Metolius letter supporting designation removal
Scenic Bikeway Life Cycle (presented to Commission April 15, 2015)

Prepared by: Alexandra Phillips



P.O Box 101, Camp Sherman, Oregon 97730

February 15, 2016

Via email to alex.phillips@oregon.gov
Alex Phillips
Bicycle Recreation Specialist
Oregon Parks & Recreation Department

Re: Metolius River Loops Scenic Bikeway

Dear Ms. Phillips,

We understand that the Oregon Bikeway Committee will meet on February 18, 2016 and that the committee will be updated regarding the scenic bikeways in the Metolius basin. This letter outlines the reasons why Friends of the Metolius (FOM) now recommends that the Metolius bikeways be delisted from the Oregon Scenic Bikeways program. We would appreciate your putting this letter in the record at the hearing.

FOM initially supported of the Metolius River Loops Scenic Bikeway when it was proposed in 2010. At that time, we were not aware of the strong economic development purpose of the scenic bikeway program, or with its various other requirements and how they would be implemented. In the intervening years we have come to fully understand the scenic bikeway program and can now see how it inherently and fundamentally conflicts with core management components of the Metolius Wild and Scenic River Management Plan and other federally implemented management criteria for the Metolius Basin. In view of the inherent management conflicts between mandated federal management plans and the Oregon Scenic Bikeway program, it is clear that the original designation of the Metolius River Loops Scenic Bikeways was an unfortunate mistake.

The Metolius River Loop Scenic Bikeway has been in existence for 5 years and is currently under review. Pursuant to OAR 736-009-0030 (6) (b), the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department shall evaluate each Oregon Scenic Bikeway at least once every five (5) years, and upon review the committee may recommend delisting of a bikeway that no longer meets the Oregon Scenic Bikeway program criteria. In this case the Metolius Bikeway never met the program criteria because the fundamental economic development component of the scenic bikeway program is in direct conflict with federal management plans for the Metolius. Fortunately, very little or no work has been done on the ground in respect of the Metolius Bikeway (e.g., no signs or markers have been installed), so the mistake is easily remedied by simply delisting the plan, an option specifically contemplated by the 5-year review provisions.

The Metolius Basin is subject to several federal management plans, all of which are implemented by the US Forest Service. These include the Metolius Wild and Scenic River

(WSR) Management Plan and 9 other Management Allocations in the Metolius Conservation Area. The Metolius River Loops Scenic Bikeway is within the Metolius WSR Management area and the Metolius Conservation Area. The Metolius River was designated as a federal WSR in 1988 and the WSR Management Plan was adopted after that. Generally stated, the WSR Management Plan is designed to maintain the character of the Metolius Basin by preserving the unique quality and diversity of its natural resources, and its historic and spiritual values.

Among many other things, the WSR Management Plan specifically limits commercial activities in the Metolius Basin, and manages signage to consolidate and minimize visual impact from signs in order to maintain the historic character of the area. Perhaps most significantly, the WSR plan restricts commercial activities and development, and restricts promotion of the area. Promotion of the area in order to draw visitors is precisely one of the goals of the Scenic Bikeway program.

The limitations imposed by the long-ago adopted federal management plans directly conflict with the Scenic Bikeway objectives of marketing for the purposes of economic development. While the economic development aspect is the most significant point of conflict between the Scenic Bikeway plan and the federal overlays, there are numerous other points of conflict, including:

- Traffic. The roads that comprise the Metolius River Loops are not designed for use by bikes; they have little to no shoulder, mostly center striping only, and no enforceable speed limit;
- Parking. The WSR plan calls for parking areas to be distanced from the river whereas the bikeway designates parking at the Camp Sherman store parking lot, which is adjacent to the river; and
- Infrastructure (such as bikeway signs and adequate numbers of toilets). The bikeway signs conflict with existing sign plans for the Metolius Basin and many of the bathroom facilities designated in the bikeway routes are managed by a commercial concessionaire (Hoodoo).

After participating in numerous meetings to discuss potential ways to modify the Metolius River Loops Bikeway so that the Oregon State Scenic Bikeway program and the WSR Management Plan objectives are not in conflict, we have come to the conclusion that the Bikeway Program and the management plans that regulate the Metolius Basin cannot be harmonized.

For the reasons outlined in this letter, there is no doubt that the Metolius River Loops Scenic Bikeway is not in compliance with Oregon Scenic Bikeway regulations and that it will not be able to comply with the regulations unless the OPRD bikeway program is modified to allow a number of exceptions. Absent substantial changes to the program, if the Metolius bikeway were to remain designated in the bikeway program, then OPRD would be participating in and promoting a program that not only conflicts with its own regulations, but which directly conflicts with the long-established management plans that are overseen by the federal agency that is charged management of the area. This would be an unworkable and untenable situation.

Five years' have shown that the Scenic Bikeway designation of the Metolius loops was the wrong program for the area and that the loops should be delisted. But we are encouraged that through ongoing and hard work of the local bikeway proponent group, working with the US Forest Service, it appears that there are opportunities to enhance and improve cycling in the basin outside of the Scenic Bikeways program.

Sincerely,



Douglas D. Hancock
President



Oregon State Scenic Bikeway Lifecycle

Originally presented to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission

April 15, 2015

Creating a designation

State Scenic Bikeways are designated by the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission by following Oregon Administrative Rule 736-009-0030. This rule says a State Scenic Bikeway Committee shall take proposals from local proponent groups and evaluate them, and:

1. Provide each recommendation for designation as an Oregon Scenic Bikeway to the director.
2. Hold public meetings on the recommended designation.
3. Consult with the Oregon Recreational Trails Advisory Council.

After the public meetings, the director either:

1. Submit the committee's recommendation to the commission for approval or denial of the proposed Oregon Scenic Bikeway; or
2. Request that the committee provide further consideration of issues presented in the public meeting.

Removing designation

Administrative rules call for a review at every five years (or sooner). During the review, the advisory committee may suggest improvements to the route, signage, or publications. If a route no longer satisfies the criteria to justify its designation as a state scenic bikeway, and it cannot be improved, the advisory committee may also recommend the commission remove the designation.

Reasons to remove a State Scenic Bikeway Designation

- Significant degradation of the scenic values, road conditions, or the overall experience, such as a large increase in traffic.
- Lack of local proponent group for more than one year and no promise of one forming.
- Newly-discovered information which causes the existence of the bikeway to substantially conflict with previously-established use plans or designations. This could be things such as: plans or designations that preclude promotion of an area, a sign code that does not allow for bikeway signage, or other barriers to the purpose of a bikeway—to be the best road cycling in Oregon, and provide local and regional economic development by promoting outdoor recreation.

Proposed Steps to Remove Designation

After discussing options with the bikeway, any associated government or nongovernment organizations, and proponents, the committee may:

1. Conduct a vote of committee members to recommend removing the designation.
2. Forward the result of this vote, plus a report explaining the reason for the result, to the department director, who can accept it or direct further work.
3. If the director accepts a recommendation to remove a designation, the director shall place an action item on the next available agenda of the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission and instruct staff to notify interested parties and the general public about the pending decision.
4. If the commission acts to remove a designation, the department will act to remove map and promotional material from OregonScenicBikeways.org and RideOregonRide.com, ask the road jurisdictions to remove signage, and release additional public information explaining why the designation was removed.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

June 29, 2016

Agenda Item: 7b

Action

Topic: Oregon Outback Proposed Bikeway Designation Vote

Presented by: Alexandra Phillips, Bicycle Recreation Specialist

BACKGROUND:

The application for the Outback Proposed Bikeway was submitted in the spring of 2013. The rating subcommittee of the State Scenic Bikeway Committee rode and rated the route using criteria developed by the committee to measure scenic values and road conditions during the spring 2013. The route was given a very high score.

As is typical of a small community, the proponents were largely volunteers and the work on the Bikeway Plan happened at an irregular pace. The local proponents were able to organize and complete the Bikeway Plan, raise awareness in the community and gain strong support for the Bikeway.

The local proponent group held one public informational meeting in Plush, a very small community on the Bikeway, in January 2014. OPRD held a public meeting March 2016. Approximately 23 people attended the OPRD public meeting including staff from the county, ODOT, Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, local business owners and other residents. No opposition was expressed at either meeting or in writing.

The only concerns voiced related to the name. Recently, a gravel road ride has also been given the Outback name. It was decided to proceed with the name since it has been long associated with the area.

The Oregon Outback Bikeway plan consists of a sign location table, proponent goals and final letters of support from all managing agencies of the road jurisdictions, which are: Lake County and ODOT. Letters of support from the Forest Service and BLM were also collected due to the campgrounds and other lands accessible from the route. Link to proponent Bikeway Plan: <http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/BIKE/docs/OutbackBikewayPlanandlettersfinal.pdf>

Prior Action by Commission: none

Action Requested: Staff requests Commission approval of the Oregon Outback Scenic Bikeway

Attached: Oregon Outback Bikeway plan (*online version please reference link above*)

Prepared by: Alexandra Phillips

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

June 29, 2016 Meeting

Agenda Item: 7c

Action

Topic: Oregon Recreation Trails Advisory Council Appointment

Presented by: MG Devereux, Deputy Director

Background:

Consistent with ORS 390.977 the Oregon Recreation Trails Advisory Council (ORTAC) consists of seven members, at least one from each congressional district and not less than two members from separate counties bordering upon the ocean shore. Members of the Council are appointed by the commission, serve four-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. The Council currently has one vacancy to fill and three positions requesting reappointment.

The Congressional District 2 representative, Kent Howes, resigned in November 2015. OPRD conducted a 60 day solicitation to recruit a Congressional District 2 representative. We received 16 inquiries from interested parties and six applications. These applications were reviewed and two finalists were selected for phone interviews. These finalists were reviewed by the Director and a nominee was selected for your consideration.

Joe Kresse is being recommended as the Congressional District 2 representative. Joe is retired after 33 years of working for Weyerhaeuser as a project manager. Joe lives in La Grande and is active in the trails community as a member of the Northeast Cycling Club, the Joseph Branch Rail Trail Consortium and being a part of the Grande Tour Scenic Bikeway proponent group. Joe is a member of the Union County Planning Commission and a member of the Union County Transit Board.

Prior Action by Commission: Approved previous recommendations in November 2015.

Action Requested: Approve Recommendation for ORTAC Congressional District 2 representative.

Attachments: None

Prepared by: Rocky Houston