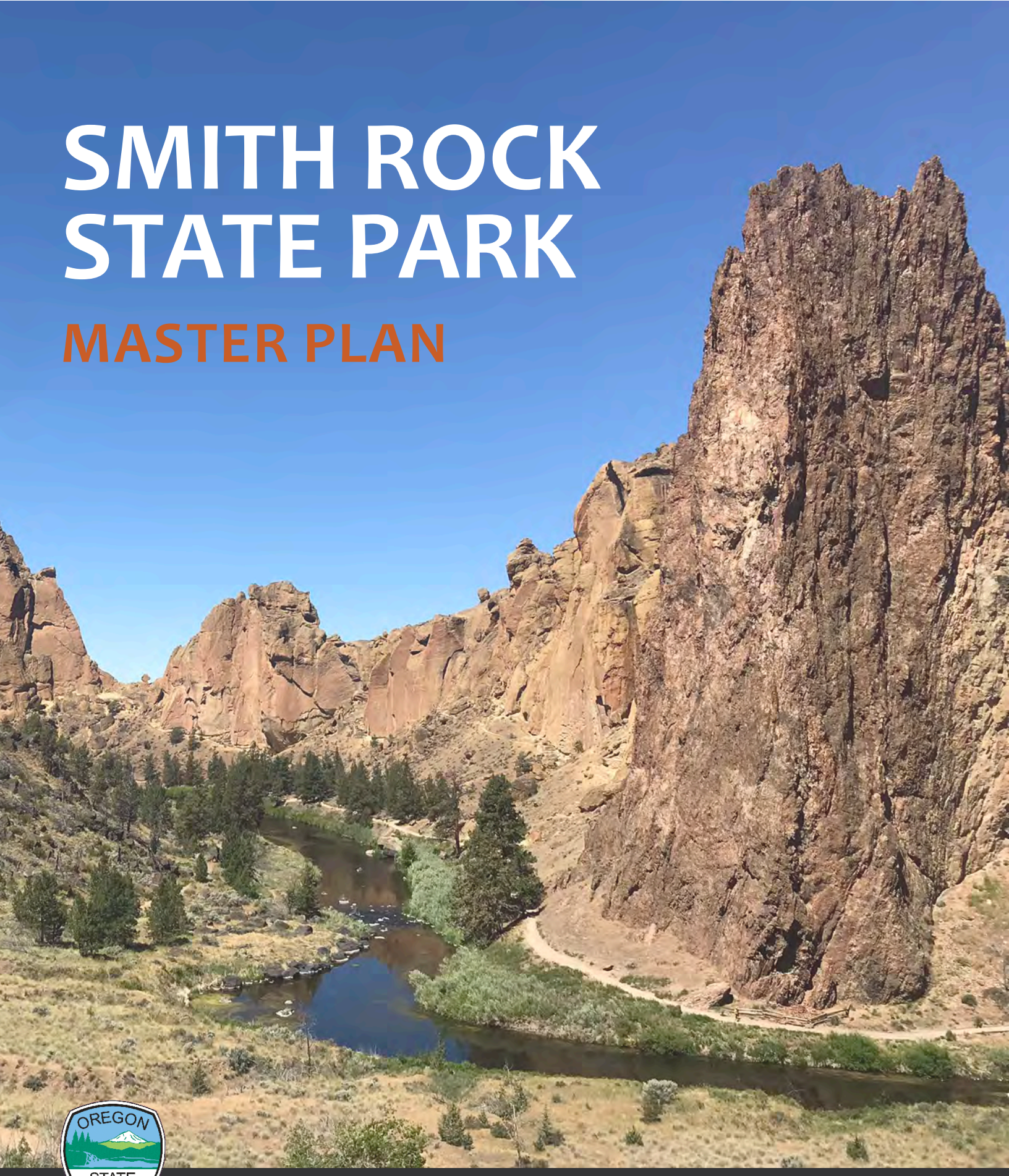
SMITH ROCK STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN



Final Draft for Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Adoption
- June 14th, 2023

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Cover Photo by GreenWorks

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1 PLAN INTRODUCTION



OPRD MISSION + VISION

The mission of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is: To provide and protect outstanding natural, scenic, cultural and recreational sites for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations.

This guiding document is rooted in the agency's vision: To take the long view to protect Oregon's special places and provide the greatest experience while creating stable future funding.

WELCOME TO SMITH ROCK STATE PARK

Smith Rock is a unique landform in Central Oregon, created over thousands of years by the constant carving of the Crooked River through layers of volcanic rock. Rising out of the high desert plateau, with the majestic Cascade Mountain peaks in the distance, the jagged



View of Monument Wall from the Lower Gorge.

spires of tuff are an aberration jutting six hundred feet into the sky. These scenic rock formations have become an internationally renowned climbing destination, drawing hundreds of thousands of hikers and sightseers to the park each year.



The character of the area has evolved over time, but it has always supported an abundance of life. Eagles, falcons, and numerous small animals and reptiles make their homes in the rocky crags; coyotes, bobcats and mule deer forage amongst the shrubs and woodlands; and beavers, mink, and river otters reside in the lush bottomlands. Native peoples have used and visited the area since time immemorial, as evidenced in part by a lasting oral history of the region.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Euromerican settlers started changing the landscape through public works projects and agricultural practices. Tunnels were bored through the rocks for irrigation system development, and improved transportation routes facilitated growth in population. These factors led to increasing use of the area for recreation activities.

Smith Rock became a State Park in 1960, ensuring that this stunning natural wonder would remain accessible to future generations. Development of park facilities has continued intermittently since the park was first established, but the primary uses – hiking, sightseeing, climbing, and camping – have largely remained the same.



NEED FOR A PLAN UPDATE

In order to balance the need for protection and enjoyment of a special place like Smith Rock, it is necessary to periodically assess the park's resources and determine its capacity for increased public use. Since the Smith Rock Master Plan was first adopted in 1991, annual park visitation has tripled, resulting in visitor demands that frequently exceed the existing infrastructure. Crowding and proliferation of rogue trails and climbing routes have degraded plant and animal habitats, decreasing the enjoyment for many visitors. The challenges for park management have evolved over time, and given the park's increasing popularity, there is a need to reevaluate the park conditions and chart a course for the future.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department initiated an update to the Smith Rock Master Plan in 2016. Due to several issues, including the unprecedented circumstances of a global pandemic, the plan has taken over six years complete. During that time, parks have come into greater focus as critical infrastructure for community health and wellness.

The State Park master planning process is enshrined in State law to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative effort is made, with public engagement being a critical component of the process. For the Smith Rock Master Plan, an Advisory Committee was established of over fifty representatives from partner agencies, tribes, and various stakeholder groups, which convened five times over the course of the project. Four rounds of public meetings were also held to gain input on management proposals and development concepts.

The Department produced several assessments, including for vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources, trails, and park capacity. A visitor survey was also conducted. The Master Plan comprises a summary of these assessments and the public input process, which guide the proposals for ongoing management and future development.



Rock climbing during the 2017 Total Solar Eclipse, by Andy Batt.

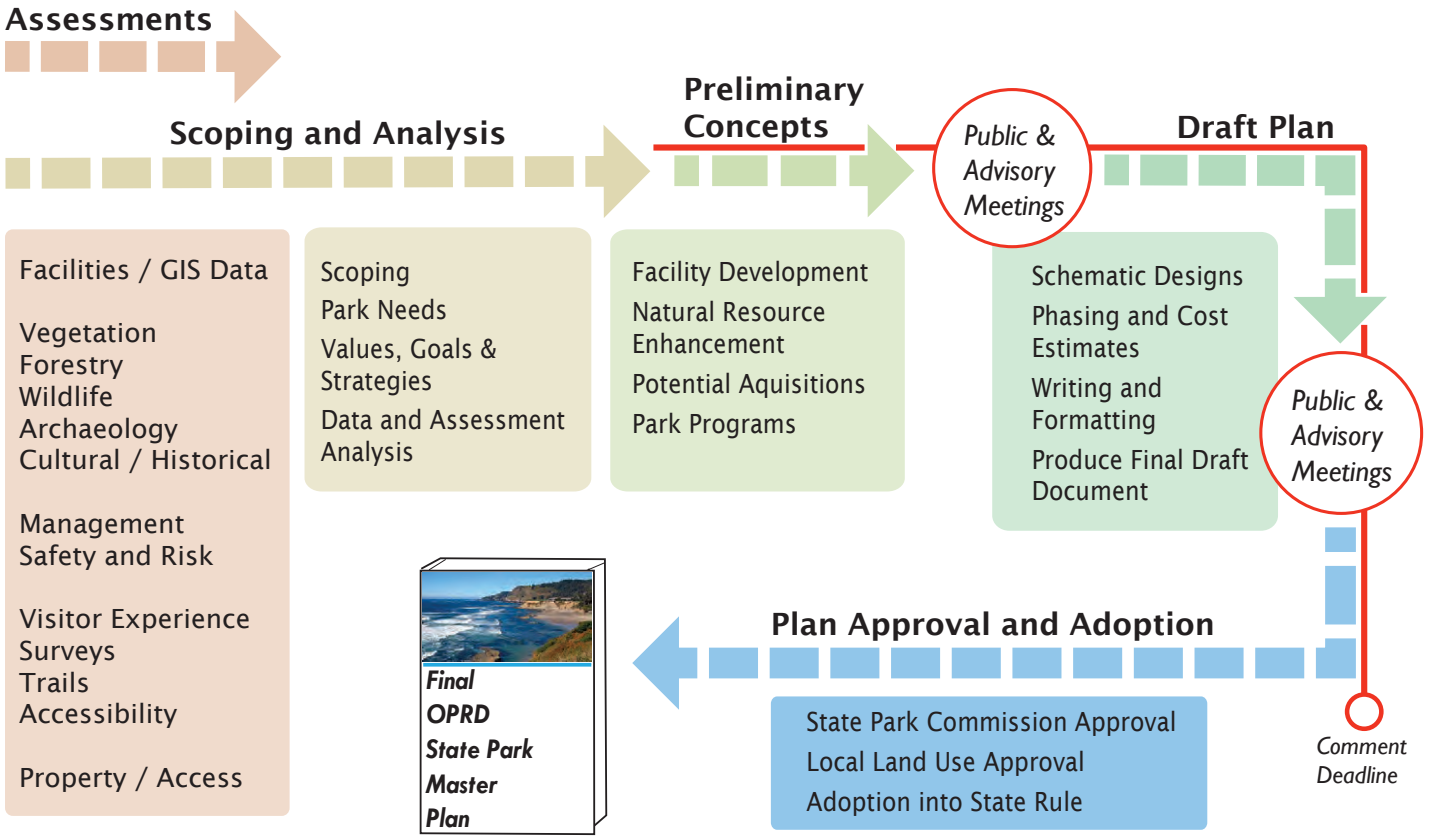


Figure 1: Master Planning Framework Diagram

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

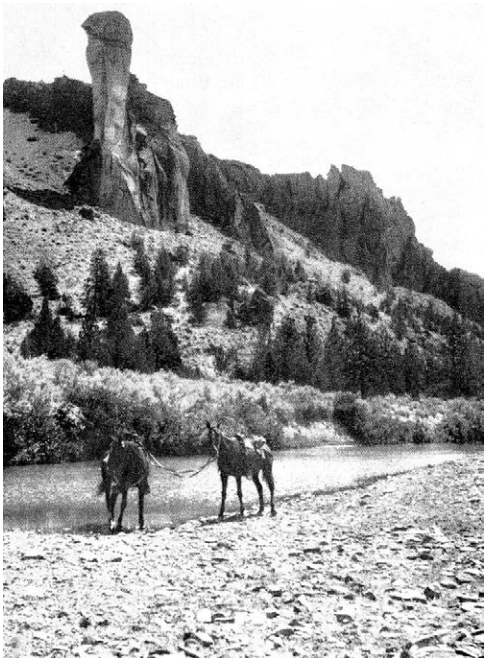
This Master Plan is intended to provide a 20-year vision; it is a guiding document for managers, partners, and interested members of the public to learn about the park resources, management goals, and future development proposals. Because of the many constituencies at Smith Rock State Park, defining and measuring success is a challenge, and ultimately a compromise. External forces, including population growth and climate change, will influence the landscape over time, and this plan is meant to provide a strong vision for the future, while allowing for adaptive responses to inevitable change.

Over the long term, success will be gauged by the degree to which management objectives are achieved. There is also a strong relationship between the health of the park's natural resources and the overall visitor experience, which can be gauged periodically through surveys, studies, and informal public feedback. At this point in time, broad support for the Master Plan is itself an indicator of success.

2 PARK CONDITIONS



Native American women photographed at Warm Springs Reservation, circa 1902.



Monkey Face along the Crooked River, circa 1905.



Prineville Shaniko Stage, Courtesy of the Bowman Museum, circa 1905.

CULTURAL HISTORY

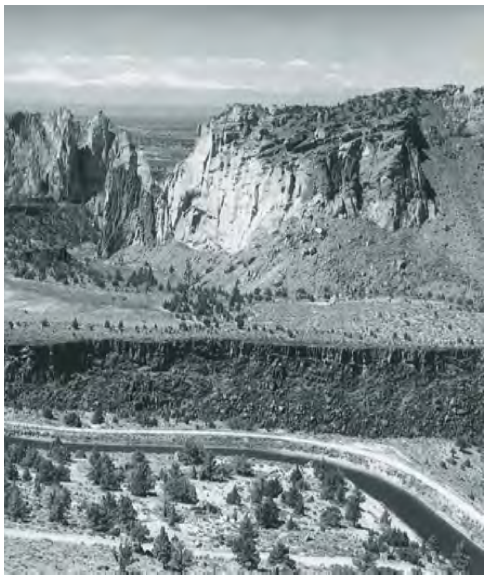
Smith Rock State Park is located near the convergence of the Plateau and Northern Great Basin Cultural Areas, places traveled and used by Native peoples since time immemorial. The park is within the traditional homeland of the Tenino, today represented by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and within territory used by the Northern Paiute, who are represented by both the Warm Springs and the Burns Paiute Tribes. Archaeological evidence within the park and surrounding area suggests a deep history of continued use over thousands of years and to this day.

Known cultural sites represent a diversity of seasonal activities, as plants are collected and processed for food, clothing, and a variety of other uses. Harvesting fish and freshwater mussels from the rivers, and hunting small and large mammals are also common subsistence activities practiced by Native peoples in the area. Smith Rock is a culturally significant place, and is represented in both the ethnographic record and through Tribal oral history, with one Paiute story referring to Smith Rock as the "Animal Village."

The first non-Native people to travel through the area were trappers that arrived starting in the 1820s. Early settlement was slow due to the rugged terrain of the Ochoco Mountains and ongoing hostilities with Native American Tribes in the region, which persisted up until the 1860s. In 1855, the United States and the Tribes of Middle Oregon signed a treaty wherein 10 million acres of traditional Native territory were ceded to the United States, and 578,000 acres were reserved for what became the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation.

The John Day Basin Gold Rush in the 1860s and the Homestead Act of 1862 brought more settlers to the region by way of improved transportation routes. There were grand plans for a railroad between Albany and Ontario that would pass just south of the canyon, which ultimately never occurred. Stage coach lines were constructed along the proposed route, and a stop was located just a few miles upstream from the park at Forest Crossing. The name Smith Rock is thought to have been in honor of either a soldier who fell to his death there in the 1860s, or a sheriff and state legislator who lived in the area during that time.

A portion of the park was homesteaded by Otto Frank Wallenburg and his wife Emily Stuart, who moved to Central Oregon in 1909. They built a switchback wagon road from the plateau at North Point down to the river that is still in use today. The homestead included a small house, outbuildings, and nearly a mile-long irrigation ditch that allowed them to grow a highly productive vegetable garden. They also grazed livestock in the canyon and planted dryland rye crops on the flat upland peninsula.



Irrigation canal photographed by Oregon State Highway Department, circa 1975.

Irrigation systems were key to the successful settlement of the region, and by 1907, the Central Oregon Canal had been constructed to divert water from the Deschutes River to thousands of farmland acres between Bend and the Cove Palisades area. During World War II, the Bureau of Reclamation initiated the massive North Unit Main Canal project to carry water through the mountainous area near Smith Rock. Two enormous tunnels were built, in part by Mennonite conscientious objectors to the war. The 3,400-foot-long Tunnel 1 was completed in 1945, and is presently accessed via Burma Road on the eastern edge of the park.



Restroom construction, circa 1990.

The State acquired the first 218 acres of land for the park from the Lowell E. and W.E. Dent families in 1960, followed by another five parcels totaling 103 acres. The City of Redmond then received a 120-acre BLM Patent for land adjacent to the Wallenburg homestead, which it transferred to the State of Oregon. Designation of this area as a State Park was strongly supported by many community members and Central Oregon Chambers of Commerce. Development of facilities began in 1961, and by the close of 1963 the park featured a total of 518 acres.

Recreational climbing at Smith Rock predated establishment of the State Park by about 30 years, and the first ascent listed in *Oregon Rock: A Climber's Guide* is West Gully, completed by Ross Petrie and Dave Pearson in 1946. The first ascent of Monkey Face, now called the Pioneer Route, was accomplished in January 1960 by Vivian Staender, Dave Bohn and Jim Fraser.



Bridge reconstruction, circa 1990.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Location

In the present day, Smith Rock State Park sits at the geographic center of the Central Oregon region, which encompasses Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties, an area roughly 7,800 square miles. Situated along the eastern flank of the Cascade Mountains, where the densely forested, snowcapped stratovolcanoes give way to the high desert, this region is one of the preeminent locations for outdoor recreation in Oregon, and is known internationally for its resort destinations and outdoor-oriented culture. Over 60 percent of the land in Central Oregon is in public ownership, primarily managed by the National Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Located 25 miles south of Smith Rock State Park on US Route 97, Bend is the Deschutes County Seat and the largest city in Central Oregon, with a population of about a hundred thousand. Ten miles south of the park is Redmond, the second-largest city in the region and home to Redmond Municipal Airport, which provides commercial airline service to many major western airports. Located just three miles west of the park, the small community of Terrebonne is the gateway to Smith Rock, and serves as the closest point for essential services like groceries and gas. On US Route 26, the city of Prineville is about twenty miles southeast, the Warm Springs Reservation is about forty miles to the northwest, and Portland is about a three-hour drive.



Looking west from Burma Road towards Smith Rock with Cascade Mountains behind.

Population

Smith Rock is located in northern Deschutes County, which is the fastest-growing county in Oregon, driven largely by the rapid growth of the Bend-Redmond metro area. The county population increased by almost 40 percent just after the millennium, and increased another 25 percent in the last decade to almost 200,000 people in 2020, making it the eighth-fastest growing metro area in the United States during that time period.[1] The population of Deschutes County is projected to reach a quarter-million by 2035.

Neighboring Crook and Jefferson Counties are also among the fastest-growing counties in Oregon, led by the growth of small cities like Culver, Madras, and Prineville, all of which are located less than 20 miles from Smith Rock. As of the 2020 Census, Crook and Jefferson County both had populations just shy of 25,000 people. Jefferson County is also one of the state's most diverse, with Latinos and Native Americans representing almost 40 percent of the population.[2]

Most communities in Central Oregon were historically built around lumber mills, and while most have since shut down, some of the largest employers remain timber products manufacturers. Major tourism destinations are also a huge part of the local economy, alongside service, education, healthcare, government, and retail sectors.[3] Boutique businesses in niche industries like craft brewing, outdoor recreation equipment, technology, and biosciences are increasingly making Central Oregon their home.

Recreation

OPRD operates three large State Parks in the region, with boat ramps, day use facilities, and expansive campgrounds: LaPine (2,300 acres), Prineville Reservoir (3,000 acres), and The Cove Palisades (4,400 acres). The two smaller regional State Parks, Smith Rock (690 acres) and Tumalo (330 acres), are very popular for day use hiking, sightseeing, and other activities. The agency also manages a number of Scenic Viewpoints in the region, including Pilot Butte, Cline Falls, Ochoco, and Peter Skene Ogden.

For local visitors, State Parks in Central Oregon function as a middle ground between City parks, which are typically smaller and highly developed with amenities, and the vast expanses of Deschutes and

1. The Bend Bulletin: https://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/us-census-says-deschutes-county-population-fastest-growing-in-oregon/article_a620329e-fc83-11eb-92d5-8b508749b53a.html

2. Central Oregon Health Data: https://www.centraloregonhealthdata.org/demographic-data?id=285505&sectionId=935

3. Economic Development for Central Oregon: https://edcoinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-Central-Oregon-Profile_-020421.pdf

Ochoco National Forests, which generally have more primitive campgrounds and day use facilities. For non-local visitors, State Parks represent an affordable and accessible option to experience the area's recreation opportunities and other attractions.

The 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identified hiking trails as a top priority for public recreation providers in the region, including connectivity between community trails and larger public land systems.[4] At Smith Rock State Park, local hiking trails provide access to adjacent BLM lands and the vast Crooked River National Grasslands slightly further afield.



Figure 2: Regional Recreation Map

Geography



The Central Oregon high desert has been greatly influenced by volcanic activity, with layers upon layers of rock deposited and sculpted by natural forces over many millennia. Smith Rock is situated on the northwestern edge of the Crooked River Caldera, a 26x17-mile wide depression created by a series of supervolcano eruptions almost 30 million years ago.[5] These eruptions deposited massive volumes of tuff and rhyolitic lavas, which over time were buried by subsequent eruptions of the Newberry Volcano, located about fifty miles to the south. The Crooked River has slowly and steadily incised a canyon through these rock layers, eroding and exposing the ancient tuff and basalt formations.

The present-day Cascade Mountains dotting the western horizon of Smith Rock are volcanoes that have influenced the landscape over the last several million years.[6] Periodic eruptions have deposited so much debris that weather from the Pacific Ocean is blocked from reaching farther east, creating a rain shadow that characterizes the semi-arid climate of Central Oregon.

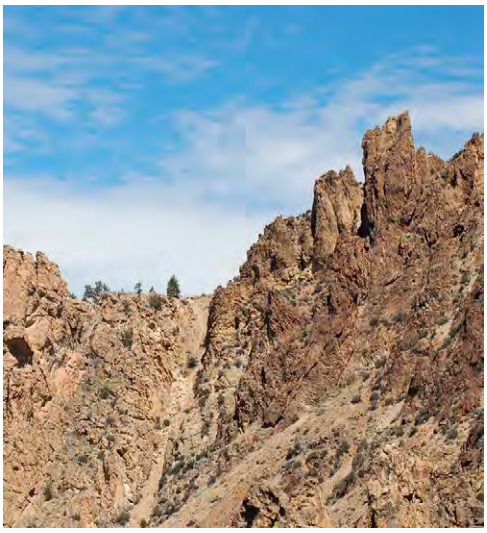


Smith Rock receives an average of just ten inches of precipitation annually, mostly falling as rain between November and January, with some thunderstorms in May and June. Summers are generally warm and sunny, averaging just over eighty degrees, with highs regularly exceeding a hundred degrees. In the winter, the average high temperature is just below forty degrees, with lows often below twenty degrees, but rarely below zero.

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

The volcanic soils and dry climate of this region are somewhat inhospitable, but many people, plants, and animals have adapted to thrive in these conditions. . Central Oregon is located at the confluence of three main ecoregions: the Eastern Cascades, Northern Basin and Range, and the Blue Mountains. These areas all have unique

4. State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan: https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/PRP/Documents/SCORP-2019-2023-Final.pdf
5.Deschutes County Land Trust: https://www.deschuteslandtrust.org/news/blog/2021-blog-posts/blast-from-our-past-crooked-river-caldera
6. US Forest Service: https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/deschutes/recreation/rocks-minerals/?cid=stelprdb5385354







characteristics, but share a similar shrub-steppe environment, dominated by bunchgrasses, sagebrush, juniper, and pine trees.

Assessments completed for Smith Rock identified several distinct ecosystem types that contribute to the park's unique biodiversity, including Non-Vegetated Cliffs, Riparian Areas, Herbaceous Meadows, Shrublands, Woodlands, and Developed areas. Figure 3 shows the distribution of these ecosystem types within the park boundary.

Non-Vegetated Cliffs

Smith Rock is most known for the dramatic, 600-foot cliffs of tuff that rise out of the river canyon. This habitat type, while not particularly hospitable to plants, is host to a number of birds of prey, including golden eagles, peregrine falcons, and prairie falcons. The rocky cliffs also provide roosting locations for spotted bats, white-throated swifts and violet-green swallows. Scree generally occurs down-slope of the cliff environment, and is composed of mostly unvegetated loose rock fragments eroding from the crags above. It is home to many reptiles, and can serve as a foraging area for small rodents and birds.

Riparian Areas

The Crooked River is another main feature of the park, and the riparian area surrounding the river channel provides critical habitat for birds, mammals, and a variety of water-loving plants. This area is especially biodiverse in the context of the surrounding desert environment. Northern river otters, American beavers, northern pikeminnows, and western ridged mussels are just a few of the creatures living in the water and along its edges. Vegetation in the wettest areas include softstem bulrush, sedges, rushes, cattail, and a variety of forbs. Poison hemlock and Canada thistle are problematic invasive species. Waterfowl, including great blue heron, pied-bill grebe, and common merganser, nest in the wetlands and marshes, which are characterized by teasel, meadow foxtail, and smooth brome. Larger shrubs like willow, mock orange, and exotic roses are also prevalent, encouraged by the upland irrigation runoff in many areas.

Herbaceous Meadows

Bunchgrass communities are mainly present in the least disturbed areas of park and provide habitat for a wide variety of rodents, and foraging grounds for mule deer, birds of prey, and other small

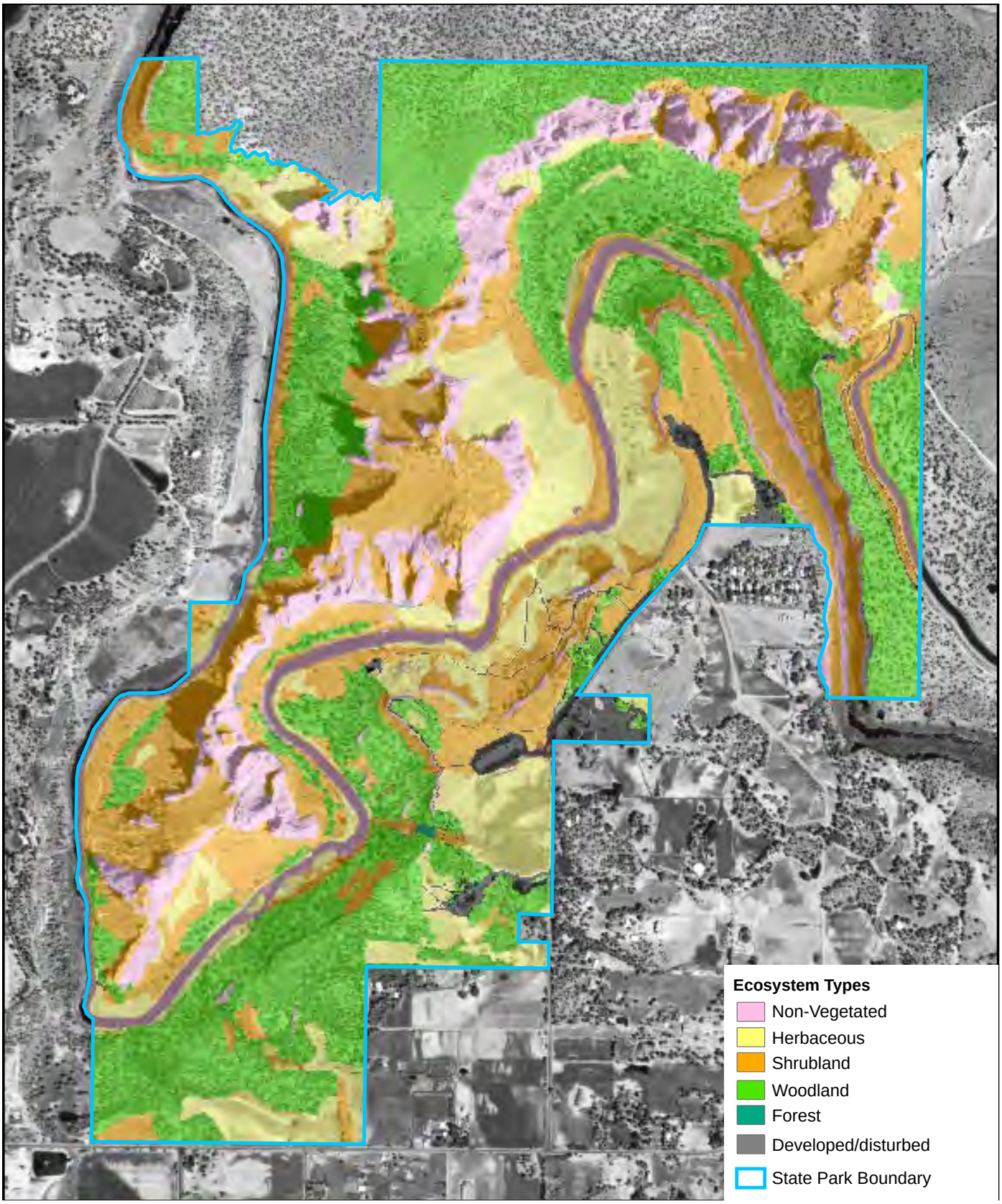


Figure 3: General Land Cover Map



mammals. The meadows are characterized by bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, Thurber's needlegrass, prairie junegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail, while some terraced locations where weeds are less abundant are dominated by needle and thread, Indian ricegrass, and basin wildrye. Generally, this habitat type requires repeated natural or human-induced disturbance to prevent succession to shrubland and woodland types.

Shrubland

Shrub-dominated habitats occur mostly in areas where there is sufficient soil, and because some shrub species have more sharply defined ecological niches, unique communities occur near particularly wet or rocky areas. All shrublands contain an herbaceous lower layer, but they are mainly characterized by big sagebrush, rubber rabbitbrush, green rabbitbrush, spiny hopsage, rock spiraea, rose, mountain mahogany, creek dogwood, mountain alder, mock orange, rigid sagebrush, and bitterbrush. Many birds make their home in the shrublands, including the sage thrasher and several species of sparrows, and it also provides important hunting grounds for the golden eagle, coyote, and mountain lion.



Woodland

Nearly all of the park's woodland habitat is dominated by western juniper, but there are a few stands of ponderosa pine found on the stream terraces adjacent to the Crooked River. One small stand of black cottonwood even meets the criteria of a forest habitat. These tall trees are particularly important for a nesting pair of bald eagles that arrived at the park in 2012, as well as white-headed woodpeckers and golden-crowned kinglets. The woodland habitat typically has a significant shrub layer composed of big sagebrush and rabbitbrushes, and an herbaceous layer of native bunchgrasses. Some wetter areas are abundant with willow, red osier dogwood, sweetbriar rose, wax currant, golden currant, mock orange, and chokecherry. These areas provide important shelter and foraging grounds for small mammals like mink and spotted bats, among other species.



Developed

Much of the flat ground above the rimrock on the south side of the canyon has been significantly disturbed by humans, largely for historic

agricultural purposes and ongoing park activities. Cheatgrass and tumblemustard are prevalent in former pasture areas, along road shoulders, and around other highly trafficked park sites. Cultivated lawn areas support yellow-bellied marmot and Belding's ground-squirrel, and numerous other bird species that are tolerant of human activities, such as house finch, American robin, and black-billed magpie. In the fallow fields on the south end of the park, meadow foxtail and smooth brome are abundant, which provides important habitat for rodents, black-tailed deer foraging, and would also support a handful of special-status wildlife species that prefer open areas, like burrowing owl and loggerhead shrike.



Invasive Species

Human disturbance is the main cause for establishment of invasive plant species and associated habitat loss. As such, the places that have been intensively used for agriculture, grazing, and recreation, as well as the riparian corridor along the river, are the most ecologically degraded areas of the park.

Woodlands, shrublands, and herbaceous meadows have been mostly infiltrated by invasive species such as cheatgrass, red-stem stork's bill, tumblemustard and bulbous bluegrass. Lower terraces and riparian areas are infested with Russian knapweed, leafy spurge, poison hemlock, and reed canarygrass. The fallow fields and pastures are composed almost exclusively of non-native species, but the irrigated areas generally have dense enough grass cover to exclude the more troublesome species.



Influence of Fire

Fire contributes significantly to the ecological health of most Western landscapes, and is critical to the reproduction of many plant species. Fire helps to clear out dense undergrowth, creating and maintaining more open habitat types. The relative absence of frequent, low-intensity fire within the last few centuries has increased overall plant density and encouraged proliferation of many non-native species at Smith Rock, which has degraded ecosystem functions, including resiliency to fire.

In August of 1996, a wildfire burned over two-hundred acres of the park, the effects of which are still evident along the canyon and uplands near the Chute. This area is now dominated by grasses, with some

young western junipers scattered throughout, and many dead snags still standing or on the ground. The mature canopy trees lost to fire will take decades to regenerate, but in the meantime, the dead wood will provide some important habitat value.

COMPOSITE NATURAL RESOURCE VALUE

The Vegetation and Wildlife Assessments produced as part of the master planning process both include an analysis of conservation values and development suitability throughout the park. These outputs are merged to form the Composite Natural Resource Value Map, which highlights areas with high conservation priority. For Smith Rock, around the existing day-use areas are the most disturbed, while the meadows and woodlands have high natural resource value. Figure 4 shows the composite natural resource values throughout the park.

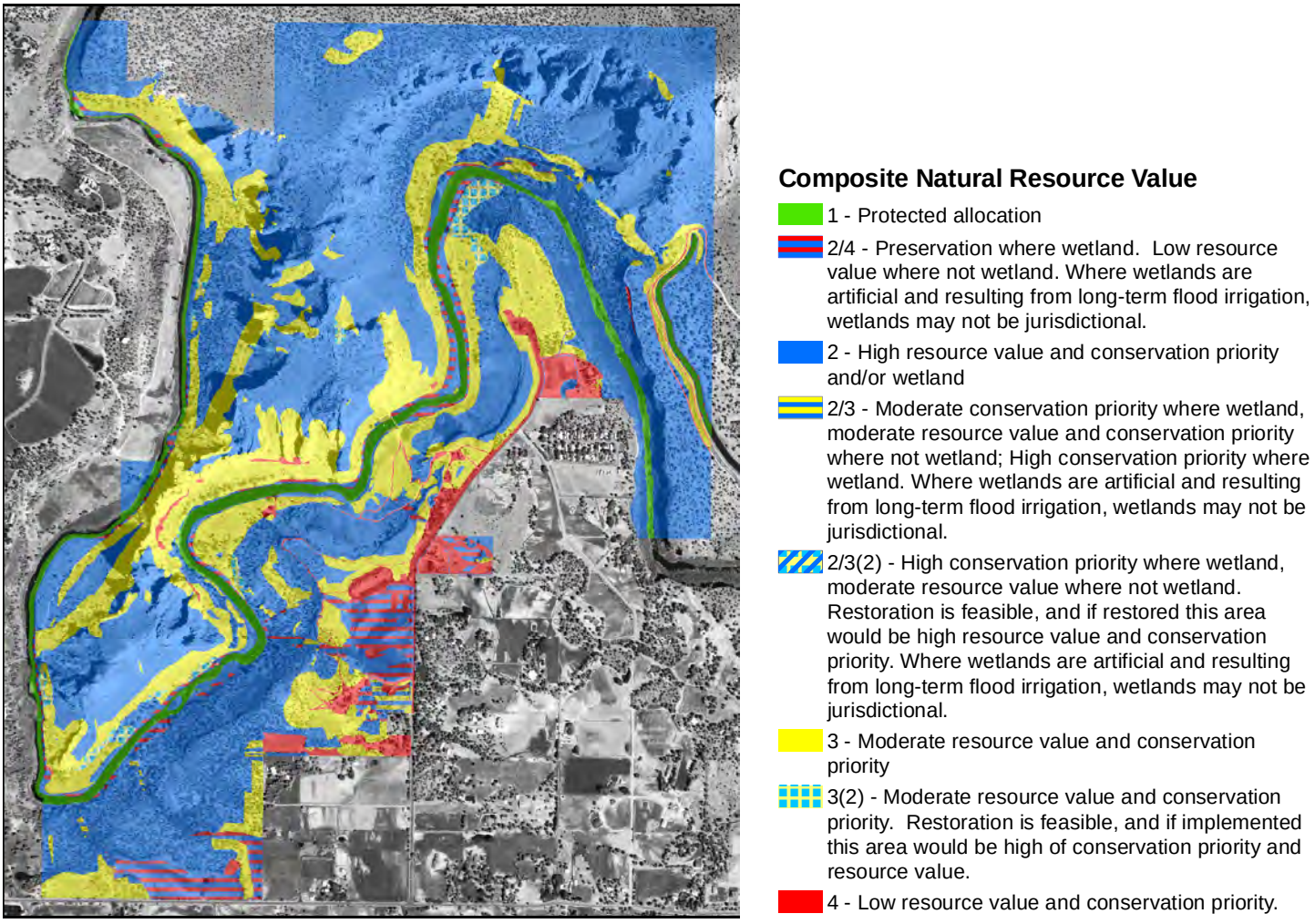


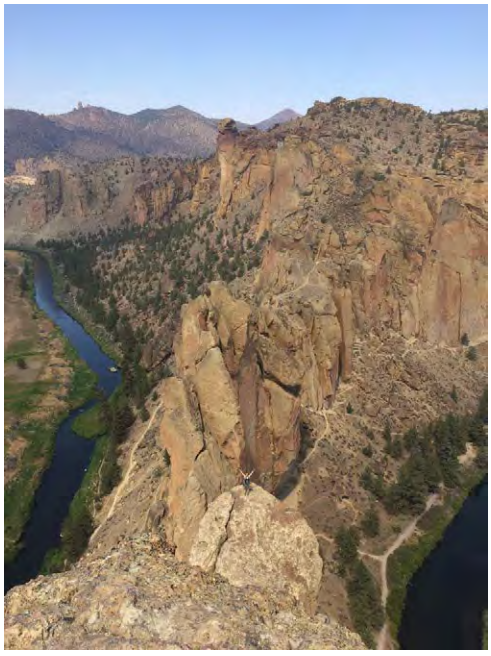
Figure 4: Composite Natural Resource Value Map

AREAS OF SCENIC INTEREST

Smith Rock State Park is scenic natural wonder, with uniquely gorgeous views from almost any location. The astounding scale of the rock formations becomes more evident as one approaches the canyon, from the rolling meadows and shrublands to the rocky terrace, and down through the woodlands to the river's edge, where the beautiful scenes are reflected on the surface of the water. This is a photographer's paradise, and indeed, pictures of Smith Rock proliferate on state and regional advertising for a variety of businesses, and many people come to the park to take pictures and have portraits taken with their families and friends.

From the highland trails the views are long in every direction, and there are a number of semi-formal viewpoints established throughout the park. To the west, Black Butte is prominent in the foreground, while Mt. Bachelor, the Three Sisters, Mt. Jefferson, and Mt. Washington are often snowcapped, rising up from the Deschutes River plain. To the northeast, craggy, juniper-dotted ridgelines extend to the formidable summit of Gray Butte. The Crooked River Canyon below frames the natural beauty of the park, juxtaposed with the developed homesites, farms, and towns nearby.







ADJACENT LANDS

The Crooked River marks a stark divide between developed agricultural lands and wilder mountainous territory, and Smith Rock State Park straddles this clash of environments. The park borders a number of private residential lots on the south side of the river canyon, all of which are accessed by Wilcox Road and Crooked River Drive. The expansive Ranch at the Canyons Home-Owners Association is adjacent to a large portion of the northwest corner of the park. Their grasslands are managed in partnership with the Deschutes Land Trust and public access is provided for a small section of the Summit Trail that traverses through this private property.

Lands bordering the park to the northeast and ranging for several miles beyond are owned by the Bureau of Land Management. The Gray Butte Trail extends from the park through this rugged landscape, into the immense Crooked River National Grasslands, which are owned and managed by the US Forest Service. Skull Hollow Campground is located just eight miles from Smith Rock, and with 76 sites, serves many people visiting the park. The USFS recently upgraded the facilities at Skull Hollow, which includes space for RVs and trailers. The lack of water is an ongoing challenge at this location.



EXISTING FACILITIES

Since the last Smith Rock State Park Master Plan was adopted in 1991, the park has grown in size, from 624 acres to almost 690 acres today. Four land acquisitions occurred during that timeframe, including a 17-acre woodland parcel along Wilcox Road, a few small parcels along Crooked River Drive that are used for maintenance activities, and a 38-acre river canyon parcel just upstream from the park administration building.

Trails

The park has over 22 miles of hiking trails, which vary in design and difficulty based on the terrain. They were informally established over many years of use, and have been reinforced as needed with wooden support structures and stronger surfacing. Erosion caused by poor drainage and overuse has become prevalent in many areas, particularly along the river and in steep sections of the canyon. Few accessible trail routes exist, and there is minimal connectivity between day-use areas

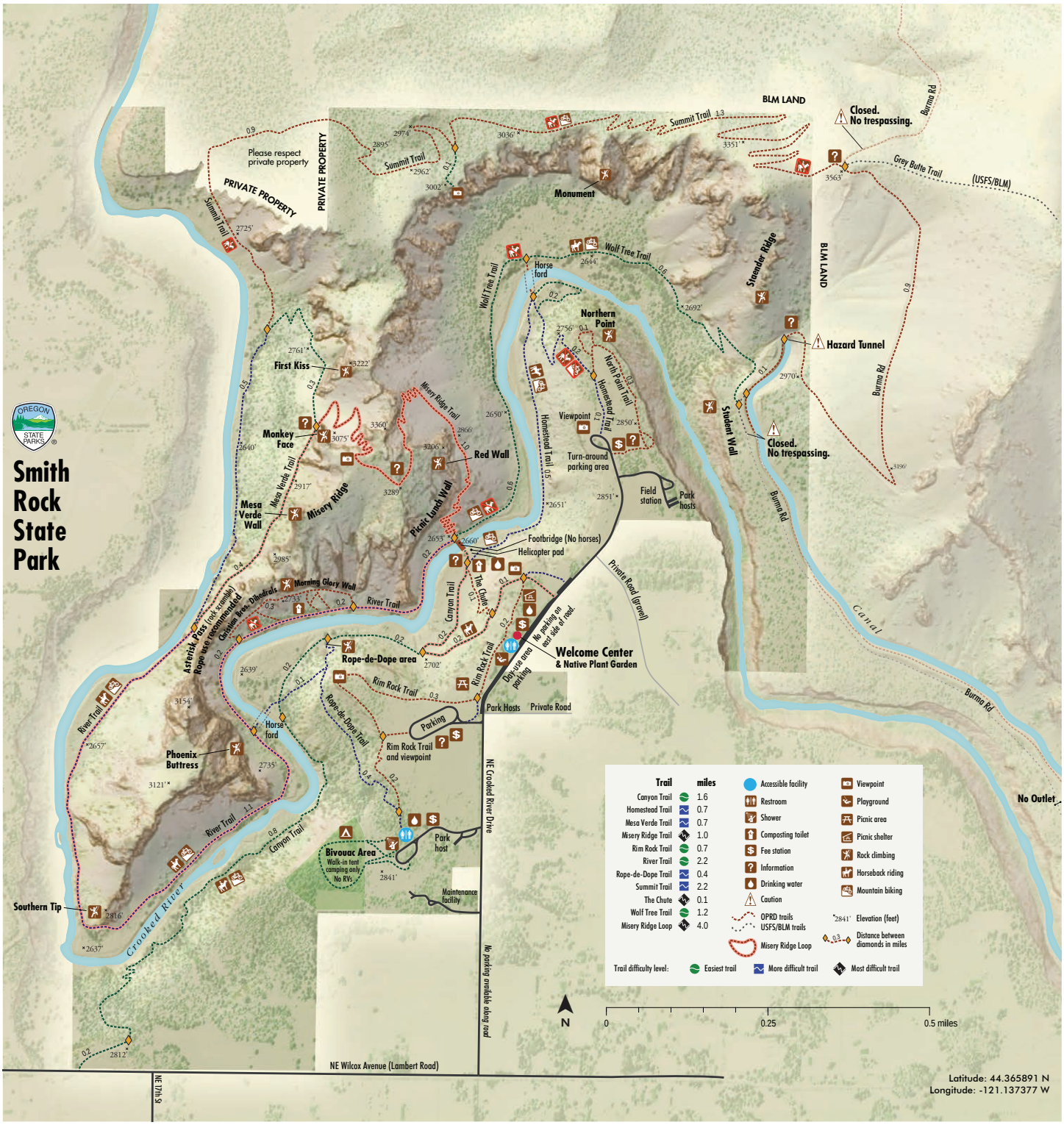


Figure 5: Existing Facilities Map



and parking. Emergency vehicle access extends into the canyon, but becomes impossible where trails are too narrow and steep. An overview of trail system is provided in Figure 5.

The master plan update included an assessment of the trail system to collect data on conditions and usage. Four trail counters were installed throughout the park, with the highest counts recorded at the footbridge. The data suggests that roughly half of trail users who cross the footbridge go on to hike the Misery Ridge Trail. Late spring and early fall are the most popular times for hiking in the park.

Misery Ridge is one of the hardest and most highly used hiking trails in the park and ascends immediately up towards Monkey Face and the Mesa Verde Trail after crossing the footbridge, making it a popular hiking loop option. These and the Summit Trail along the park's northern boundary are all considered difficult, and are not recommended for inexperienced hikers.



The widest, most well-developed trails are on the south side of the canyon, near the Welcome Center yurt and North Point. The Rimrock Trail and the North Point loops traverse these flatter uplands, providing more easily accessible experiences of the park. There are also many social trails in these areas, which contribute to landscape degradation and confusion.

The River Trail at the bottom of the canyon is considered easy, but due to the nature of the steep canyon walls, all trails are more difficult getting down towards the river. A single footbridge provides access to trails on the north and west sides of the canyon, including the majority of climbing routes and popular hikes. As such, this area is often congested with people.

There are well over a thousand vertical climbing routes bolted on the rock faces in the park, which are maintained by user groups. These areas require technical rock-climbing experience and would be inappropriate for most visitors without a professional guide. Unmapped social routes proliferate around the major climbing areas, both at the bottom and top of the canyon.

Day Use Areas

The two main day use areas are North Point and the Welcome Center at the Chute trailhead. There is on-street parking and an off-street overflow parking lot at each location, with minimal pedestrian connectivity between them. North Point and the Chute are the two primary trailheads leading into canyon, but the only footbridge across the river is accessed via the Chute. Both day use areas also have options for hiking along the rimrock.

North Point is located at the terminus of Crooked River Road, and has paved, head-in parking for 35 cars, and a 125-car gravel overflow parking area located just to the south. Within the vehicular turnaround there is a picnic area with about 6 tables and a few portable toilets. There is also a small amphitheater and group gathering area used somewhat informally for events, including weddings and large picnics. The Homestead Trail leads down into the canyon and south along the river towards the Chute Trail and footbridge.



Looking east at North Point day use picnic area.

At the Welcome Center and Chute trailhead there is paved, head-in parking for approximately 110 cars and a paved, off-street parking lot for 92 cars located just to the south. A yurt serves as the existing Welcome Center, located next to an irrigated lawn area with about 20 picnic tables scattered throughout. There is a plumbed restroom building, a native plant display garden, and a small rock-climbing play area nearby. At the Chute trailhead on the north end is a picnic shelter that is popular for people entering and exiting the canyon. These features are all located right along Crooked River Drive for about a half-mile stretch, which becomes extremely congested during busy seasons, frustrating visitors and causing safety concerns.



Welcome Center Day Use Area from Crooked River Drive.





View of Bivouac Campground communal cooking area by Marcia Volk.

Bivouac Campground

The overnight camping situation at Smith Rock, known as "the Bivy," is unique in the State Park system, with parking for 50 cars and walk-in tent camping in a juniper woodland area nearby. Mainly developed as a primitive basecamp for climbing, there is a single restroom building with showers, and about 15 picnic tables located at the communal cooking area. No other amenities are provided, and campfires are not allowed. Trailers and RVs are not accommodated at this location, and sleeping in vehicles is not allowed. The campground operates from mid-March through mid-November, weather permitting, and is supported by a volunteer Park Host who typically resides in an RV onsite.

Maintenance and Administration

The main park administration building is located in a former residence near North Point, adjacent to the overflow parking area. The old barn is used for storing equipment, and there is dedicated staff parking and an RV/trailer site for the Park Host. Two other maintenance yards are located along Crooked River Drive, one across from the Welcome Center yurt, and one farther south of the Bivouac Campground. There are a few storage sheds, staff parking, a small administration building and a manager's residence. All of these facilities are aging and in need of upgrades for security, efficiency, and accessibility.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

User Survey

A user survey was conducted in 2016 as part of the master plan update, wherein day-use and overnight visitors were questioned about a range of topics, including the distance, duration, and purpose of their trip, the characteristics of their group, activities and spending, and overall satisfaction with their experience.

Just over half of the visitors surveyed were from Oregon, with nearly a quarter having driven less than thirty miles to reach the park. Among overnight users, just under half lived in Oregon, and 18 percent were from outside of the United States. Roughly equal proportions of day users were male and female, while a much higher percentage of overnight users were male. The average age of respondents was about 40 years old, but overnight users were likely to be about ten years younger. Almost 90 percent of the respondents were white, with four percent being either Latino or Asian, respectively.

Day use visitors spent almost four hours in the park on average, and were more likely to participate in hiking or walking, sightseeing, and dog walking. Overnight visitors were most likely to stay two or three nights and participate in rock climbing, running, biking, or picnicking. Overall, the most popular activities were hiking or walking (93%), sightseeing (53%), outdoor photography (35%), wildlife viewing (23%), and rock climbing (21%).



When presented with options for potential improvements, park users strongly supported creating more opportunities for hiking, viewing wildlife, and escaping crowds. Visitors were least satisfied with existing parking, group facilities, and interpretive opportunities. Over 80 percent of park users also felt some degree of crowding on their visit, which is significantly higher than for most other State Parks. However, nearly 80 percent of users still reported that they were "very satisfied" with their experience.

Survey respondents were also able to provide open-ended comments and suggestions, and the most common themes that emerged from their responses were: improve parking, protect natural resources, manage crowds, provide more restrooms and drinking fountains, add

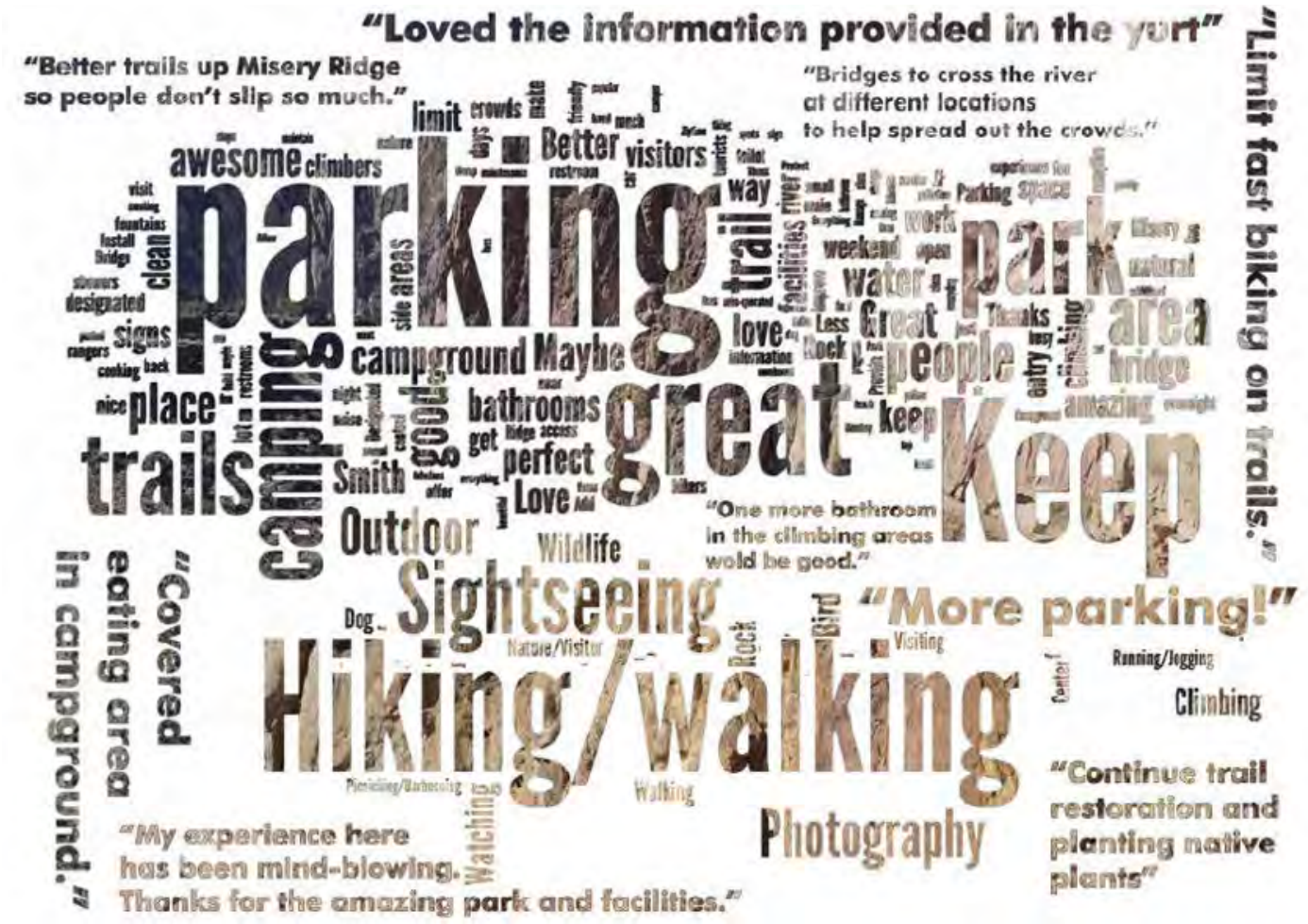


Figure 6: User Survey Word Art

another bridge, and improve trail etiquette. Many people also expressed a desire for minimal changes, as indicated by most park attributes falling in the "keep up the good work" performance category.

Capacity Assessment

A capacity assessment was commissioned as part of the master plan update, to determine how to best monitor and alleviate the impacts of drastically increasing visitor use. Goals and objectives were identified for natural and cultural resources, visitor experience, and park operations. The park was then divided into analysis areas, with measurable indicators and quantified thresholds established to achieve the goals and desired experiential outcomes.



Photo by Lyn Wilchek

Indicators such as the percent cover of invasive species, acres of high-quality wildlife habitat, length of unsanctioned trails, and number of people in view were proposed to be monitored and evaluated against a desired threshold. For some indicators, thresholds may vary by analysis area. For example, a larger number of people in view on a hiking trail may be more acceptable near the Welcome Center area than in the back country.

Based on the numeric thresholds established for various indicators, the park capacity was quantified in terms of "people at one time." The assessment methodology determined the physical capacity of various park features, including trails, day use facilities, overnight facilities, and climbing areas. The overall day use capacity was determined to be 1,178 people at one time, while the overnight capacity was determined to be 114 people at one time.

In order to avoid crowding and negative impacts to the landscape, the report suggested that the physical capacity of the park should be balanced with the number of visitors. Parking availability is one way to theoretically limit the number of visitors present in the park at any given time. As determined by the user survey, each vehicle typically

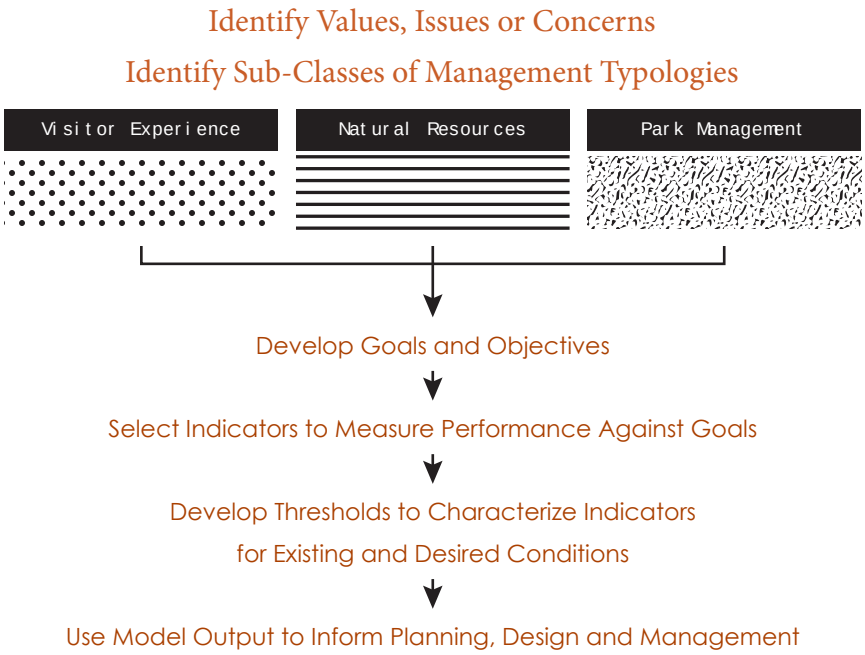


Figure 7: Capacity Assessment Process Diagram

carries about three people, so the number of parking spaces could be converted to a visitor capacity.

The assessment methodology ultimately concluded that the capacity of day-use parking exceeds the physical capacity of the park by about eight people. Though the numbers are fairly balanced, this means that if the parking areas are full, the park is operating just slightly over capacity. Given that the distribution of people varies throughout the park, visitors are likely to feel crowded in key activity areas.

It was recommended to plan for additional physical capacity within the park in tandem with developing additional parking, in order to limit adverse impacts to the park resources and the visitor experience. Deterring illegal parking was also identified as critical to reducing impacts of overuse.

Public Engagement

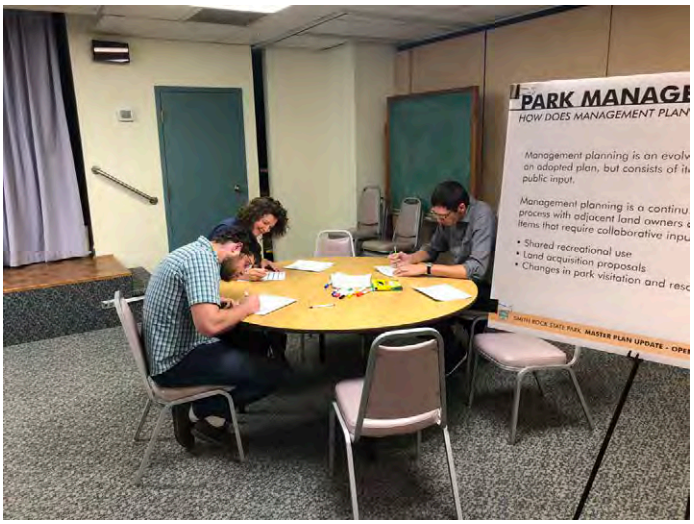
The master planning process is a unique opportunity for OPRD to engage with specific user groups, partner agencies, tribes, and the public in defining a direction for the future of a beloved place. For Smith Rock State Park, the process was extended, largely due to the global pandemic that upended the course of normal operations at the Agency.



Beginning in 2017, OPRD held targeted outreach meetings with key groups, including the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Deschutes County Commissioners, Terrebonne Neighborhood Alliance, Northwest Sustainable Climbing Conference, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Portland Metro. A project Advisory Committee was established with representatives from these and other stakeholder groups, which met five times during the course of the project.

Four rounds of public meetings were also convened with local and regional in-person and virtual participation options. In order to gain diverse perspectives, multiple meetings were held in Redmond, Bend, Portland, and on Zoom, with both presentation and open house formats. Meetings were advertised through a variety of methods, including fliers in the park, press-releases in local newspapers, social media postings, and direct mailers. A project website was created to facilitate communications and feedback throughout the process.

Generally, OPRD staff provided updates, including summaries of park assessments, surveys, and input received, and solicited input on key development and management proposals. Throughout this iterative process a few key themes emerged, including availability of parking and camping, visitor congestion, and resource degradation. Figure 8 shows the distribution of priority issues identified by the Advisory Committee and the general public.





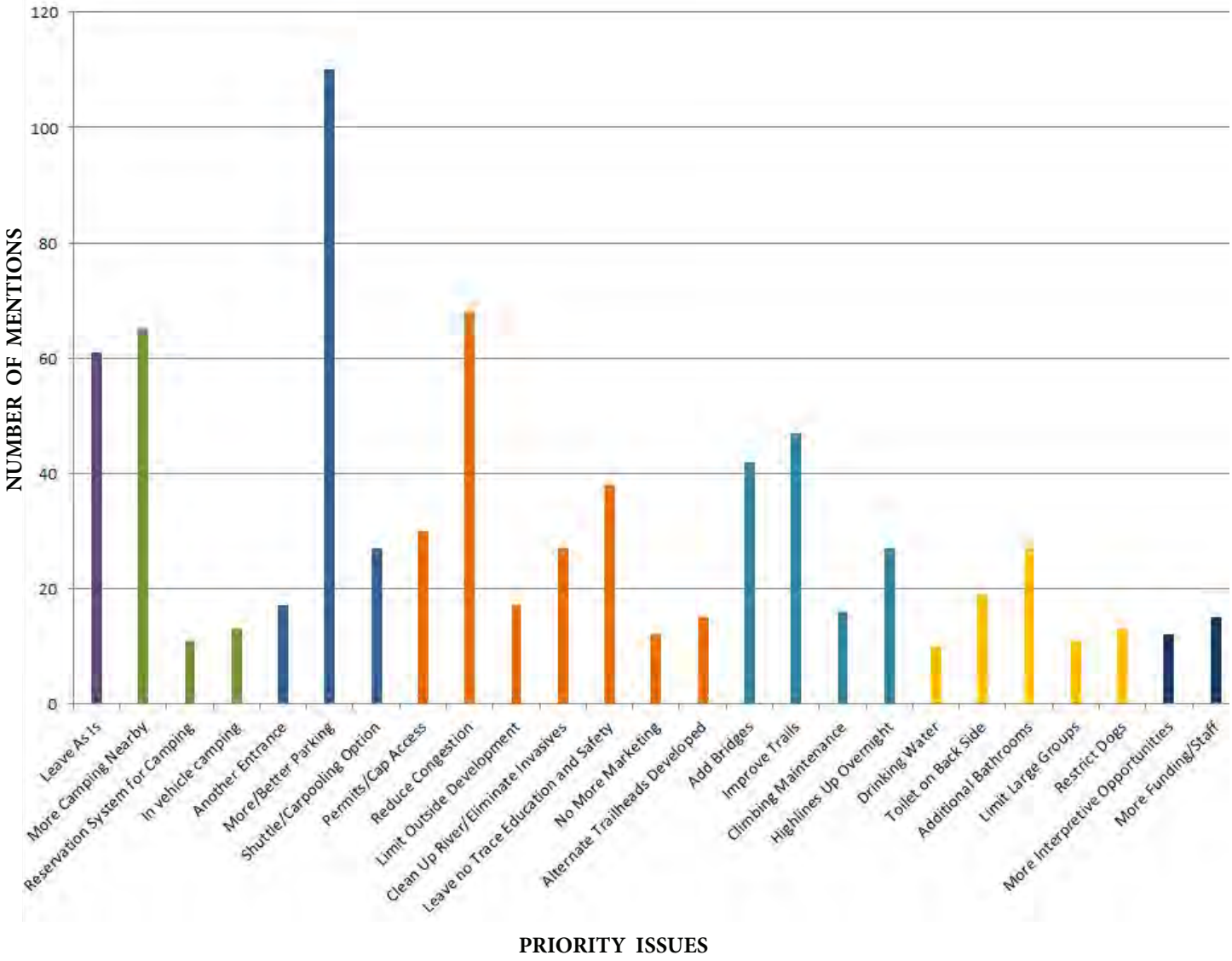


Figure 8: Public Engagement Survey Graph, 2017

Two public meetings in April 2023, one by Zoom and one in Bend, coincided with the Draft Plan being published on the OPRD website, followed by a 30-day public comment period. The plan was featured in several media articles including in-depth interviews with staff. Over 300 comments were submitted through the OPRD website, approximately 200 of those appeared to be from the dedicated climbing community. Major themes included the reservation system, parking capacity, trail development, and the Climbing Management Plan. Many individuals and organizations also expressed a desire for continued involvement in ongoing park policy and project development.

3 MANAGEMENT GOALS+ STRATEGIES



GUIDING VALUES

Throughout the master planning process, a wide variety of input was received from park users, agency staff, partners, neighbors, and community members. Everyone's comments and concerns together inform the following set of values for the park, which are guided and reinforced by the OPRD mission. These values are an important lens through which management and development decisions can be evaluated.

Preservation

- The park's unique geology and rugged, scenic landscape provide habitat for a variety of native plants and animals.
- Visitor access is balanced with appropriate protections for natural and cultural resources.

Recreation

- Trails support a wide range of activities, including hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, climbing, and walk-in camping.
- Climbing at Smith Rock is recognized as having a rich history, and is highly supported by the community.

Community

- Being within close proximity to population centers increases the park's natural value for a variety of user groups.
- The Agency and the diverse user communities all share a sense of responsibility for stewardship of the park.

The following objectives and proposals aim to address the most pressing management issues identified in the resource assessments and through public input received during the planning process. The issues are presented in four broad categories: Natural Resources, Recreation, Cultural Resources, and Administrative Operations.

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

Protection of Nesting Raptors

Objective: Birds of Prey that call the park home are respected by visitors and encouraged to thrive.

Existing Conditions: Bald eagles, golden eagles, prairie and peregrine galcons have been nesting since time immemorial in the crags of Smith Rock, and are protected by state and federal regulations. As hikers and climbers continue to impose on their territory within the park, seasonal closures have been implemented in critical nesting areas to limit adverse impacts. The closure periods vary for each species, which can be confusing to some visitors. Raptor populations within the park are currently stable, indicating a successful protection program thus far.



Photo by Steve Lay

Proposal: Continue to implement nesting area closures, and monitor for annual variances in bird activities. Consider a broader closure to encompass multiple species, and include partner agencies, adjacent land managers, and the climbing community in strategy development and enforcement. Provide interpretive resources to the public about wildlife and agency efforts to balance recreation and habitat values.

Preservation of Intact Ecosystems

Objective: Maintain key landscape areas that exhibit high quality habitat characteristics.

Existing Conditions: The ponderosa pine woodlands along the Crooked River and the native bunchgrass prairie on the northern uplands are priority areas for conservation activities. These areas exhibit important habitat characteristics that have been minimally impacted by park uses to date, but are susceptible to increasing environmental stressors. The southern woodland area is also a high-quality wildlife refuge for many large mammal species that are increasingly pushed out of more developed areas surrounding the park.



Proposal: Discourage off-trail use by the public, and monitor adverse impacts and changes to species composition over time. The woodland canopy should be bolstered through strategic plantings, and juniper encroachment should be periodically thinned to preserve habitat values. Collaborate with other agencies and local partners on project planning and implementation.





Photo by Scobel Wiggins



Photo by Marcia Volk

Restoration of Degraded Ecosystems

Objective: Areas that have been altered by human impacts are transitioned to more resilient native habitats.

Existing Conditions: Land use and recreation patterns over the last several decades have changed vegetation and habitat characteristics, particularly in the Crooked River riparian area and uplands in the central portion of the park. Invasive species have replaced natives and reduced ecosystem functionalities.

Proposal: Prioritize work to remove invasive plants, with particular focus along the Crooked River riparian corridor. Establish a native planting regime and engage partners in ongoing landscape maintenance and monitoring activities. Uplands impacted by irrigation and agricultural practices could be maintained as beneficial wetland habitats that increase biodiversity and provide opportunities for public education.

Adaptive Management for Sensitive Species

Objective: Unique plants and animals within the park are studied and supported through ongoing public inquiry and protection.

Existing Conditions: A host of birds, mammals and other interesting creatures thrive in the unique environment of Smith Rock, but may have a sporadic or undocumented presence. This is especially true for larger animals like mule deer, coyotes and bobcats. As habitat conditions evolve, sensitive populations are likely to be impacted, and for some species regulatory protections have been implemented. There are potentially threatened freshwater mussel species identified in the Crooked River, whose population characteristics are currently being studied within the park. Other sensitive species of interest include the burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, and the red fox.

Proposal: Engage with partners to formalize collection of vegetation and wildlife data within the park. As more information becomes available, take strategic actions to enhance key habitat characteristics for sensitive species, including closure of habitat areas to the public. Continue to monitor changes in population characteristics over time. Implement best management practices to protect these species and their critical habitat.

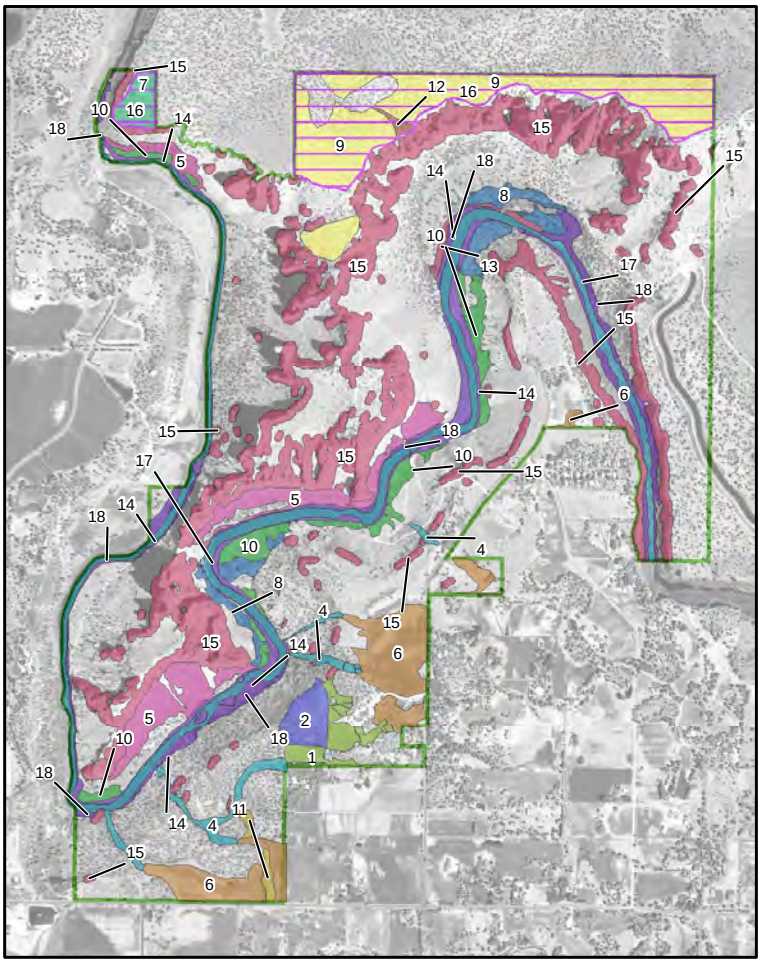


Figure 9: Natural Resource Management Map

Use of Irrigation and Water Rights

Objective: Maintain legal water rights for irrigation throughout the park, managed efficiently to meet management, aesthetic, and habitat needs.

Existing Conditions: The park has legal rights to use water for irrigation, which is supplied through the Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) canal system. The water has historically been used to flood-irrigate pastures on the south and central uplands, which has inadvertently created wetland habitat that would otherwise not be present in the park. The wetland habitat, while unnatural, supports a variety of wildlife considered beneficial to the park. There is also an irrigated lawn in the day use area, which is heavily used by park visitors. Availability of water has been limited in recent years, and the





park has opted to in-stream some of the water rights, which supports riparian habitat.

Proposal: Confirm legal thresholds of water use to maintain rights. Utilize water minimally in the park to enhance high-use areas with grass and shade trees, and to mitigate impacts of erosion. Explore using irrigation water to maintain beneficial wetland habitat for biodiversity and educational value.

RECREATION ISSUES

Visitor Capacity and Parking

Objective: The visitor capacity is monitored and appropriately managed to reduce adverse impacts to the park's natural and cultural resources, and to maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

Existing Conditions: Smith Rock has limited capacity to support both natural ecosystems and increasing recreational activities. At roughly 690-acres, the park encompasses the vast majority of the unique rock formations, and the official trail system provides access to explore almost every corner of the park. That said, unsanctioned trails, overwhelmed facilities, illegal parking, and human waste issues proliferate, which are together indicative of over-use.



Proposal: Strategically expand facilities, including trails and amenities, as needed to consolidate recreational use in areas that are most suitable for intensive development, and minimize recreational development in high-quality habitat areas. Reconfigure on-street parking to control access and improve safety, increasing capacity as appropriate. Reassess visitor capacity and crowding concerns, evaluating the impacts of development projects and management strategies over time, including the need for additional staff.

Provision and Maintenance of Amenities

Objective: The quality and quantity of park facilities are appropriate for optimal visitor experience.

Existing Conditions: Smith Rock has experienced a dramatic increase in visitation, especially in the last decade, transforming it from a relatively remote roadside wonder, to an iconic regional attraction.



Parking along Crooked River Drive on Memorial Day Weekend in 2016.

Development has been incremental, and remains fairly minimal. There are two plumbed restrooms, one for day use and one for overnight. They are frequently overwhelmed during the busy seasons, and even closed due to mechanical failures. There are also two primitive toilets and limited trash receptacles in the canyon, where human waste and litter issues have become more prominent. Tables, benches and formalized viewpoints are clustered throughout the park, mainly at the day use areas, where there is just one covered picnic shelter. The degradation of facilities due to age and overuse, and the relative lack of amenities has begun to negatively impact the visitor experience.



Proposal: Establish appropriate standards for amenities to streamline maintenance activities, including for restrooms, trash cans, tables, and benches. Prioritize replacement of obsolete amenities, and increase quantities as appropriate for visitor demands. Locate amenities in areas that are sate, highly used and easily accessible by visitors and staff.



Trail Standards and Circulation

Objective: The robust trail system facilitates a diversity of quality experiences for visitors of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

Existing Conditions: Trails at Smith Rock were largely created through formalization of climbing and social routes throughout the park. As a result, extended lengths are steeper and narrower than design guidelines recommend, and many trails are now subject to erosion. Few trails in the park meet accessibility standards, and most hiking options include a very steep descent into the river canyon. With only one river crossing, hikers are inclined to traverse longer distances over difficult terrain in order to create loops, which has contributed to increasing emergency response needs. With limited pedestrian connectivity between parking areas and trailheads, people walk significant distances along the road, causing congestion and safety concerns. Wayfinding is provided at official trailheads and junctions, but there remain many unsanctioned social trails that contribute to confusion, erosion, and habitat loss. There is a need to provide a more easily accessible experience of the park's resources.

Proposal: As appropriate, incorporate universal design principles and trail classification standards into development plans, and prioritize developing a barrier-free accessible path along the rim to connect parking areas. Upgrade trail infrastructure to accommodate heavier use, including emergency vehicles. Provide multiple river crossing locations to reduce congestion near the Chute, and diversify trail type and loop options throughout the park.



Access for Dogs, Horses and Bicycles

Objective: These intensive uses are monitored and managed to balance diverse recreation needs and limit adverse impacts to sensitive habitat areas, trails, and other visitors' experiences.

Existing Conditions: Horse use in the park has declined in recent years, while dogs have become more frequent visitors. These four-footed friends can cause significant damage by widening pathways, cutting switchbacks, trampling vegetation, and disturbing wildlife, especially in the riparian areas. Mountain bike use has also significantly increased in the park, and trails were not designed for this intensive use. The park's steep terrain poses safety risks, especially where

trails are narrow and crowded. Horses are restricted from using the footbridge, Summit Trail, and parts of the River and Wolf Tree Trails, while bikes are only restricted from Misery Ridge Trail. Dogs are allowed throughout the park, but many dog owners do not abide by the leash or waste pickup policies, and dogs are at risk of becoming overheated on hot summer days.



Proposal: Consider the various impacts of dogs, horses, and bicycles within the park, and engage user groups to implement appropriate restrictions and enforcement strategies. In particular, limit these intensive uses on steep, narrow trails and in congested areas. Establish appropriate design and etiquette standards where they may be allowed.

Standards for Climbing

Objective: Provide clear and accessible climbing guidelines and expectations that maximize safety, inclusion, and other best practices.

Existing Conditions: Smith Rock is a world-class climbing destination that thousands of people come each season to explore. As with many public outdoor climbing areas across the country, managers rely on user groups to self-police on appropriate equipment and etiquette, as park staff do not necessarily have climbing expertise nor the capacity to regulate this popular recreation activity. Installation of new routes must be approved by the Park Manager, but there is otherwise very little oversight of climbing activities at Smith Rock. With increasing use, there is a more pressing need to communicate expectations and proactively resolve conflicts.



Proposal: Collaborate with user groups and other agencies on a Climbing Management Plan that details appropriate standards for climbing in the park. Procedures should be outlined for creating new routes, leaving various marks and equipment, assumption of risk, and commercial use of specific areas in the park. A Climbing Ranger position is recommended to help educate the public and enforce climbing standards in the park.

Use of Drones and Low-Flying Aircraft

Objective: Limit drones and low-flying aircraft at Smith Rock State Park to minimize impacts to wildlife and visitor experience.

Existing Conditions: Take-off and landing of drones at Smith Rock



is currently prohibited during the raptor nesting seasons. Drones have been used more frequently in the park by both amateurs and professionals in recent years, which has increased potential for conflict with other park users, particularly rock climbers, who could easily be startled or injured while in a precarious position. In some instances, park users have been nearly hit by drones, and falcons and eagles have been known to attack drones flying near nests.

Proposal: Work through official channels to develop appropriate regulations for drone and other aircraft use in the park, whether as part of a statewide effort, or specific to Smith Rock. Evaluate potentially legitimate uses of these instruments in and around the park, and how to best accommodate these activities.

Interpretive Infrastructure and Programming

Objective: The Park's unique ecology and history are communicated to the public in creative and collaborative ways, promoting public stewardship and outdoor recreation etiquette.



Existing Conditions: A yurt located near the Chute trailhead serves as the Welcome Center for the park, which provides information about the geology, vegetation, wildlife, and recreation opportunities, including the history of climbing at Smith Rock. The Park Host currently staffs the center year-round, and volunteers provide a limited number of seasonal education programs. There are also a handful of interpretive signs throughout the park. An Interpretive Plan is currently in development, which includes a new Welcome Center proposal with expanded space for exhibits and group activities.



Proposal: The Interpretive Plan should explore ways to convey educational information about the park, while minimizing visual clutter on the landscape. Continue to collaborate with local schools, tribes, and user groups on content and delivery, with an emphasis on inclusivity. An Interpretive Ranger position is recommended to supplement ongoing volunteer-led programs and provide education to the public about Leave no Trace ethics.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Protection of Cultural Resources

Objective: Cultural resources within the park are preserved according to OPRD policy and State and Federal regulations.

Existing Conditions: Previous surveys and consultation have identified multiple significant cultural resources at Smith Rock State Park. Cultural resources can include Traditional Cultural Properties, Historic Properties of Religious and Cultural Significance to Indian Tribes, as well as other historic sites and cultural artifacts. Known and unknown cultural resources are susceptible to a variety of impacts that can threaten or damage their integrity, possibly altering eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Impacts can occur from natural processes, including erosion, or from human activities, including for recreation.

Proposal: Conduct surveys to locate cultural resources throughout the park, particularly in areas proposed for public access and development. Evaluate identified resources in accordance with the eligibility criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office and affected Oregon Tribes on all activities or projects that could affect cultural resources within the park. Take appropriate measures to prevent adverse impacts to known cultural resources, and consider interpretive opportunities that would educate visitors about significant park history.







ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

Staffing

Objective: The park has adequate staff to maintain facilities, facilitate programs, and respond to daily public needs and inquiries.

Existing Conditions: Current staffing at the park consists of one Park Manager, two permanent Rangers, one seasonal Ranger, three seasonal Ranger Assistants, and a part-time Park Specialist. Visitor numbers exceed the park capacity at many points throughout the year, requiring staff to operate in "triage mode," prioritizing immediate safety issues and delaying general maintenance and improvement projects. The park relies on volunteers, including the Park Host, to assist with daily facility upkeep and provide key interpretive programs.

Proposal: Given Smith Rock's increased popularity, the park would benefit from a full-time Park Specialist and two additional Rangers, including an Interpretive and/or Climbing Ranger, which would significantly improve the visitor services capacity. As new facilities are developed, seasonal staffing needs should be reevaluated.



Administration and Maintenance Facilities

Objective: The park administration and maintenance facilities are kept in good condition, supporting optimal park operations and staff safety.

Existing Conditions: The two park administration buildings were constructed in the 1960s, and are in need of major upgrades. Specifically, the buildings have inefficient heating and cooling systems and a lack of security features to adequately protect property and staff. The buildings do not meet current accessibility standards, and would be difficult to bring into compliance. The maintenance buildings are generally newer, but should be evaluated for their efficacy in supporting increased demands for park maintenance activities.

Proposal: Complete building inspections at regular intervals and take immediate action on any health and safety issues identified. Evaluate budget needs for potential building upgrades, including potential for facility replacement.

Emergency Operations

Objective: The park's procedures for emergency response are documented and actionable by staff, with involvement from other relevant service providers.

Existing Conditions: Park staff regularly respond to emergencies in the park, most often visitors needing medical attention due to injuries or exhaustion. There are also natural hazards that staff must be prepared for, including fires and storms, and altercations that could impact visitor use and safety of the park. These instances usually involve other emergency response personnel from the County, Fire District, Hospital, or other partner organizations. Staff are generally adept in assessing emergencies, but there is no documented protocol for responding in various situations. Access into the park by emergency vehicles is limited in the canyon area, necessitating rescues on foot or by helicopter, in some instances.



Deschutes County Search and Rescue operation at Smith Rock.



Proposal: Develop a readily available contact list of partner service providers, and collaborate on an Emergency Operations Plan that can be implemented by all parties. Improve all-terrain vehicle access throughout the park as feasible.

User Fees and Reservations

Objective: Utilize an online system to coordinate scheduling of group reservations and special uses, with fees charged in accordance with administrative needs and consider implementing a reservation system for some facilities, including parking, to accommodate long-distance travelers.

Existing Conditions: Consistent with many state parks, a day use fee of $5 is charged for public parking., which is often at capacity during the busy seasons. The primitive Bivouac campground costs $8 nightly per person, and essentially allows for two days of parking. Fees charged for special use permits are a flat rate plus extra for additional people. All facilities are first-come, first-serve unless a special use permit has been issued, which can include parking and specific use areas. The Bivouac at times becomes "overbooked" when paid campers leave in their cars and lose their parking space to another camper. There is also some difficulty with large groups, including commercial operations, unexpectedly occupying the campground, day use areas, climbing routes, and other facilities for extended periods, severely reducing availability to other users.

Proposal: Retain first-come-first-serve parking and camping options, but consider implementing a reservation system for some facilities throughout the park to accommodate long-distance travelers and large groups. Develop an online reservation and permitting system to streamline communications between visitors and park staff, particularly in the case of large group events and commercial activities. Evaluate fees and management at the Bivouac campground, and add designated group camp areas.



Partnerships

Objective: Park managers work collaboratively with the tribes, community organizations and adjacent land managers in planning and implementation of interpretation, development, trail improvement, and habitat restoration projects.

Existing Conditions: Given the limited capacity of park staff, managers have always welcomed opportunities to partner with community members on important projects. The park has a strong relationship with the Smith Rock Group and High Desert Climbers Alliance, whose members regularly volunteer to maintain and improve hiking and climbing trails. Staff also work with agencies including ODFW, USFWS, USFS and BLM on land management projects to preserve wildlife habitat and provide recreation services. Establishing a Friends Group has been of interest to enhance the park's ability to provide needed facilities and services.

Proposal: Continue to collaborate with partners on projects within the park, including planning efforts for climbing management, interpretation, and emergency operations. Engage with USFS and BLM on regional recreation planning efforts, particularly in the Crooked River Grasslands and on public lands adjacent to the park. Explore establishing a Friends Group.



4 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS



Photo by Marcia Volk





DESIGN INTENT

The Smith Rock State Park Master Plan provides a 20-year vision, with development proposals aimed at improving the visitor experience and alleviating managerial challenges. The plan seeks to provide more opportunities for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to enjoy the park, without spoiling the natural, minimally-developed quality that existing users highly value. These proposals can be implemented over time to accommodate present and future use, while preserving and enhancing the park's unique natural and cultural resources. Development concepts are proposed in five main focus areas of the park, and address key issues including crowding, circulation, interpretation and wayfinding, parking, and site utilities.

Crowding

Since the last Master Plan was adopted in 1991, annual park visitation has tripled from just over 300,000 people to over a million visitors in 2021. This dramatic increase has resulted in the park operating at full capacity much of the year, as evidenced by congestion and landscape degradation in key areas, particularly at the Chute, the footbridge, and the Bivouac Campground.

This plan addresses crowding issues by shifting the intensive-use areas away from Crooked River Drive, diversifying trail options, and planning for increased capacity in each focus area. The plan proposes a new Welcome Center, additional restrooms, accessible trails, group picnic areas, and reconfigured parking, with improved wayfinding to help orient visitors to appropriate areas of the park.

Circulation

As indicated by the visitor survey, hiking and walking are the most popular activities for park visitors. However, trails leading into and out of the canyon are all very steep, limiting participation and increasing the risk of illness or injury for many park users. With only one bridge facilitating access to the north side of the canyon, looping trail options are limited, and there is frequent congestion at the footbridge.

This plan addresses trail circulation challenges by proposing an accessible trail system along the rim and into the canyon, which will connect the new Welcome Center and North Point. Two new bridges are also proposed to reduce congestion along the river corridor

and provide more trail looping options in the canyon. Prioritizing development of sustainable, accessible trails will ideally reduce injuries and improve emergency access in the park.



Photo by Marcia Volk

Interpretation and Wayfinding

The current placement of park entry monuments and trail signage creates orientation challenges for many park visitors. Along with improved site design at the focus areas, there is a need to incorporate consistent and effective wayfinding monuments, trail maps, route signage, and interpretive infrastructure parkwide. The focus areas are designed to relocate trailheads and day-use activity centers farther from parking areas to safer, more appropriate locations. Heavy use is consolidated around the new Welcome Center, providing opportunities for creative wayfinding and interpretive installations.



Parking

Limited parking availability and the lack of pedestrian connectivity between day-use parking areas are significant challenges for both visitors and park managers. On busy weekends, visitors often circle parking areas multiple times and even wait in the roadway for parking spaces to become available. Once parked, people are forced to walk along the road adjacent to parked cars to access desired amenities, which causes congestion and safety issues.

In order to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, this plan proposes removing all roadside parking and consolidating off-street parking within the focus areas, prioritizing the new Welcome Center area. The maximum quantity of parking proposed is aligned with the visitor capacity of the park and provides for controlled access and future expansion areas as needed. These strategies ultimately aim to create a safer environment within the park and along Crooked River Drive, for neighbors and visitors alike.



Utilities

Due to the aging condition of most facilities at Smith Rock State Park, there is a need to assess and upgrade the utility systems serving each focus area. The potable water supply is sourced from a single well on the west side of Crooked River Drive, which has capacity for 15,000 gallons per day. There are separate septic drain fields for each permanent restroom and the administration buildings in the park.

This plan proposes to add new restrooms at North Point, the Overflow Parking area, Welcome Center, and Bivouac Campground, where showers will also be included. Existing restrooms and utilities will remain at the Chute parking area and Bivouac Campground. Electrical improvements near parking lots should be sized to accommodate future electric vehicle charging capacity and other green energy technologies.

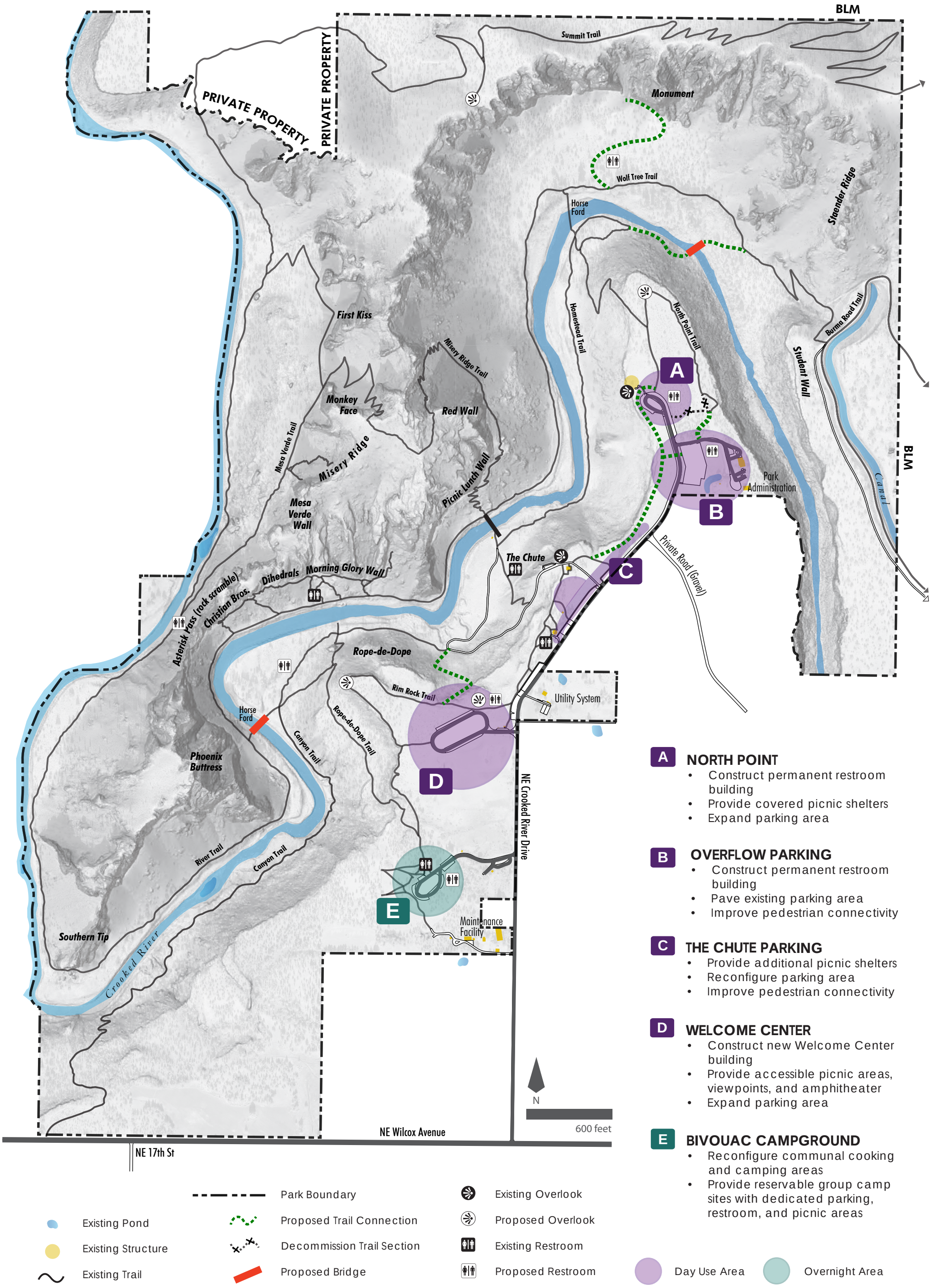
DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

Park master plans are intended, among other things, to identify key facility improvements and guide future uses of parkland. Figure 11 is the Development Concepts Overview Map for the park and lists proposed improvements for each detailed focus area.

The concepts were developed through an iterative planning process that incorporated input from many sources, as described in previous chapters of this plan. The focus areas address some of the most highly used areas of the park, including: A. North Point, B. Overflow Parking, C. The Chute Parking, D. Welcome Center, E. Bivouac Campground, and the Trail System.

PARKING AREA	EXISTING QUANTITY	PROPOSED QUANTITY
North Point	35	85
Overflow Parking	125	100
NE Crooked River Dr. (Parallel)	60	0
NE Crooked River Dr. (Head-in North)	60	0
NE Crooked River Dr. (Head-in South)	50	0
The Chute Parking	0	100
Welcome Center	92	215
TOTAL DAY-DAY USE PARKING SPACES	**422**	**500**
Bivouac Campground	50	60
TOTAL PARKING SPACES	**472**	**560**

Figure 10: Parking Table



A NORTH POINT
- Construct permanent restroom building
- Provide covered picnic shelters
- Expand parking area

B OVERFLOW PARKING
- Construct permanent restroom building
- Pave existing parking area
- Improve pedestrian connectivity

C THE CHUTE PARKING
- Provide additional picnic shelters
- Reconfigure parking area
- Improve pedestrian connectivity

D WELCOME CENTER
- Construct new Welcome Center building
- Provide accessible picnic areas, viewpoints, and amphitheater
- Expand parking area

E BIVOUAC CAMPGROUND
- Reconfigure communal cooking and camping areas
- Provide reservable group camp sites with dedicated parking, restroom, and picnic areas

Figure 11: Development Concepts Overview Map

A. North Point

North Point is located at the terminus of Crooked River Drive and offers a panoramic view of the unique rock formations overlooking the river. This area features a parking lot, fee station, seasonal portable toilets, a small amphitheater, short walking loop along the rim, and access to the canyon via the Homestead Trail.

The plan proposes to remove the existing head-in parking and develop a new off-street parking lot within the park property. Proposed day-use amenities include a permanent restroom, picnic shelters, improved wayfinding, accessibility improvements to the amphitheater, and interpretive signage. To contain the development areas and minimize associated impacts to the natural habitat, fencing and landscape restoration are also recommended.



1. Amphitheater
2. Trailhead
3. North Point Parking (35)
4. Pay Station
5. NE Crooked River Dr.

Figure 12: North Point Existing Conditions



Development Recommendations

- **A1** Improve trailhead and trail connections throughout focus area
- **A2** Provide additional picnic shelters, including covered group areas
- **A3** Construct a permanent restroom building
- **A4** Improve ADA access at existing amphitheater
- **A5** Construct off-street asphalt parking lot with approximately 85 spaces (77 standard, 6 ADA, and 2 RV)
- **A6** Restore habitat within parking lot islands, along the roadway, and at decommissioned trails
- **A7** Improve wayfinding signage at new trailhead location, including interpretive kiosk

Rimrock
Existing Trail
Decommission Trail
Proposed Trail Connection
Existing Amphitheater
Proposed Picnic Shelters and Restroom
Landscape Area

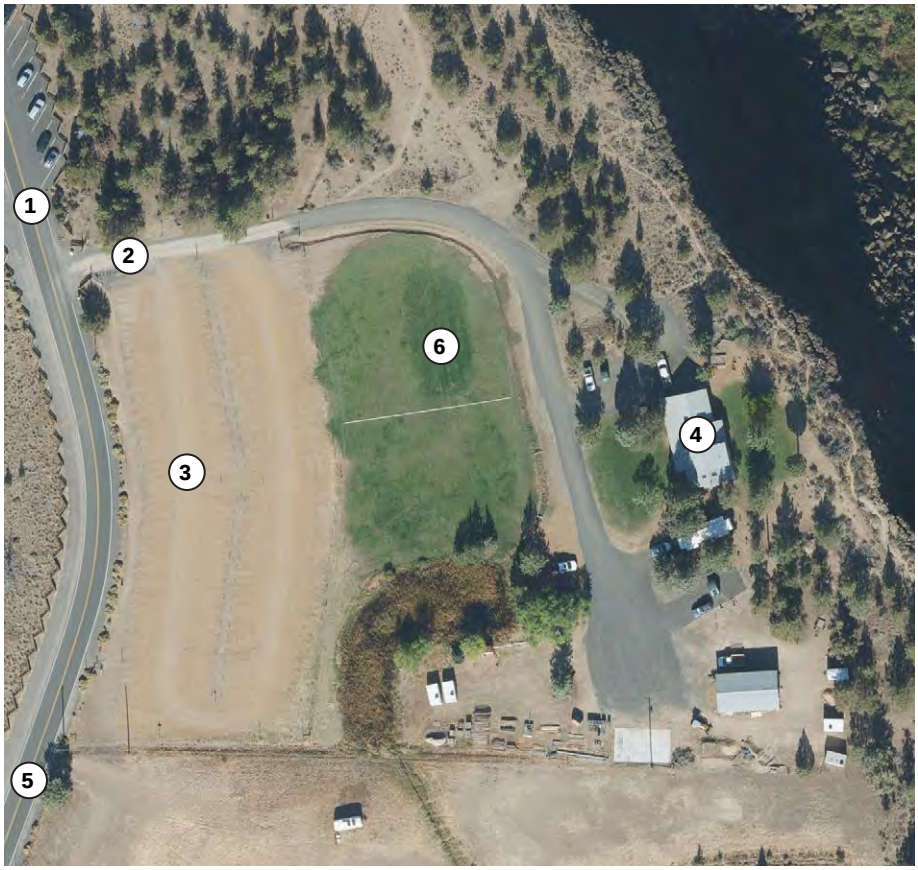
- **Cost estimate: $2 million**
- See Ch-5 for permitting requirements

Figure 13: North Point Focus Area

B. Overflow Parking

The Overflow Parking area is an existing gravel lot about 200 feet south of North Point, with space for approximately 126 cars. This area is closed seasonally to reduce erosion and wear on the gravel surface. Given the high level of park use throughout the year, it would be beneficial to formalize this parking area with improved drainage and asphalt surfacing.

The plan proposes to improve the overflow lot in its existing footprint, maintaining the single vehicular access point off Crooked River Drive. Pedestrian connectivity and accessibility will be improved across the road and along the Rimrock Trail toward both the Welcome Center and North Point. A permanent restroom and registration kiosk with wayfinding and interpretive elements will be provided, with controlled gate access implemented if needed. A vegetated berm is also recommended to provide a visual separation between the parking area and neighboring residents to the south.



1. To North Point
2. Access Road
3. Gravel Parking (125)
4. Park Administration
5. To Chute Parking
6. Drainfield

Figure 14: Overflow Parking Existing Conditions



Development Recommendations

- **B1** Pave existing gravel lot with approximately 100 spaces (92 standard, 6 ADA, and 2 RV)
- **B2** Provide pedestrian connectivity across Crooked River Drive to the Rimrock Trail
- **B3** Upgrade Park Administration building
- **B4** Construct a permanent restroom building
- **B5** Provide connection to North Point Trail
- **B6** Restore habitat within parking lot islands, along the roadway, and in areas disturbed by construction
- **B7** Include wayfinding and interpretive signage

Rimrock
Park Boundary
Proposed Trail Connection
Existing Structure
Proposed Restroom
Landscape Area
Existing Pond

- **Cost estimate: $800,000**
- See Ch-5 for permitting requirements

Figure 15: Overflow Parking Focus Area

C. The Chute Parking

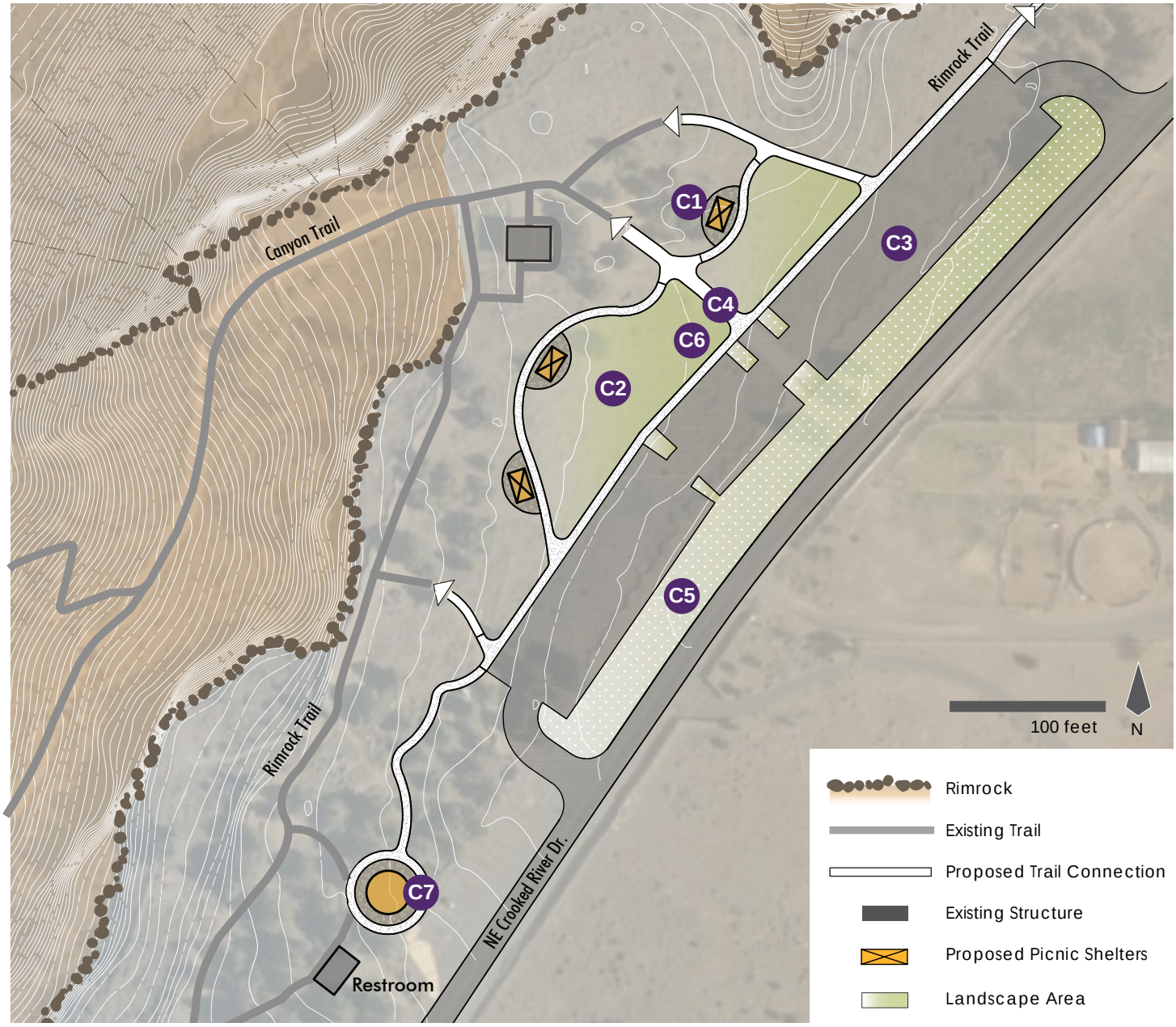
The Chute is the busiest area of the park, providing the most direct access to the footbridge and the hiking and climbing routes on the north side of the canyon. This area has a number of popular day-use facilities, including the existing Welcome Center yurt and the irrigated lawn area nearby. Highly-used picnic tables are scattered throughout this vicinity, but there is only one shelter, and limited space for large groups to reliably convene. The Chute also provides the only emergency vehicle access down into the canyon within the park. Head-in and parallel parking are located along Crooked River Drive for about a half-mile, causing congestion and safety issues.

This plan proposes to eliminate all of the on-street, parallel and head-in parking, instead providing an access-controlled parking lot parallel to Crooked River Drive. The new parking area will have separate entry and exit points, and include a buffered landscape strip along the road. The plan also proposes additional picnic shelters and expansion of the irrigated lawn area to support group activities. The Welcome Center is proposed to be relocated farther from the road and accessed by an expanded existing parking area just south of the Chute (See D. Welcome Center).

1. Canyon Trail
2. Overlook
3. Picnic Shelter
4. Trailhead
5. Parallel Parking (60)
6. Head-In South Parking (50)
7. Play Structure
8. Picnic Area
9. Restroom
10. Welcome Center Yurt
11. Pay Station
12. Head-In North Parking (60)
13. NE Crooked River Dr.



Figure 16: The Chute Existing Conditions



Development Recommendations

C1 Provide accessible picnic tables, including group picnic shelters

C2 Expand landscape area for flexible uses

C3 Replace head-in parking with paved, off-street lot with approximately 100 spaces (95 standard, 5 ADA)

C4 Improve trailhead and trail connections throughout focus area

C5 Restore habitat within parking lot islands, along the roadway, and in areas disturbed by construction

C6 Improve wayfinding signage and interpretive elements, including community board

C7 Replace the existing Welcome Center Yurt with an open pavilion

- **Cost estimate: $1.5 million**
- See Ch-5 for permitting requirements

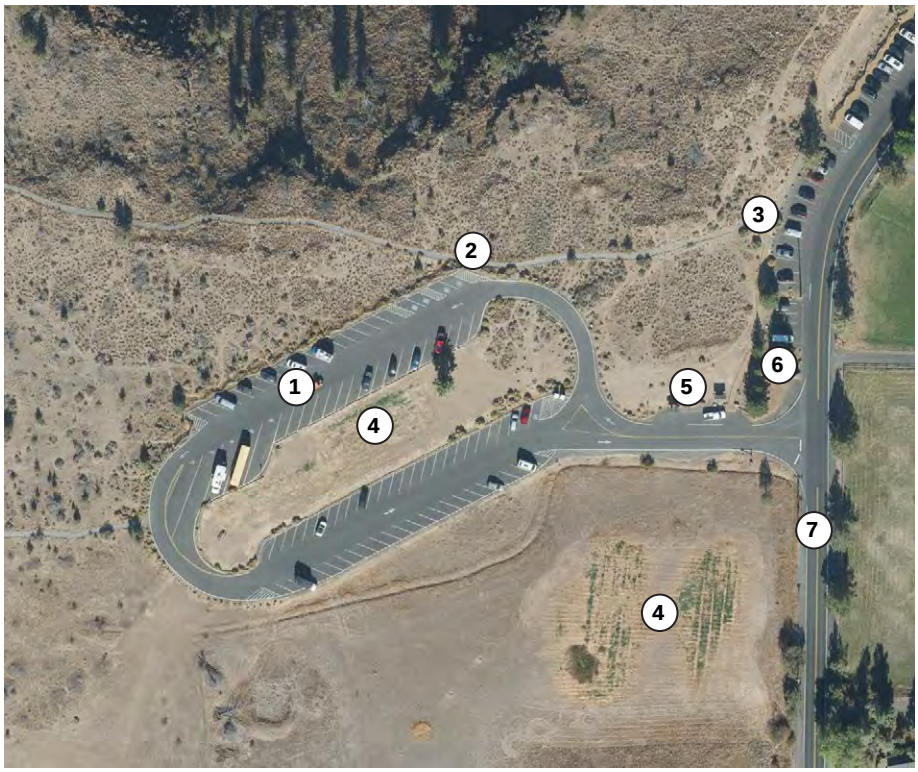
Figure 17: The Chute Focus Area

D. Welcome Center

The new Welcome Center area is designed to be the primary location where visitors arrive and get introduced to the park's resources. The Welcome Center building, which will replace the yurt currently located at the Chute, will include a small gift shop, interpretive exhibits, office and meeting rooms, and restroom facilities. There will also be a covered courtyard, with pathways leading to accessible viewpoints and group gathering areas, including a small amphitheater. The building style will maximize views and minimize impacts to the landscape, using durable materials in natural colors.

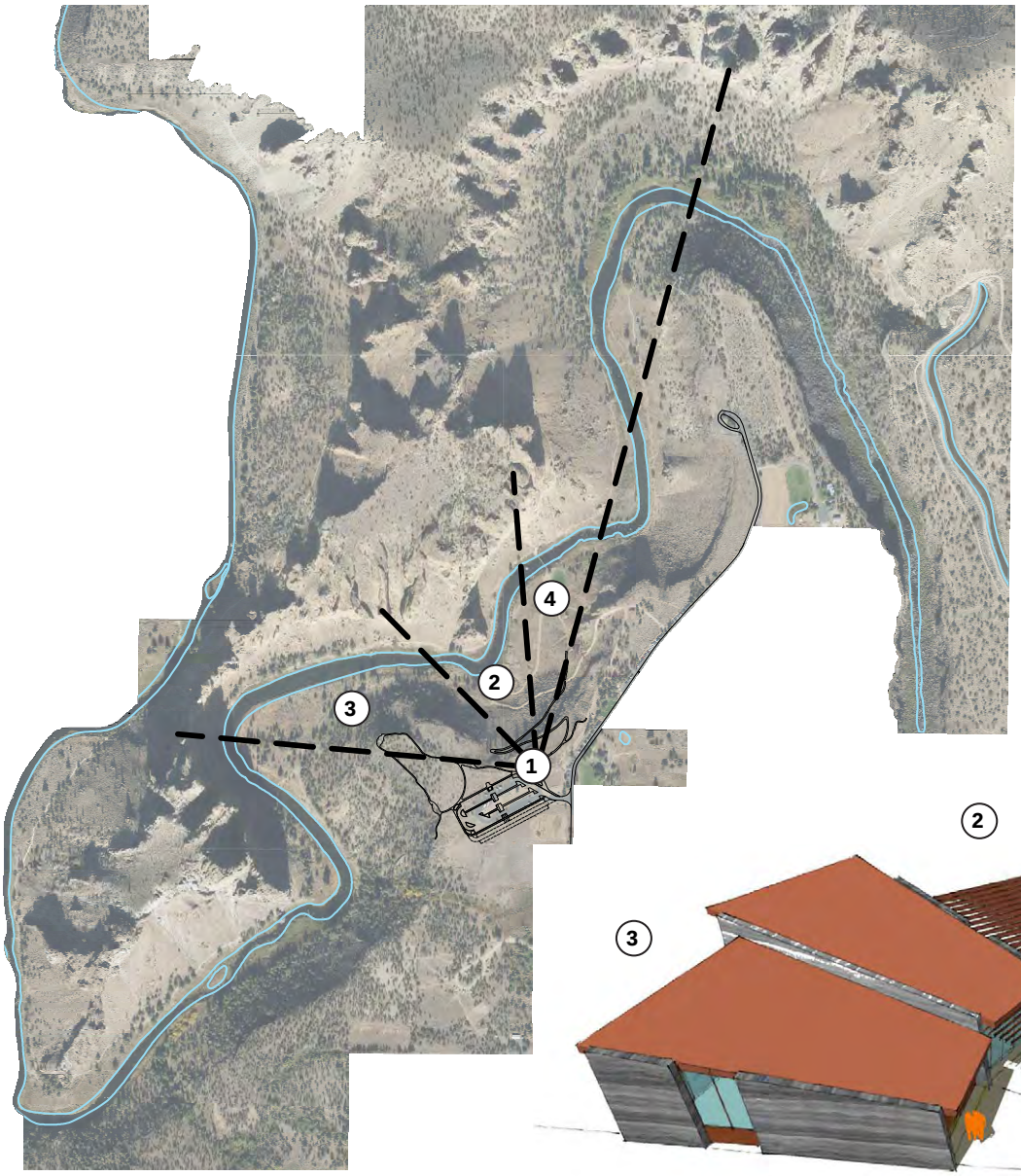
Improved trails are also proposed along the rim and into the canyon from the Welcome Center, with the intent of providing a quick, engaging, and accessible experience of the park. A comprehensive wayfinding and interpretive plan will be implemented at this location to provide a high level of service to visitors.

The existing 92-space parking area in this location is proposed to be reconfigured and expanded to accommodate larger vehicles and buses, with room for bus drop-off and possible future shuttle service.



1. Parking (92)
2. Trailhead
3. Head-In South Parking (50)
4. Drainfield
5. Pay Station
6. Entrance Sign
7. NE Crooked River Dr.

Figure 18: Welcome Center Existing Conditions



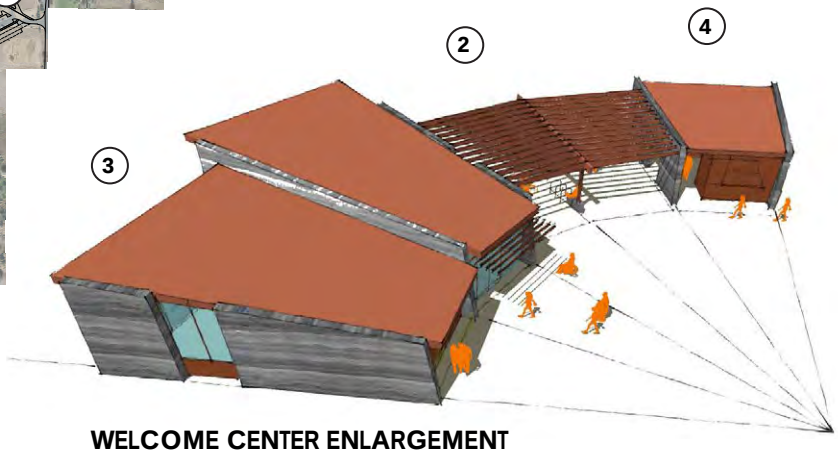
CONTEXT

1 Welcome Center

2 Primary courtyard and interior view: NW to Morning Glory Wall

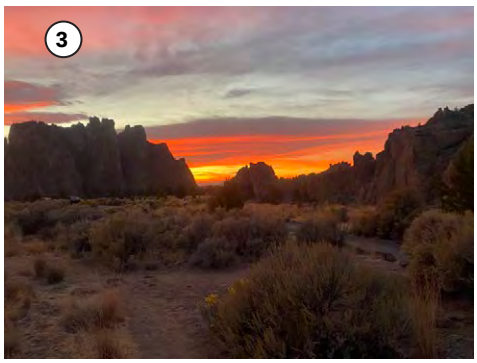
3 Secondary courtyard view: West to Astrix Pass and Phoenix Butress

4 Secondary interior view: North to Burma Road



WELCOME CENTER ENLARGEMENT





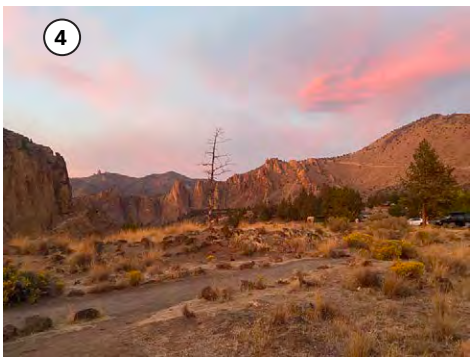


Figure 19: Welcome Center Viewshed

Development Recommendations

- D1 Expand and reconfigure existing parking lot to accommodate approximately 215 spaces (200 standard, 8 ADA, 7 RV)
- D2 Construct a new 2,500 square foot Welcome Center and restrooms
- D3 Improve the Rimrock Trail with accessible seating, viewpoints and interpretive elements
- D4 Improve trailhead and accessible trail circulation throughout the focus area
- D5 Develop comprehensive wayfinding and interpretive plan for this high-use area
- D6 Construct a new accessible amphitheater
- D7 Upgrade utilities, including potable water, electric service, and sanitary drainfield
- D8 Restore habitat within parking lot islands, along the roadway, and in areas disturbed by construction



Figure 20: Welcome Center Perspective

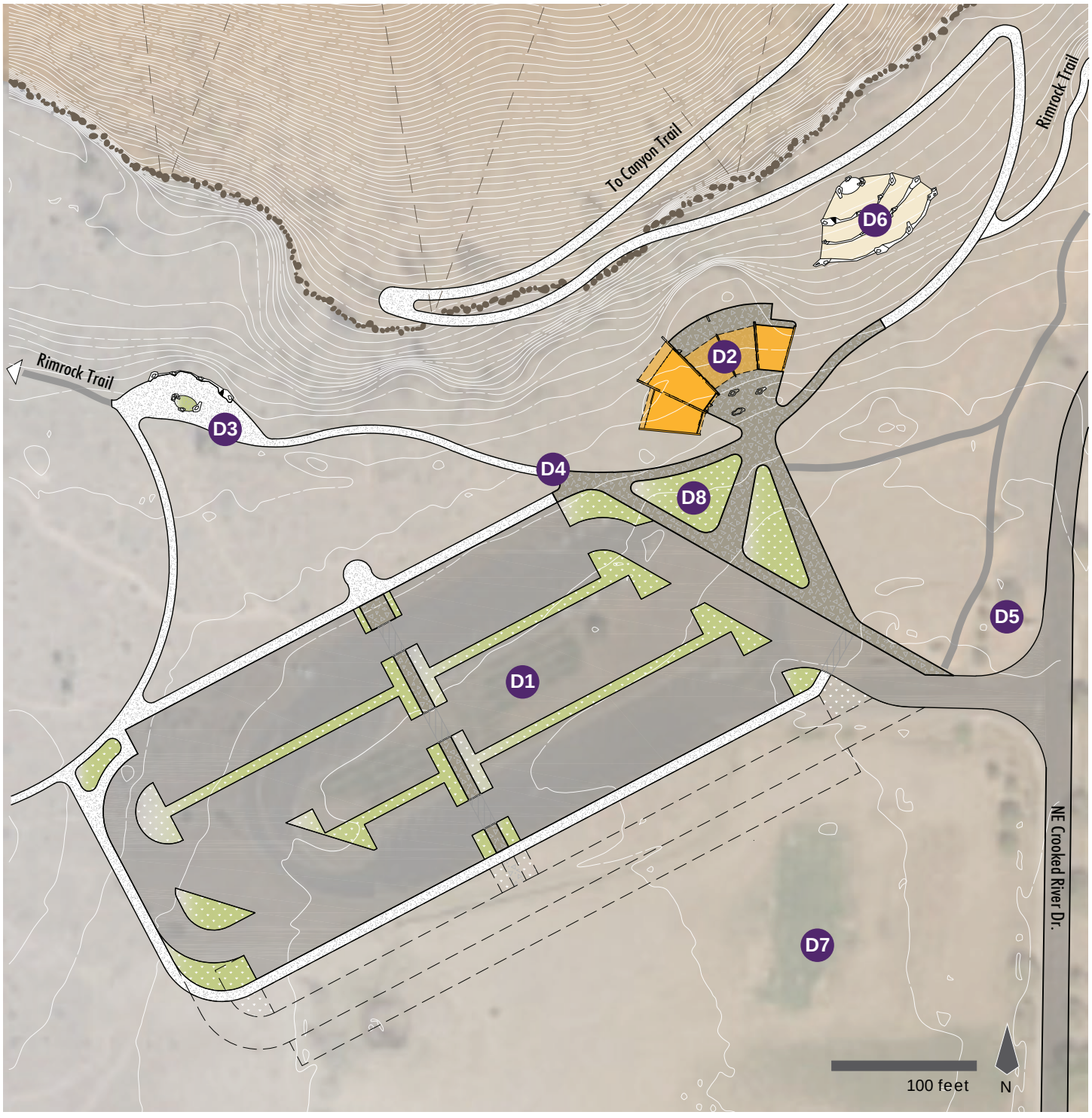


Figure 21: Welcome Center Focus Area

E. Bivouac Campground

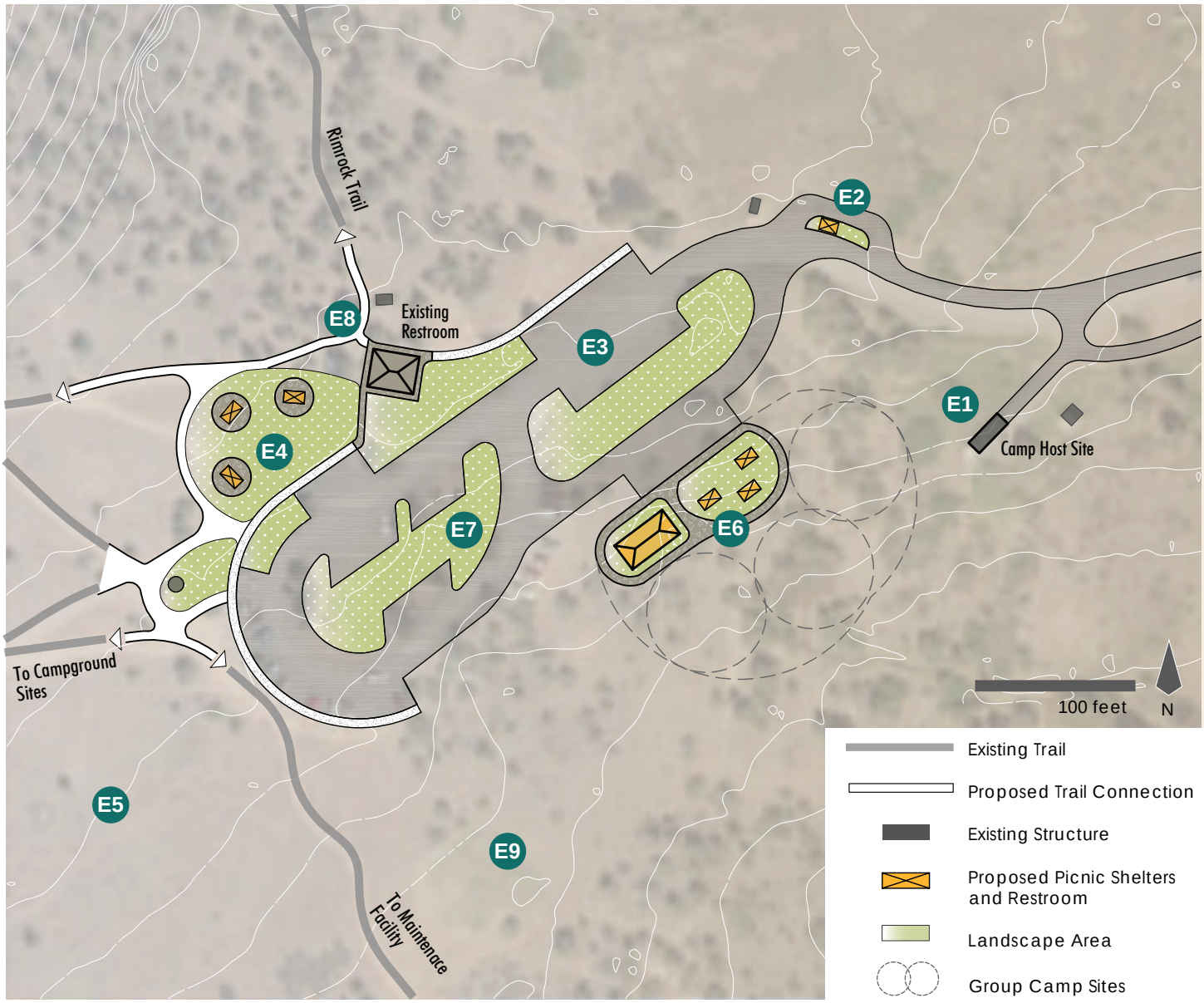
The Bivouac Campground, commonly referred to as the "Bivy," is the only overnight-use area in the park, with exclusively first-come first-served, walk-in camping. The Bivy is located off Crooked River Drive south of the day use areas, tucked into the juniper woodland at the end of a long driveway. There is currently a dedicated Camp Host site to support the 50-space parking area, with associated fee station, trailhead, restroom and shower facility, and communal cooking area.

The plan proposes to add three group camp areas that would ideally be available for advance reservations. The group camp area includes dedicated parking spaces, a new restroom and shower facility, and additional picnic shelters. Other improvements include minor adjustments to the general parking layout, expanded camping and cooking locations, and a new registration kiosk with improved wayfinding and interpretive signage.



1. Existing camping
2. Shower & Restroom
3. Cooking Area
4. Parking (50)
5. Pay Station
6. Camp Host Site

Figure 22: Bivouac Campground Existing Conditions



Development Recommendations

- **E1** Maintain the existing host access road and site.
- **E2** Provide a new kiosk for camp reservations, check-in, and camping policies
- **E3** Reconfigure parking to accommodate 60 spaces (55 standard, 5 ADA)
- **E4** Relocate cooking area outside of the parking lot and include shade structures.
- **E5** Consolidate walk-in camp sites away from rimrock
- **E6** Construct three new group camp areas with dedicated cooking shelters, restroom and shower building, and parking for approximately 8 vehicles (6 standard, 2 ADA)
- **E7** Restore habitat within parking lot islands, along the roadway, and in areas disturbed by construction
- **E8** Improve trailhead with wayfinding and interpretive signage
- **E9** Upgrade utilities for the new restroom and shower building

  - **Cost estimate: $2.8 million**
  - See Ch-5 for permitting requirements

Figure 23: Bivouac Campground Focus Area

TRAIL SYSTEM

As described in the 2017 Trail Assessment Report, the existing trail system has many sustainability issues resulting from poor design and increasing usage. With the lack of accessible hiking options, looping trail networks, and emergency vehicle access, there is a need to improve trail standards and circulation parkwide and implement a wayfinding and signage plan to improve the visitor experience and safety.

Figure 25 outlines the proposed standards for various trails throughout the park, to be implemented over time as opportunities arise. This plan proposes a number of trail improvement projects within each focus area and beyond:

- **T1** Extend the Rimrock Trail from the Chute to North Point to improve circulation and provide easier hiking opportunities along the rim
- **T2** Improve accessibility along the Rimrock trail from the Chute to the Bivouac Campground with viewpoints, seating, and interpretation
- **T3** Develop a barrier-free trail from the new Welcome Center into the canyon, improving access for hikers, park management, and emergency vehicles
- **T4** Construct additional bridges across the Crooked River at North Point and Phoenix Buttress to provide more loop options
- **T5** Improve River Trail for maintenance and emergency access
- **T6** Formalize trail access from Wolf Tree Trail to the Monument Wall climbing area (Subject to further monitoring of Golden Eagle nesting activity in the area)
- **T7** Improve Misery Ridge and Mesa Verde Trails to remove obstacles, reduce slopes, and upgrade structures where feasible
- **T8** Manage lower section of Canyon Trail to prioritize wildlife habitat considerations
- **T9** Connect North Point Trail to the Overflow Parking and decommission the existing connection

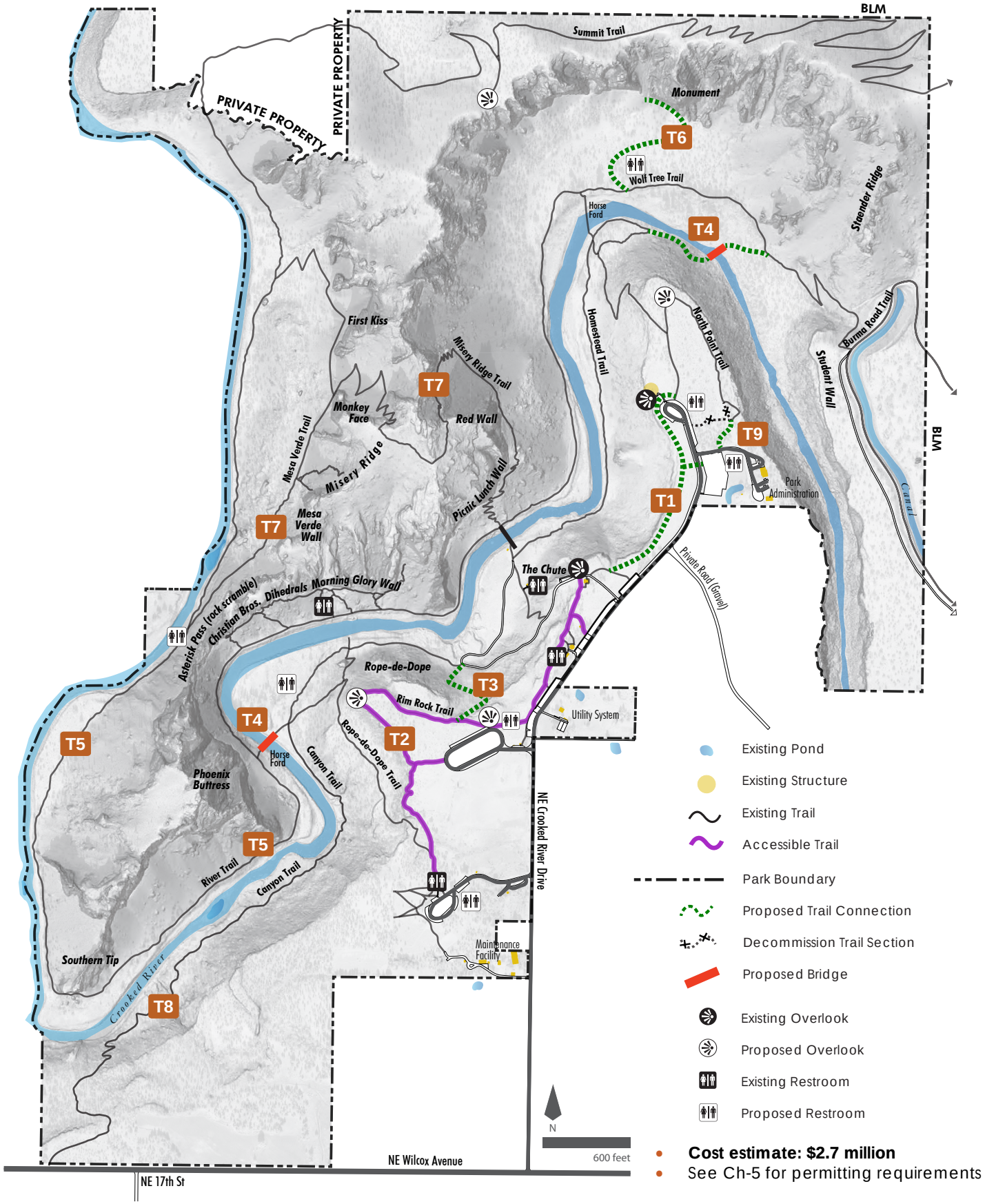


Figure 24: Trail System Project Map

Difficulty Level	Easiest 	Easy 	Moderate 	Difficult 	Very Difficult 
Proposed Trails	Rimrock Trail	Canyon, River, Wolf Tree Trails	Homestead, Mesa Verde, Summit, Rope-de-Dope Trails	The Chute	Misery Ridge
Tread width	60-96"	60-72"	36-60"	24-36"	12 - 36"
Shoulder Width	12" per side	12" per side	12" per side	6" per side	6 - 12" per side
Tread Materials	Paved, amended/ compacted crushed stone surface (<1/2")	Paved, amended/ compacted natural surface	Natural surface with amendments as necessary	Natural surface (native soils) with rock and some loose material possible	Native soil with significant rock, loose material common
Average Grade	2 to 5%	<5%	<7%	<10%	15% or greater
Maximum Grade	up to 8%	up to 10% for 30 feet	up to 12% for 10 feet	up to 20% for short distances	25% common for long distances
Cross Slope	1 to 2%	1 to 2%	3 to 4%	3 to 7%	3 to 7%
Tread Roughness	Low, generally smooth and even. No protrusions	Moderate, some rock or root protrusions <1/2" above trail tread	Moderate, some rock or root protrusions <2" above trail tread	Moderate, some rock and root protrusions <6" above trail tread	High, regular protrusions up to 12"
Notes	Maximum grade is only allowable with ramps and handrails. Related Standard: ADA	Width should comply with OPRD Accessibility Standards. Related Standard: ABA Outdoor Recreation Access Routes	Width should comply with OPRD Accessibility Standards or provide passing zones and landings intermittently as needed. Related Standard: ABA Trails	Cross slope increases proportionate to longitudinal slope. May include steps. Related Standard: USFS Hiker Trail 2	Cross slope increases proportionate to longitudinal slope. May include steps. Related Standard: USFS Hiker Trail 1

Figure 25: Trail Design Standards

5 PERMIT REVIEW

MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Each project proposed in the Smith Rock Master Plan may trigger a variety of permit review types, including for local, state, and federal regulations. The development concepts are preliminary, and will need significant further study and final design in order to be built. The permitting process helps each concept take shape in a manner that is legal and acceptable by all applicable standards, often providing opportunities for public input. In the case of Smith Rock, the applicable jurisdictions are Deschutes County, and various State and Federal Agencies.

LAND USE AUTHORITY

Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) describe the master planning criteria that OPRD must follow in amending existing state park master plans under OAR 736 Division 18. A key thread through the criteria is agency coordination, including requirements for consultation with numerous state and federal agencies, and with local governments (OAR 736-018-0028). Development of the park facilities described in the plan is regulated under the provisions of the Deschutes County Comprehensive Plan.

DESCHUTES COUNTY

Zoning

Title 18 of the Deschutes County Code (DCC) details zoning regulations that apply to Smith Rock State Park. The park is generally designated Open Space and Conservation (OS&C) with small areas of Multi-Use Agriculture (MUA) and Exclusive Farm Use -Terrebonne Subzone (EFU-TE) located along the southern boundary. The park also includes areas within the Landscape Management Zone (LM), the Wildlife Area Combining Zone (WA), the Sensitive Bird and Mammal Habitat Combining Zone (SBMH) and the Flood Plain Zone (FP). The entire park is within a Wildfire Hazard Zone.

Figure 26 shows the base zoning for Smith Rock State Park, and Figure 27 shows the applicable combining zones. Development considerations are described in further detail for each zone.

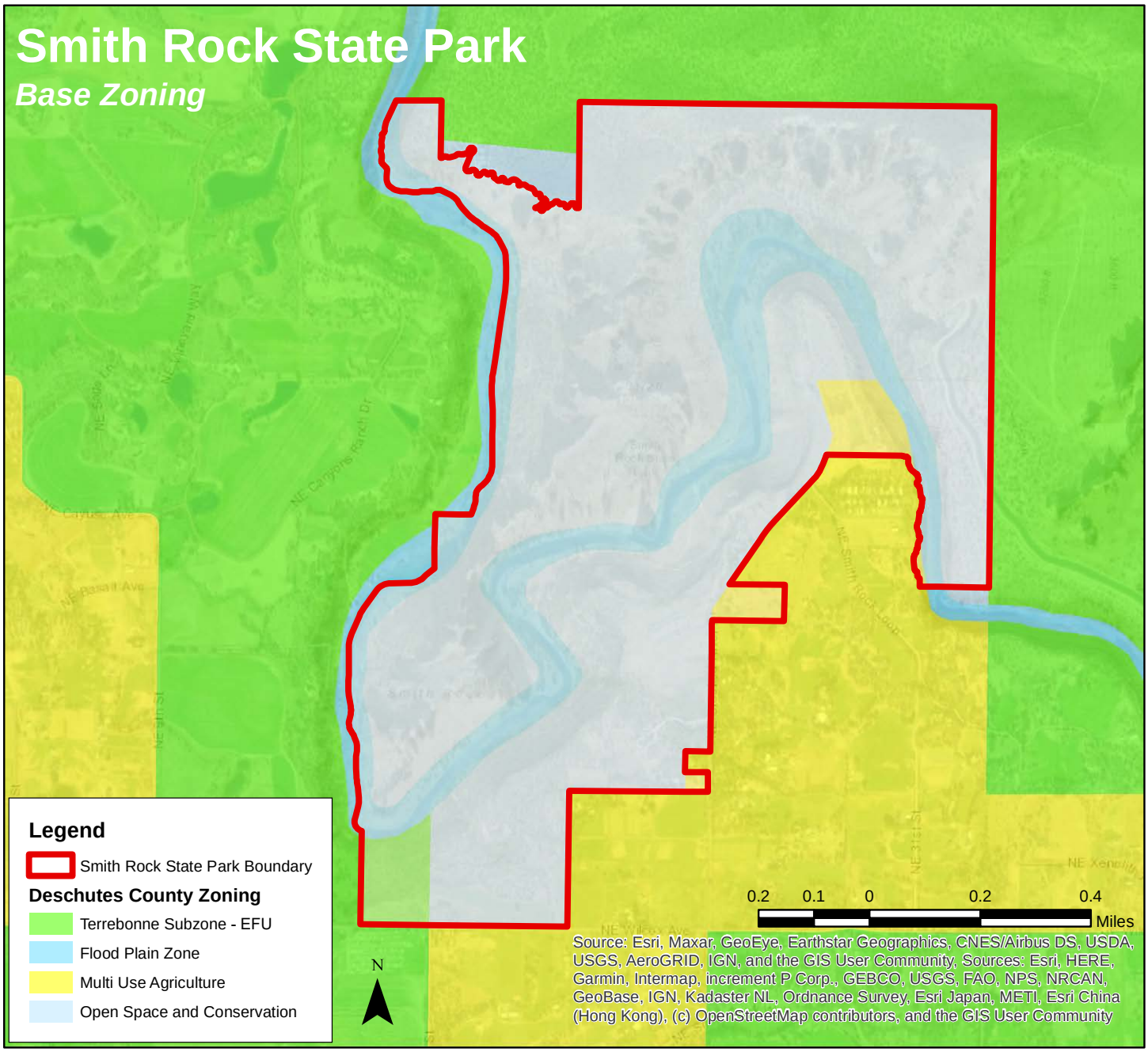


Figure 26: Deschutes Base Zoning Map

Open Space and Conservation Zone (OS&C)

The OS&C zone: 1) protects designated areas of scenic and natural resources; 2) restricts development in areas with fragile, unusual or unique qualities; 3) protects and improves the quality of the air, water and land resources; and 4) plans development that will conserve open space. Deschutes County recognizes Smith Rock State Park as an established public park, adopted in its Comprehensive Plan. Amendments to the master plan and associated park improvements that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan do not trigger conditional use (CU) review, and park development in the OS&C zone is generally allowed as an expansion of the "public parks and recreational areas" use.

There are four specific uses (or use expansions) proposed in the master plan that may require CU review in the OS&C zone:

- Welcome Center
- Excavation, grading, fill, and vegetation removal within the banks of a river or within a delineated wetland, including new pedestrian bridges.
- Campgrounds and alterations of existing campgrounds that would amount to approval of a "substantially new proposal"
- Rimrock Trail extension and new trail into canyon

Whether or not a project requires conditional review, all park improvements developed as part of the master plan update will require administrative land use review, including site plan review, prior to construction.

Multiple Use Agriculture (MUA)

The MUA zone allows "public uses," campgrounds, and other recreational uses as conditional uses (DCC 18.32.030). Structures are limited to 30 feet in height. Setbacks from NE Crooked River Drive are 30 feet, CRD is LM zone with 100 ft setback, side setbacks are 20 feet, and rear setbacks are 25 feet. Setbacks from the north lot line must meet solar setback requirements in DCC 18.116.180. The overflow parking and any new park development in the MUA zone will require conditional use, site plan, and potential variance reviews.

Exclusive Farm Use (EFU)-Terrebonne Subzone (TE)

The EFU zone is an agricultural zone that allows public parks and playgrounds as conditional uses (DCC 18.16.030). The southwest corner of the park and part of the Canyon Trail is within the EFU-Terrebonne Subzone. New trails proposed in the EFU zone will require site plan review and a conditional use permit.

Landscape Management Combining Zone (LM)

The LM zone maintains scenic and natural resources in LM designated areas, and maintains and enhances scenic vistas and natural landscapes as seen from designated roads, rivers, and streams. At Smith Rock State Park, the Crooked River is a designated LM river, and NE Crooked River Drive is a designated LM road, which requires a 100-foot building setback from these features.

As shown in Figure 27. LM zone development criteria, a large portion of the park is within the LM zone, and as such, almost all of the proposed development concepts will need to comply with the building setback criteria.

Wildlife Area Combining Zone (WA)

The Wildlife Area Combining Zone (WA) conserves and protects important wildlife areas in the County and allows development compatible with wildlife protection. Areas north of the Crooked River within the park have been identified as winter deer range and therefore are part of the WA zone.

Sensitive Bird and Mammal Habitat Combining Zone (SBMH)

The SBMH zone aims to ensure that sensitive habitat areas identified in the County's Goal 5 Sensitive Bird and Mammal Inventory as critical for the survival of certain sensitive species are protected from the effects of conflicting uses. According to the Deschutes County Comprehensive Plan, the park has seven inventoried golden eagle nests and one prairie falcon nest that are protected by the SBMH zone. For projects proposed within a quarter mile of an identified nest, building permits, conditional use permits, or site plan applications will trigger additional review under DCC 18.90.

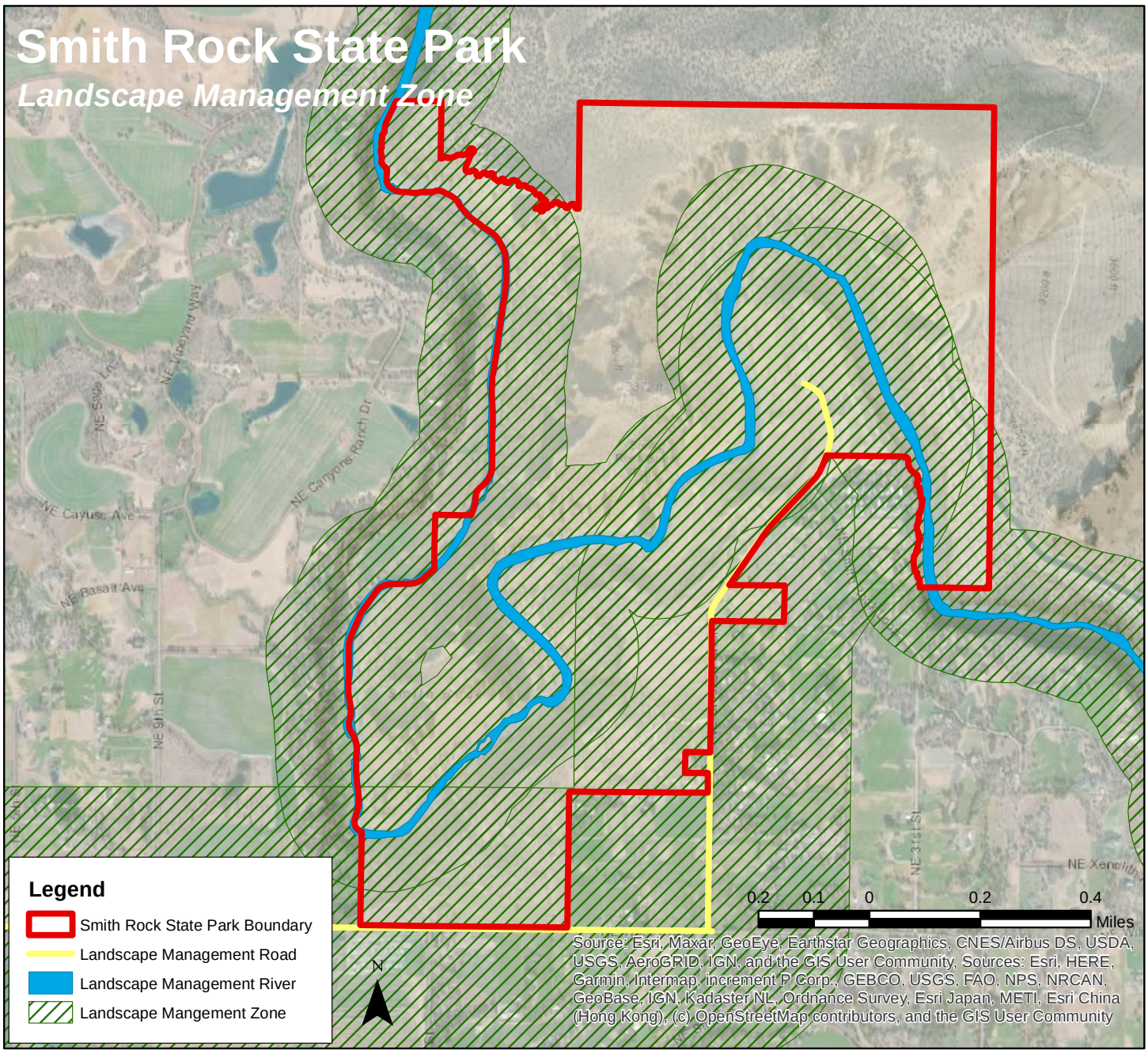


Figure 27: Deschutes County Combining Zone Map

Flood Plain Zone (FP)

The FP zone is designed to protect the public from hazards associated with flood plains, to conserve important riparian areas along rivers and streams for fish and wildlife resources, and to preserve significant scenic and natural resources. The 100-year flood plain along the Crooked River is subject to Flood Plain (FP) zone standards. Developments including roadways, bridges, grading, excavation, fill, and vegetation removal all would require FP review.

ADDITIONAL DESCHUTES COUNTY REGULATIONS

Off-Street Parking and Loading

- County off-street parking standards are contained in DCC 18.116.030(G).
- Parking lots have minimum landscaping requirements, listed in DCC 18.124.070.B
- Bicycle parking standards DCC 18.116.031

Rimrock Setbacks Outside of the LM Combining Zone

Outside of the LM Zone, all structures located within 50 feet of rimrock are subject to site review if visible from a river or stream. Site review standards are listed in DCC 18.116.160. Proposed development such as the Welcome Center is subject to the LM setback.

Building Setbacks for the Protection of Solar Access

Deschutes County has a passive solar code (DCC 18.116.180) that requires new structures to be sited so that they do not block the sun from falling on adjacent properties.

Right-of-Way Permits

The only public right-of-way (ROW) within Smith Rock State Park is NE Crooked River Drive. All work within County roadways, including construction of underground pipelines, will require a ROW permit approved by the Deschutes County Road Department. Any permanent changes to the affected roadway, including new access points, must comply with Deschutes County Road Department standards.

Wastewater Treatment

An approved wastewater treatment and disposal system is required for the new Welcome Center and all plumbed restrooms proposed in the

park. Septic location approval is required for building expansion or new structures (DCC 13.08.030). Wastewater treatment systems must be designed according to Deschutes County standards and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regulations.

Stormwater

Drainage facility guidelines for Deschutes County are found in the Central Oregon Stormwater Manual (COSM) (DCC 17.48.190). The COSM outlines minimum design requirements and standards for stormwater management systems in Central Oregon, including erosion and sediment control. A stormwater permit meeting the COSM requirements will need to be approved by Deschutes County.

Wildfire Hazard Zones

The County Building and Construction Code (Title 15) addresses Wildfire Hazard Zones (DCC 15.04.085). The entirety of Smith Rock State Park is within a Wildfire Hazard Zone. Activities within this zone are subject to the provisions of the Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Section R327 of the Oregon Residential Specialty Code. These provisions only apply to new dwellings and their accessory structures; therefore, they should not affect planned development for the park.

Deschutes County Building Permits

Nearly all construction requires a County building permit, approved by the Deschutes County Building Department. Relevant exceptions include fences and walls, trails, pedestrian bridges, certain small structures and driveways. Separate plumbing, electrical, and mechanical permits may also be required, as applicable. Land use approval, onsite septic, and driveway access must be addressed prior to building permit application approval.

Deschutes County land use review and development permits are needed for many of the proposed projects in the updated master plan, to ensure compliance with the applicable zoning code. Because the park is composed of over 20 parcels, zoning standards and permitting criteria may vary across adjacent parcels within the park. Applicabe zoning, land use, and building permit reviews anticipated for each project are outlined in Figure 28.

Proposed Development	LU Review	Building Permit	Applicable Zones
Welcome Center	Site Plan, LM Application, Conditional Use Review	Yes	OS&C, LM, (Unlikely to qualify as a Modification of Approval (DCC 22.36.040) based on prior land use decisions.)
Chute Area Parking	Site Plan	Yes	OS&C, LM, SBMH
North Point Parking	Site Plan, CUP (any portion in MUA)	Yes	OS&C, SBMH, MUA, LM
Overflow Parking	Site Plan, Conditional Use Review	Yes	MUA, LM
North Point Restroom	Site Plan, LM Application	Yes	OS&C, SBMH, LM, MUA (depends on location)
Chute Area Restroom	Site Plan, LM Application	Yes	OS&C, LM, SBMH
Pedestrian Bridges	Site Plan, Conditional Use Review	No	OS&C, FP, LM, SBMH, (possible FEMA coordination)
Bivouac Campground and Group Sites	Site Plan, Conditional Use Review, or Modification of Approval, LM	No	OS&C, LM, (May qualify as a Modification of Approval, see DCC 22.36.040.)
Bivouac Campground Restroom/Shower Building	Site Plan, Conditional Use Review, or Modification of Approval, LM	Yes	OS&C, LM
Barrier-free Rim Trail	Site Plan, Conditional Use Review, or Modification of Approval (if applicable)	No	OS&C, SBMH, LM

Figure 28: Permitting Summary Table

STATE AND FEDERAL

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 1200-C Construction Stormwater General Permit

DEQ issues the 1200-C permit to regulate stormwater runoff from construction activities that affect surface waters of the State. If any construction project disturbs more than one acre, or adds over 5,000 sq. ft. of impervious surface, a DEQ National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) 1200-C General Construction Permit is required. Construction of new parking areas, large buildings, and entrance roads are likely meet this threshold.

Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) Removal-Fill / United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 Joint Permit

Oregon's Removal-Fill Law (ORS 196.795-990) requires any person who plans to remove or place fill material within wetlands and other "waters of the State" to obtain a Removal-Fill permit from DSL, reviewed concurrently with the USACE under the Clean Water Act.

Delineation of wetlands and other waters of the State is generally performed early in design development, once a study area for the project has been defined. The study area should include all areas directly affected by permanent and temporary impacts, including areas temporarily disturbed by construction for staging, storage, and ingress/egress. A wetland determination to document the absence of wetland resources can be performed in situations where the National Wetlands Inventory, County soil survey, and other documentation do not suggest the presence of regulated wetland resources. There are mapped wetlands within the park and if impacted by development projects, a formal delineation must be performed to facilitate design development and consideration of alternatives.

OPRD ADA Transition Plan

The 2021 OPRD ADA Transition Plan[1] identifies accessibility barriers within parks and park programs for people with disabilities, and provides a roadmap for removing them within the next 25 years. Every Oregon State Park was surveyed to identify barriers and propose remediation strategies. Barriers can range from inaccessible picnic

1. The 2021 ADA Transition Plan can be downloaded here: https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/ao/pages/au-accessibility.aspx

areas and restroom facilities, to parking lots without designated accessible parking. Proposed remediation strategies vary, but ultimately aim to remove low, medium and high priority barriers within a 25-year timeline.

Accessibility barriers identified at Smith Rock include: undersized accessible parking stalls, inadequate maneuvering space around site features, inappropriate mounting/access heights on some site features, loose unstable surfacing, and other items. Future renovation projects at the park shall incorporate remediation of the identified issues to improve site accessibility.

OPRD Accessibility Standards

In 2021, the Oregon State legislature passed House Bill 2171 which directed OPRD to develop statewide accessibility standards for a range of recreation amenities. These standards incorporate elements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), and establish guidelines to meet or exceed those standards within the Oregon State Park system, wherever feasible. The standards apply to new park development as well as renovation of existing features.

Due to the unique topography of Smith Rock, it is recognized that full compliance with the ADA throughout the park is both undesirable and unfeasible. New improvements, particularly around the Welcome Center and North Point day-use areas, should be designed to meet as many accessibility standards as possible.

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requires approved archaeological permits prior to commencement of the following activities on public land: excavation or alterations of an archaeological site, exploratory excavations to determine the presence of an archaeological site, or removal of any material of an archaeological, historic, prehistoric, or anthropological nature.

Federal and State Endangered Species Act

The Smith Rock State Park Wildlife Assessment updated in 2023 includes a detailed assessment of the wildlife, references to their status

as sensitive species, and a discussion of associated state and federal legal requirements. The assessment also includes an analysis of wildlife resource values inform facility development plans and identify priority areas of the park for habitat preservation and restoration.

Note that there may be species present or likely to occur in the park that are on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Sensitive Species List. While not a regulatory tool, this list is used by ODFW to guide and promote conservation activities and to inform the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) administers the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which prohibit the unauthorized taking of migratory birds and bald and golden eagles within the United States.

Established buffer distances from known eagle nests are defined in the USFWS National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines and reflected in the Deschutes County Sensitive Bird and Mammal Habitat Combining Zone. Any construction activities during the nesting season within these buffer areas, or other activities causing direct impacts to active or alternate nest sites will require Deschutes County permit review and coordination with USFWS.

Nesting season begins when raptors commence their courting and nest-building activities, generally in early to mid-January at Smith Rock State Park. Nesting season ends on August 1, or earlier if the nests have been confirmed to have either fledged or failed. Public access, including for climbing activities, is curtailed annually within the nesting buffer zones during nesting season, in coordination with USFWS and ODFW. Drone operations within the park are not allowed during nesting season.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

LWCF is a federal grant program that is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Grants are issued to assist with park land acquisition, project planning, and construction. Lands acquired or developed using LWCF Grants must be used in perpetuity for public outdoor recreation activities.

Transfer of land or development of facilities that are not deemed necessary to support public outdoor recreation can result in a 6(f) Conversion process.

Several LWCF grants have been used to acquire land and develop projects at Smith Rock State Park over the years. The most recent LWCF grant was for replacement of the park's only pedestrian bridge. All lands within the Smith Rock State Park boundary at the completion of the project in 2023 will be subject to the regulations of the LWCF program. Future proposed projects, including the new Welcome Center, should be reviewed for compatibility with the program requirements. Any potentially non-compliant features will need NPS approval.