

News Release



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Park Service Lists Oregon Trail Resources in the National Register of Historic Places

LA GRANDE, Ore. – Two National Register nominations recommended by Oregon’s State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation (SACHP) have been accepted by the National Park Service and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

These important documents outline the history of the Oregon Trail in Oregon. The Oregon Trail, Oregon, 1840 to 1880 Multiple Property Document provides a comprehensive history and tool for future listings of other Oregon Trail properties. The La Grande to Hilgard trail segment is one piece of the larger trail that retains physical evidence from those who traveled across Oregon.

This effort is in line with Oregon’s Statewide Preservation Plan that seeks to increase the number of listings in the National Register. It also supports the goals to increase access to Oregon heritage that are part of the Oregon Heritage Plan.

La Grande to Hilgard Segment – The La Grande to Hilgard Segment is a well-preserved trace of emigrant wagon ruts, crossing a high plateau composed of three segments that is 3.66 miles long and is located between the cities of La Grande and Hilgard. One of the steepest climbs on the Trail in Oregon, the La Grande to Hilgard segment follows a brushy ephemeral stream course that leads to a long, steep hill that is open and rocky. The La Grande to Hilgard trail segment was consistently used by overland emigrants, freighters carrying mining equipment, foodstuffs, and other commodities, and was used by stage companies carrying passengers across the greater Blue Mountains. Eventually use of these three trail segments by overland emigrants and freighters waned, particularly due to alternative routes that redirected traffic and road improvements that were made from La Grande to Hilgard and in the Grande Ronde River canyon. However, the redirection of travelers helped preserve these segments of the Oregon Trail.

Oregon Trail, Oregon, 1840 to 1880 Multiple Property Document

This document provides an overview of the history of the Oregon Trail through four different historical contexts and establishes a framework for identifying and listing Oregon Trail resources in the National Register of Historic Places. This thematic document provides resources and guidance for individuals interested in listing properties in the National Register. If anyone is interested in listing a significant Oregon Trail resource or would like to learn more about how to use this document, please contact Robert Olguin at Robert.olguin@oregon.gov

Thematic Contexts discussed in the document include:

- Geography and Natural Character; Physical Character and Setting of the Road
- Exploration, Transportation Use, Settlement
- Social, Political and Cultural Significance
- Economic and Commercial Significance

The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service under the authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. More information about the National Register and recent Oregon lists is online at oregonheritage.org (listed under "Designate").

Properties listed in the National Register are:

- Recognized as significant to the nation, state, or community;
- Considered in the planning of federal or federally assisted projects;
- Eligible for federal and state tax benefits;
- Qualify for historic preservation grants when funds are available;
- Eligible for leniency in meeting certain building code requirements;
- Subject to local laws pertaining to the conservation and protection of historic resources.

National Register listing does not place any restrictions on a property at the state or federal level, unless property owners choose to participate in tax benefit or grant programs.

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