

# OREGON HISTORICAL TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL



## 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

# Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council 2009 Annual Report

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## Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council 2009

### Introduction

In 1998 the Governor established the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council (OHTAC) to oversee and provide advice on the sixteen designated historic trails in Oregon. We are nine volunteer citizens, working together to preserve and promote these trails. Ex-officio members from a variety of state, federal, and trail related agencies and organizations provide technical information and input to OHTAC.

This report describes OHTAC activities for 2009. It includes meeting minutes, field trip notes and recommendations that have been a result of the field trips and consultation on a variety of projects with potential impacts to the trails.

### Summary of 2009 Activities

We met as a group three times and conducted our annual business meeting at our September 27 meeting in Ontario, Oregon. Our meetings take place on weekends and generally include a day in the field and a business meeting. Day one is spent on a field trip focusing the historic trail or trails in the area. This field trip generates information about the trail(s) being studied, consultation with an expert(s) in the field dealing with the trail(s) studied, and potential recommendations for the various groups and agencies. Day two is our public business meeting with a chance for public input concerning the historic trails in the area.

**On the weekend of April 25 and 26, the Council met in Pendleton, Oregon.** The field trip focused on the Whitman Route. Our tour started at The Pendleton Oregon Trail Museum Park Kiosk and continued toward Poker Jim Hill. We followed the main Whitman Route and variants from the crossing of the Umatilla River to Walla Walla, Washington. During the return from Walla Walla, the Council visited Milton Freewater, Oregon on both the Whitman Route and the Fremont Route. The field trip finished the day at Tamastlikt. Business meeting was held on April 26 at Tamastlikt.

The following recommendations were made:

1. The Pioneer Cemetery off the end of 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Milton Freewater, Oregon is in need of some urgent care. It is being overgrown with weeds and many of the grave markers need resetting.
2. The Fremont marker at the edge of Milton Freewater needs to be cleaned and preserved.

3. The Fremont Route at the foot of Linton Hill needs some appropriate signage.

**On the weekend of July 25 and 26, the Council met in Bend, Oregon.** The field trip focused on the Fremont Route and the Santiam Wagon Road. The trip along the Fremont Route began at Shevlin Park and after an introduction to the route by Mr. Loren Irving, local historian and photographer, we spent the morning working our way along the probable route and campsites in the area. The afternoon was spent on the Santiam Wagon Road starting at Cache Creek Toll Station and working through two segments of the Wagon Road. The public meeting was held on July 26 at the Deschutes County Historical Society Museum.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Appropriate signage for the Fremont Route needs to be placed at the entrance to Shevlin Park and at the Highway 20 viewpoint between Tumalo State Park and Sisters.
2. The Forest Service needs to work with Mr. Irving to verify and protect the location of a potential Fremont campsite at Wychus Creek.
3. The Forest Service needs to consider closing the open section of the Santiam Wagon Road sandwiched between the Mount Washington Wilderness Area and the Cache Mountain Research Natural Area. The open Wagon Road in this area puts both the Wilderness Area and the Research Area at risk.
4. The Forest Service needs to be notified that there is evidence that OHV's are using a contributing segment of the Santiam Wagon Road, which is closed.

**On the weekend of September 26 and 27 the council met in Ontario, Oregon.** The field trip focused on the route of the Oregon Trail. Mr. Stafford Hazelette, the mapping and marking chairman for the Northwest Chapter of The Oregon-California Trails Association, was our guide. The first part of the trip was the South Alternate Route and the crossing of the Owyhee River. We then crossed Keeney Pass into Vale. After Vale the Council followed the Oregon Trail route to the Willow Springs campground and then on to Farewell Bend State Park. Other sites visited were the Van Orman Site, the descent into the Birch Creek drainage, and the official Birch Creek site. The public meeting was held on September 27 at the Ontario Holiday Inn.

The following recommendations were made:

1. The Fort Boise Marker at the Snake River Crossing Kiosk outside of Nyssa needs work or replacement.
2. Oregon Trail route signs pointing the way to Keeney Pass are extremely faded and in need of replacement.
3. The interpretive panels at the Keeney Pass site are sun faded and need replacement.
4. The Henderson gravesite panel needs replacement and possible reorientation, and the missing marker explaining the “died of thirst story” needs to be replaced.
5. The Malheur Country Historical Society sign concerning the Meek Cutoff needs significant repairs or replacement.
6. There is a need for directional signage at the road junction in the area of the Willow Creek Camp site.
7. The top rail of the fence needs to be replaced at the Van Ornum site.
8. The directional signage for the walk up the established Birch Creek site needs replacement.

### **Other Historic Trails Related Functions**

Wind farms and power transmission lines still dominate much of OHTAC's time. The Council has been represented at meetings from Baker City to The Dalles, been in the field with archeologists and representatives of the developers, and been involved with the Energy Siting Council's application process through written input.

The Council has helped expedite contact between energy developers, county planners, state agencies, national associations for trail preservation, and local experts on the various Historic Trails. We have given written and oral comments into the various management plans being developed by National Forests with Historic Trails within their boundaries.

During the past year OHTAC is especially proud of its help in moving along the nomination process for the Santiam Wagon Road's listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Even with greater success defending the Historic Trails, OHTAC has concerns about the ability to protect the Historic Trails from small energy (less than 105 megawatts) developments that do not have to go through any unified siting process, the ability to protect the Historic Trails from intrusions by OHV and ATV users, the ability to promote the Historic Trails in an effective manner, and the ability to provide a Historic Trails educational component.