

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

February 24, 2016

Agenda Item: 8a

Action

Topic: 2016-2025 Statewide Trails Plan

Presented by: Terry Bergerson, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Background: The last Statewide Trails Plan for Oregon was completed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) in February 2005, and is coming to the end of its ten-year planning horizon. The purpose of the 2016-2025 statewide trails planning effort is to provide guidance for the Recreational Trails Program (Federal funds) and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Grant Program, and information and recommendations to guide federal, state, and local units of government, as well as the private sector, in making recreational trail policy and planning decisions. It also provides guidance for other OPRD-administered grant programs including the Local Government Grant (Lottery), Land and Water Conservation Fund (Federal), and County Opportunity (RV funds) Grant Programs. Besides satisfying grant program requirements, the primary intent of this plan is to provide up-to-date, high-quality information to assist recreation providers with trail system planning in Oregon.

The planning process began in August 2013, taking an innovative approach to statewide trails planning by conducting simultaneous ATV, snowmobile, non-motorized, and water trails planning efforts. The plan also establishes a review process for potential State Scenic Waterway corridor additions.

At a previous commission meeting (November 2015) staff and Dr. Kreg Lindberg (Oregon State University) presented information about the overall planning process, trail user survey results, trail issues, funding need, and grant evaluation criteria. From December 4, 2015 to January 6, 2016, a draft of the trails planning document entitled *Oregon Trails 2016: A Vision for the Future* was available for public review and comment. A total of 62 comments were received during this period and addressed in the final plan. The revised plan is available at the following web link: <http://tinyurl.com/j32k6nc>. Following Commission approval, printing and statewide distribution will occur in February 2016.

Information Presented: An Executive Summary for the plan is provided with this brief. The summary provides a description of the planning process, along with a summary of trail survey findings and implications, trail funding need, and management issues for each of the four trail category types. The full planning document also includes a set of strategic actions for addressing each of these statewide issues in coming years.

To allocate ATV and RTP grant funds in an objective manner, a set of evaluation criteria were developed for evaluating grant proposals. Separate criteria were developed for evaluating the following types of ATV project proposals: 1) Acquisition, Development, and Planning, 2) Operation and Maintenance, 3) Emergency Medical, and 4) Law Enforcement. RTP evaluation criteria were developed for evaluating ATV, snowmobile, non-motorized, and water trail grant proposals. A substantial number of the total evaluation points available are tied directly to findings from the trails planning effort.

The OPRD is directed to periodically study rivers or segments of rivers and their related adjacent land for potential inclusion in the State Scenic Waterway Program. The trails planning effort used public input to identify a list of 22 potential state scenic waterway study areas for the plan's ten-year planning horizon. The plan also describes how OPRD will facilitate the study of candidates for potential scenic waterway designations in coming biennia using the process developed during the 2013-2016 pilot study of sections of the Molalla, Chetco, and Grande Ronde rivers. A scenic waterway planning schedule for the period from 2017-2025 is included in the plan.

Prior Action by Commission: Participation in trails planning process work session in September 2013 and planning update in November 2015.

Action Requested: OPRD staff requests approval of the 2016-2025 Statewide Trails Plan.

Attachment: Statewide Trails Plan Executive Summary

Prepared by: Terry Bergerson

Oregon Trails 2016: A Vision for the Future



Nature
HISTORY
Discovery

Executive Summary

The 2016-2025 statewide trails plan, entitled *Oregon Trails 2016: A Vision For The Future*, constitutes Oregon's ten-year plan for recreational trail management. The plan guides the use of the state's Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) grant funds, and provides information and recommendations to guide federal, state, and local units of government, as well as the private sector, in making policy and planning decisions. Besides satisfying grant program requirements, a primary intent of this plan is to provide up-to-date, high-quality information to assist recreation providers with trail planning in Oregon. Further, it establishes a review process for potential State Scenic Waterway corridor additions.

Public outreach was a key emphasis in the planning effort, which included statistically reliable surveys of trail users and non-motorized boaters, resulting in feedback and opinions from 7,450 randomly selected Oregon residents. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) contracted with Oregon State University (OSU) to conduct four separate surveys of state residents regarding their participation in four categories of trail-related recreation: motorized (ATV/OHV), snowmobile, non-motorized trail, and non-motorized boating. Statistically reliable results for the OHV, non-motorized trail and non-motorized boater surveys are provided at the statewide scale and trails planning region scale (11 planning regions in state). Results for the snowmobile trail survey are provided at the statewide scale.

Regional trails planning workshops were held in 14 locations across the state, allowing additional public input on trails issues and funding need for each of the four trail category types. In addition, workshop attendees had an opportunity to nominate top water trail and State Scenic Waterway study corridor additions.

OPRD also made a strong effort to involve trail providers (local, county, state, federal, non-profit) from across the state in the planning process. Trails plan collaborative efforts included:

- Four separate trails plan advisory committees (ATV, snowmobile, non-motorized, water) to assist with the concurrent planning process.
- A series of online surveys (ATV, snowmobile, non-motorized, water trails) of Oregon's public recreation providers to determine region-level need for trail funding and issues affecting recreational trail provision.
- Two separate advisory committees to assist with using trails planning findings to develop a set of ATV grant program and RTP grant program evaluation criteria for evaluating trail grant proposals.

The planning effort included four distinct methods to identify trail funding need for each of the four categories of trail-related recreation at the state and region levels. Early in the planning process, OPRD conducted a needs assessment as part of the online surveys of public recreation providers in the state. A similar needs assessment was included in the statewide surveys of resident trail users. These survey results were presented at each of the regional trails workshops. A voting process was used to identify top funding need in each planning region. Summary results were presented to members of the four trail advisory committees. A final set of regional and statewide funding needs were finalized during the four trails planning advisory committee meetings.

The planning effort also included four distinct methods to identify trail issues for each of the four categories of trail-related recreation at the state and region levels. A trail issues assessment was part of the online surveys of public recreation providers in the state. A similar issues assessment was included in the statewide surveys

of resident trail users. These survey results were presented at each of the regional trails workshops. A voting process was used to identify top trail issues in each planning region. Summary results were presented to members of the four trail advisory committees. A final set of regional and statewide issues were finalized during the four trails planning advisory committee meetings. A set of strategic actions for addressing each statewide issue were finalized during the four trails planning advisory committee meetings.

The following is a summary of key statewide survey findings and implications, trail funding need, and management issues for each of the four trail category types.



MOTORIZED (ATV/OHV)

Statewide Motorized Trail Survey Findings and Implications:

- Class IV (side-by-side) permit sales began in 2012 in Oregon. Survey results show that Class IV riding is now 7% of total OHV rider days in the state. Of the four OHV classes, Class IV operators report the lowest level of satisfaction (46% being very or somewhat satisfied) with OHV trail opportunities in the state. Land managers should reach out to Class IV operators in future planning efforts to better serve their specific rider needs.
- OHV riders reported that the greatest loss in riding opportunities in Oregon in the past 10 years was for riding opportunities outside the state's Designated Riding Areas. The 2015 Oregon OHV Guide includes a listing of 53 Designated Riding Areas in the state. These areas are high-intensity riding areas with associated high operation and

maintenance costs. There are also many designated OHV routes and trails on public lands in Oregon which are outside the boundaries of these Designated Riding Areas. Many OHV enthusiasts seek out these less crowded riding experiences and enjoy exploring new riding areas. As such, OPRD will provide additional points in the ATV grant program for projects intending to enhance existing or provide new riding opportunities outside the boundaries of the state's official list of 53 Designated Riding areas.

- The survey identified a strong need for funding to maintain existing trails in good/sustainable condition. A recent GAO report found the USFS is only able to maintain about one-quarter of National Forest System trails to the agency standard, and the agency faces a trail maintenance backlog of \$314 million in fiscal year 2012. A consistent trail maintenance backlog is also reported on Oregon national forests. The state of Oregon should investigate the potential for initiating a trails foundation with a mission

- of protecting and maintaining recreational trails in the state.
- Closure of trails and unimproved backcountry roads were also identified as top OHV management issues. Land managers should reduce unwarranted OHV closures through comprehensive review/input/analysis by all stakeholders.
- The survey report identifies expenditure and economic contributions associated with OHV riding on public lands in Oregon. Statewide, OHV use by Oregon residents supports 869 jobs, \$23 million in labor income, and \$58 million in value added. When out-of-state visitors are included, the estimated amounts increased to 1,120 jobs, \$45 million in value added, and \$29 million in labor income. This information should be used to educate Oregonians about the economic benefits received from their investment in OHV riding areas, facilities, and services in the state.

Statewide Motorized Trail Funding Need:

1. Maintaining existing trails in good/ sustainable condition.
2. More single-track off-road motorcycle trails (Class III).
3. Prioritize loop over out-and-back trails.

Statewide Motorized Trail Management Issues:

1. Closure of trails. The implementation of federal travel management planning has resulted in a loss of OHV trail riding opportunities in Oregon. Closure of designated trails and routes without providing other designated routes in the same area leads to overuse and impacts in new areas.
2. Closure of unimproved backcountry roads. Again, the implementation of federal travel management planning has also resulted in the loss of OHV riding on backcountry roads in Oregon.
3. Riding in closed areas. Land managers have reported a proliferation of user created trails arising from repeated unauthorized travel by OHVs.



SNOWMOBILE

Statewide Snowmobiling Survey Findings and Implications:

- The general trend is for lower snow amount accumulations at Oregon snowmobile areas. Less snow was the most common reason for survey respondents reporting a decrease in snowmobiling trips in the state. The USFS should consider the effects of changing climate (e.g., receding snowpack and earlier spring runoff) on future recreation use patterns when conducting OSV travel management.
- Approximately 49% of snowmobile survey respondents are 50 years of age and older, compared to 27% of snowshoeing participants and 29% of cross-country skiing participants. These results suggest that snowmobiling provides an opportunity for older Oregonians to continue to enjoy the outdoors and access to public lands during winter months. The Ossa reports that many club members suffer from a variety of age-related disabilities (arthritis, heart, walking) and continue to snowmobile on a regular basis.
- The survey identified a strong need for funding for backcountry off-trail riding and expanded trail systems. The State of Oregon should work with the USFS Region 6 Office to develop a long-term strategy for using state snowmobile gas tax funds for snowmobile expanding existing trail systems, creating more backcountry off-trail riding opportunities, trail grooming, and trail rehabilitation on USFS lands in Oregon. In addition, a Federal

- funding mechanism should be implemented to fund such projects on USFS lands in Oregon.
- A recent court ruling requires that all Oregon Forest Districts will need to go through a public planning process in the next five years to review and designate roads, trails, and cross country areas which are open to snowmobile use (similar to OHV Travel Management). This survey identified closure of trails and riding areas as the top snowmobile management issue in Oregon. As a result, land managers should reduce unwarranted snowmobile trail and riding area closures through comprehensive review/input/analysis by all stakeholders.
- The survey also identified a need for trail maps, current snow depth, and safety/ avalanche information for snowmobile riding areas on the internet. Recreation providers should also consider developing geospatial PDF maps of snowmobile routes to allow on-the-snow wayfinding. Such maps can be uploaded onto mobile devices (smartphone or tablet) and then, using an app, use built-in GPS to track the users location on the map.
- The survey identifies expenditure and economic contributions associated with snowmobiling on public lands in Oregon. Statewide, snowmobiling by Oregon residents supports 129 jobs, \$4.1 million in labor income, and \$6.5 million in value added. When out-of-state visitors are included, the estimated amounts increased to 155 jobs, \$7.7 million in value added, and \$5.0 million in labor income. This information should be used to educate Oregonians about the economic benefits received from their investment in snowmobiling areas, facilities, and services in the state.

Statewide Snowmobile Trail Funding Need:

- Expand existing trail system.
- More trail grooming/ rehabilitation.
- More back-country trail riding opportunities.

Statewide Snowmobile Management Issues:

- Closure of snowmobile trails/ riding areas. In the coming years, all Oregon USFS Forest Districts will go through a public planning process to review and designate roads, trails, and cross country areas which are open to snowmobile use as part of the over-snow vehicle (OSV) travel management rule. There is a need to minimize unwarranted snowmobile riding closures during upcoming OSV travel management planning in Oregon.
- Riding in closed areas. In recent years, the USFS has been confronted with a proliferation of trails arising from repeated unauthorized cross-country snowmobile travel. Unauthorized access can result from either areas not mapped, signed, or marked clearly as open or closed; or snowmobilers ignoring designations.
- Lack of snowmobile trail maintenance. A consistent snowmobile trail maintenance backlog exists on Oregon national forests.

NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

Statewide Non-Motorized Trail Survey Findings and Implications:

- Relative to all Oregonians, non-motorized trail users tend to be younger and less ethnically diverse. According to the 2013-2017 Oregon SCORP, the state's elderly population (65 years and older) and minority populations (Hispanic, Asian, and African-American) are growing at a much higher rate than the population as a whole. As a result, Oregon's recreation providers should consider developing marketing strategies to encourage regular use of existing trail systems by elderly and minority populations in their jurisdictions.
- Survey results showed that dirt was the most common preferred trail surface for all activities other than biking on hard surface trails. Soft trail surface preference was also identified in the 2011 Oregon Outdoor Recreation Survey. Soft surface



- trails are typically constructed of natural earth, crushed rocks, or recycled concrete materials. They can also be made of gravel, dirt, limestone, and mulch. Recreation planners should note this preference in trail planning efforts.
- The survey also identified that the highest priority for additional trails was for walking/ hiking both inside and outside one's community. Trails for hard surface biking were the next highest priority for inside, while trails for backpacking were the next highest priority for outside one's community. Overall, a higher priority was placed on trails inside the community over trails outside. Close-to-home trail investments will maximize everyday use by local residents.
- Repair of major trail damage was identified as the highest trail funding priority by survey respondents. Such projects involve extensive trail repair (e.g., resurfacing of asphalt trails or complete replacement, regrading, and resurfacing of all trails) needed to bring a facility up to standards suitable for public use. As a result, OPRD will provide additional points for projects intending to repair major trail damage in the RTP evaluation criteria.
- The survey report identifies expenditure and economic contributions associated with non-motorized trail use in Oregon. Statewide, non-motorized trail use by Oregon residents supports 21,730 jobs, \$672 million in labor income, and \$1.0 billion in value added. When out-of-state visitors are included, the estimated amounts increased to 24,340 jobs, \$1.2 billion in

value added, and \$753 million in labor income. This information should be used to educate Oregonians about the economic benefits received from their investment in non-motorized trails in the state.

Statewide Non-Motorized Trail Funding Need:

- Connecting trails into larger trail systems.
- More signs/ trail wayfinding.
- Repair of major trail damage.

Statewide Non-Motorized Trail Management Issues:

1. Need for more trails connecting towns/ public places. This issue is addressed by trails projects that connect communities to each other; provide connections between existing trails; close a gap within an existing trail; provide links to trails outside Urban Growth Boundaries; provide access to parks and open space; and provide access to significant facilities within communities such as schools, libraries, indoor recreation facilities, and businesses.
2. Need for improved trail maintenance. For this issue, trail maintenance includes routine trail maintenance and trail rehabilitation/ restoration. Routine maintenance includes work that is conducted on a frequent basis in order to keep a trail in its originally constructed serviceable standards (e.g., mowing, tree and brush pruning, leaf and debris removal, cleaning and repair of drainage structures such as culvers, water bars, and drain dips), maintenance of water crossings, and repairs to signs and other amenities. Routine

1. maintenance work is usually limited to minor repair or improvements that do not significantly change the trail location, width, surface, or trail structure. Trail rehabilitation/ restoration involves extensive trail repair (e.g., resurfacing of asphalt trails or complete replacement, regrading, and resurfacing of all trails) needed to bring a facility up to standards suitable for public use (not routine maintenance). In some cases, trail rehabilitation/ restoration may include necessary relocation of minor portions of the trail.
2. Need for more trail signs (directional and distance markers, and level of difficulty). Trail users require a number of different types of signs to safely and enjoyably pursue their trail experience. Location signs that lead people to trailheads and parking areas, directional signs along the trail, destination signs to let people know they have reached end points, interpretive signs that describe the natural or cultural history of the area, and regulatory signs that explain the do's and don'ts of the area are important trail components. Trail managers should provide information about their trails that allows users to choose the trails within their skill and capability level. It is important for all users, but especially elderly or disabled users, to understand a specific trail's maximum grade and cross-slope, trail width, surface, obstacles and length before using the trail.

WATER TRAILS

Statewide Non-Motorized Boater Survey Findings and Implications:

- Survey results show that increased public access for non-motorized boating is the top facility/ service funding priority. These findings can reinforce local efforts to plan and develop non-motorized access sites in their jurisdictions. Access refers to a specific location where the public has the legal right and physical means to get to the water to launch a non-motorized boat. Non-motorized boating access may be unimproved or enhanced to varying degrees. Formal

non-motorized boater access areas may be paved launch ramps, parking areas with dirt trails, or roadside-to-the-waterway trails.

- The survey also identified a strong funding need for online boating information. Providing online non-motorized boating maps and information will also address the need for increased access for non-motorized boating by informing boaters about existing paddling opportunities in the state. Survey results also identify if water trail smart apps were provided, they should include where/ how to access the waterbody, safety information/ waterbody obstructions, a map of water trail sites, trailhead information, list of amenities that are available at the launch site, driving directions, and regulatory information. Recreation providers should also consider developing geospatial PDF maps of water trail routes to allow on-the-water wayfinding. Such maps can be uploaded onto mobile devices (smartphone or tablet) and then, using an app, use built-in GPS to track the users location on the map.
- Twenty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that they camp less often than they would like to on Oregon water bodies. Lack of primitive campgrounds, lack of first-come first-serve boat camping, and lack of developed campgrounds were top concerns limiting boat camping. Vehicle safety and not enough information about camping opportunities were also identified as top concerns limiting camping. Land managers should continue to develop non-motorized boater camping facilities to meet public boating needs.
- Vehicle safety at non-motorized boating parking lots was identified by non-motorized boaters as the top boater issue. As a result, recreation providers should consider improving parking security at waterway put-in and take-out locations. Strategies to consider include upgrading parking lots and access facilities so that other land-based and water-based recreationists are using the parking lot and facilities reducing opportunities for vandals to break into parked cars. More frequent ranger patrols also reduce



- break-ins. Placing signs at parking areas to identify who to call in the event of a break-in can also be considered.
- The survey report identifies expenditure and economic contributions associated with non-motorized boating in Oregon. Statewide, non-motorized boating by Oregon residents generated \$114 million in expenditure across the state. In turn, this expenditure contributed 1,084 jobs, \$54 million in value added, and \$34 million in labor income. When out-of-state visitors are included, the estimated amounts increased to 1,258 jobs, \$63 million in value added, and \$39 million in labor income. This information should be used to educate Oregonians about the economic benefits received from their investment in non-motorized boating facilities in the state.

Statewide Water Trail Funding Need:

1. Public non-motorized boater access to the water (developed or undeveloped).
2. Non-motorized boat launch facilities.
3. Restrooms.

In addition to water trail funding need, top nominations for water trail development and potential State Scenic Waterway additions were also identified to encourage water trail development and Scenic Waterway studies.

Statewide Water Trail Management Issues:

1. Need for increased access for non-motorized boating. The need for increased access for non-motorized boating is driven by a continuing

increase in participation in non-motorized boating activities in both Oregon and the U.S. in recent decades. Access refers to a specific location where the public has the legal right and physical means to get to the water to launch a non-motorized boat. Non-motorized boating access may be unimproved or enhanced to varying degrees.

2. Lack of funding for non-motorized boater facilities. Currently, non-motorized boat users do not register their boats, and as a result, there is no dedicated funding source specifically for non-motorized facility development. The lack of a specific funding source limits the establishment of new opportunities solely for people who enjoy non-motorized boating in Oregon. Therefore, there is a need to address this programmatically by creating a dedicated funding source for non-motorized boat access and launch facilities.
3. Lack of non-motorized boating maps and information. Projects addressing this issue could include water trail guides, information brochures, signage projects, websites, smartphone apps, and promotional materials.

The plan also includes a set of ATV grant program evaluation criteria for evaluating OHV grant proposals and RTP grant program evaluation criteria for evaluating OHV, snowmobile, non-motorized and water trail grant proposals. A substantial number of the total evaluation points available for both sets of criteria are tied directly to findings from the trails planning effort.