Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission
February 20, 2020

Agenda Item: 6c

Topic: Middle Deschutes State Scenic Waterway potential future rulemaking

Presented by: Trevor Taylor

**Background:** Beginning at river mile 144 North of Tumalo until the southern boundary of the wilderness study area, the Middle Deschutes Scenic Waterway holds the classification of “Scenic River Area*”. At the time of the designation in 1977, this site was mostly zoned for farming and surface mining. Portions of this section of the Middle Deschutes are also federally recognized Wild and Scenic. While the designation of this portion of the Middle Deschutes River was established to preserve its largely undeveloped character, pressures from population growth and county planning adjustments have slowly altered the character of this river corridor. In 2008 Deschutes County amended the zoning codes to accommodate future cluster planned development. At this time the Scenic Waterway program had one dedicated staff member and the program lacked capacity to vigilantly monitor every nuanced issue. This rural residential (RR-10) and multiple use agricultural (MUA-10) re-zoning has since allowed more residential development along the Middle Deschutes Scenic River Area, and as a result the values protected by the “Scenic River Area” have slowly eroded.

A recent development proposal on the Middle Deschutes exemplifies this change. A property parcel on Lower Bridge Road in Terrebonne was recently approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to allow development of 19 residential lots, averaging 2-acres each. This approval by the BOCC came after two previous denials from county and state hearing officers. OPRD submitted letters reminding the county of the adjacent Scenic Waterway Program designation and regulations. The county has approved several changes that are out of alignment with the Scenic Waterway’s designation, compromising the Middle Deschutes and other state-wide Scenic Waterways that hold the same “Scenic River Area” classification. We anticipate OPRD may be engaged in rulemaking on the classifications applied to segments of the Middle Deschutes this year.

*As specified by OAR736-040-0040(1)(b), the “Scenic River Area” indicates adjacent lands and shorelines are still largely primitive and undeveloped, except for agriculture and grazing, but are accessible in places by roads. “Scenic River Areas” may not include long stretches of conspicuous or well-traveled roads paralleling the river in close proximity, but may include extensive areas in agricultural use. This classification will be administered to maintain or enhance their high scenic quality, recreational value, fishery and wildlife habitat, while preserving their largely undeveloped character and allowing continuing agricultural uses.

Prior Action by Commission: None.
Action Requested: None.
Attachments: Scenic Waterway map and classification scheme.
Prepared by: Bridget Tinsley and Trevor Taylor
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