

Oregon Coast Trail: A Collaborative Governance Framework for the Implementation of the Action Plan and Long-Term Operations and Maintenance

Revised Draft

1/13/2023

Summary

The purpose for this document is to outline a governance structure for the Oregon Coast Trail (OCT). This document identifies a framework for the long term sustainable governance structure to operate, maintain, and enhance the OCT. This framework is intended to address the three major governance components that are essential for the success of long-distance trails – leadership and policy, operations and maintenance, and a non-profit foundation group.

The OCT governance framework is based on a “collaborative partnership structure representing different levels of government, non-profit organization, communities and stakeholders dedicated to agreed-upon goals.” (Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission presentation, 4/12/2022). The proposed long term governance framework for the OCT is a partnership between local, state, and federal agencies, tribes and non-profit partners. There is also a role for trail advocates and private businesses.

Guiding principles for identifying a governance structure include:

1. This is the time to address the OCT challenges, implement the action plan, and this is the group that can do it.
2. The Action Plan will be completed in early 2023 and is expected to have the concurrence of the Statewide Landowners Group at the time it is presented to the Oregon State Legislature.
3. The OCT has never benefitted from a comprehensive governance structure knitting together all of the landowners that host the Trail route.
4. A governance framework that centers around a collaborative approach is key to success with the Action Plan implementation
5. A governance structure will emerge based on concurrence with the Action Plan, and will reflect and move forward the commitments contained in the OCT Declaration of Cooperation for Implementing the Action Plan and the respective OCT Segment Team Declarations of Cooperation (North, Mid- and South Coast).
6. There is an urgency to identify a governance structure and move forward to maintain the momentum for completing the trail and assuring its long-run sustainability, while also recognizing that putting in place a governance structure will take time and necessitate an interim approach leading to the desired long-term solution.
7. Establishing a governance structure leading to sustainable operations and maintenance will require creative cooperation among all project partners.
8. Identification of resources, including staff capacity and funding, is a key need for administering and coordinating implementation of the Action Plan and as well as assisting with moving the governance framework forward.
9. OCT partners agree to support each other in gaining the authority and capacity to make the Trail a win-win for all.

10. Solutions for closing gaps and related OCT projects must add value for the communities and tribes along the OCT route.

There is emerging concurrence for building on the existing structure created to develop the Action Plan. This structure includes the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant Project Management Team, the three coast Segment Teams, the FLAP Project Advisory Group and the Statewide Landowners Group. This involves the current partners and stakeholders aligning and integrating the current structure to support the action plan development, the FLAP grant and the Oregon Solutions project to a collaborative governance structure. This can be summarized as follows:

<u>Existing Framework</u>		<u>Proposed Long-Term Framework</u>
<u>Leadership and Policy Making</u> Statewide Landowners Group	→	OCT Policy Board
<u>Operations and Maintenance</u> Landowners individually	→	Landowners coordinating with support from the Oregon Coast Trail Foundation and other non-profit groups
<u>Action Plan Implementation and Project Development</u>		
FLAP Project Advisory Group	→	Coordinating Committee
Segment Teams	→	Implementation support, local leadership
<u>Nonprofit Foundation Support</u> Non-profit recently created	→	Oregon Coast Trail Foundation

The direction for the governance framework is derived from the work of the OCT Statewide Landowners Group and in particular the four entities that requested the Governor designate the OCT as an Oregon Solutions project: Association of Oregon Counties, Oregon Coast Visitors Association (the Regional Destination Management Organization for the coastal region appointed by the Oregon Tourism Commission), Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Per the Governor’s Oregon Solutions project designation, “agreement on the governance structure will provide the OCT a coordinated framework for adopting and advancing the implementation of the action plan including how to reach collaborative agreements on overall project priorities and management functions. The governance plan should also identify the means to perpetually engage a broad group of key stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sectors in the ongoing efforts to achieve implementation of the plan in an orderly and timely manner. Lastly, this effort should identify fiscal responsibilities and opportunities for management, capital construction and maintenance of the Trail.”¹

¹ Governor Kate Brown, [2018 designation letter](#).

Link: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://orsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/11.14.18_OR-Solutions-Designation-Oregon-Coast-Trail-Project-1.pdf

Levels of Organization and Representation

There are a significant number of details to be worked through and decisions that are needed to establish the governance structure suggested by this framework. Some of the details and decision points are outlined here:

OCT Policy Board (Leadership Group)

The criteria for participation on the leadership group will include those entities owning and managing the lands that the OCT route crosses, including public, private, tribal and non-profit entities. Initially the Board could be comprised of senior level managers and executives from OPRD, ODOT, USFS, OCVA, AOC, LOC, OCTF. Tribal representatives are always welcome to participate. A trail policy board sets overall direction, and can expand its membership if needed to better reflect the complexities of trail route ownership and trail use.

The functions of an OCT Policy Board include:

- Primary decision making authority for the OCT.
- Aligns high level support for resources needed for implementing the Action plan, developing projects, and operating and maintaining the Trail.
- Assures that decisions are being made to implement the Action Plan, issues are addressed and resolved in a coordinated, collaborative ongoing fashion.
- Provides staff to participate with the Coordinating Committee (discussed in the following paragraphs) to assist with the implementation, operations and maintenance activity.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) serves as the convener of Policy Board meetings and provides staff to coordinate and run meetings. Policy Board decisions are by consensus – that is, all can “live with a proposed decision”. (If in the future the Policy Board were to be involved in grant funding or other fund disbursement decisions then a voting criterion may need to be established for that specific purpose.)

Key roles and expectations for the Policy Board include:

- Oversee the operation of the OCT.
- Set strategic priorities, make budget commitments, establish state and federal legislative agenda.
- Meet on a regular basis.
- Discuss at least once each year the overall implementation of the Action Plan and consider revisions as deemed necessary.
- Seek consensus on proposed changes to the Action Plan.
- Seek consensus on any issues that cannot be resolved by the OCT Technical Working Group/Coordinating Committee.

OCT Coordinating Committee

A coordinating committee is seen as a technical working group staffed by the Policy Board entities to help support and direct 1) Action Plan implementation, and 2) new project development. A coordinating committee would also troubleshoot operations and maintenance issues, including identifying operations and maintenance responsibilities for any new OCT segments or any “orphan” segments along the OCT route.

An OCT coordinating committee would have the same, or very similar, composition as the current OCT Project Advisory Group (PAG). PAG participation includes Western Federal Lands, OPRD, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), League of Oregon Cities, Oregon Coast Visitors Association (OCVA), tribes, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and trail advocates.

The functions of an OCT Coordinating Committee include:

- Troubleshooting operation and maintenance issues along the Trail in addition to implementing the Action Plan.
- Maintaining a shared sense of ownership of the Trail (this could include the Chair rotates annually and will be responsible for setting meetings, agendas, staffing meetings and tracking action items).
- Drawing on participants from the three OCT Segment Teams, and the local resources identified in the North, Mid- and South Coast Segment Teams’ Declarations of Cooperation, to maintain local input and support for all aspects of the OCT.

Key roles include:

- Providing review and assistance for OCT project development, operation, and maintenance.
- Tracking and reporting progress on Action Plan implementation.
- Consulting and coordinating with each other when operation, management or implementation issues arise.
- Reviewing and proposing appropriate alternatives to implementation projects of the other parties during project planning and environmental review processes.
- Coordinating and working with other agencies and regulatory bodies to implement the Action Plan.
- Meets regularly, quarterly has been suggested.
- Making recommendations and elevating conflicts to the policy group as needed.

In the initial stages of implementing the Action Plan and related project development, OPRD could convene the Coordinating Committee, together with additional local stakeholders, technical resources, elected officials and state and federal agencies (senior project staff representatives from OPRD, ODOT, USFS and others) to identify the priority concepts to be implemented in the short term. This would serve to identify immediate opportunities, consider priority projects and kick start immediate execution of some of the gap solutions.

Oregon Coast Trail Foundation

The [Oregon Coast Trail Foundation \(OCTF\)](#) is a 501(c)3 non-profit group established in 2019 “to secure resources to ensure users safely experience and appreciate the trail’s natural beauty,

cultural significance and educational value.” The purpose of the non-profit is “to solicit, receive, and distribute funding for projects that improve and maintain the physical aspects and infrastructure of the Oregon Coast Trail and connecting recreation trails, as well as to provide marketing and information relative to the Oregon Coast Trail and connecting recreation trails.”

OCVA established the Foundation and currently provides administrative services. The initial functions of the OCTF have included advocacy, fundraising and support for trail construction and maintenance. The Foundation is currently providing funding to Trail Keepers of Oregon to coordinate and expand volunteer opportunities for trail work parties,

The Foundation’s role may expand as the non-profit builds capacity in the coming years. Both the OCTF and OCVA are participants on the OCT Policy Board.

The OCTF functions over time can include (based on Action Plan approved by the Policy Board):

- Soliciting, receiving and distributing funding for projects that improve and maintain the physical aspects and infrastructure of the OCT and connecting recreation trails.
- Making available visitor information regarding local services and amenities.
- Leading efforts to identify and make information available regarding transportation along the OCT including public transit, private shuttles, tour experiences and river and bay crossing services (The latter are generally discussed as private businesses offering boat rides, water taxis and ferries).
- Coordinating with the Policy Board, tribes and other stakeholders to facilitate the development and distribution of informational, educational and interpretive material related to the OCT.
- Maintaining and updating online maps of the OCT route using the best available information provided from the Policy Board entities and other trail partners.
- Making available promotional materials and Trail schwag.
- Working with the Policy Board members to arrange for an annual OCT Summit open to all stakeholders, tribes and advocates to dialogue about the status of the OCT.
- Celebrating successes.

Proposed Next Steps

The next steps to establishing a collaborative governance structure includes chartering an OCT policy/leadership board evolving out of the current Statewide Landowners Group. Once chartered an initial discussion for the Policy Board would be seeking agreement on a strategy for implementing the OCT governance framework. This includes:

- The status of standing up and staffing a technical working group, or coordinating committee, to review, discuss and coordinate on issues related to implementation of the action plan (as outlined above).
- Collaborating with OCVA and the OCT Foundation to map out and concur with the future roles and responsibilities for the non-profit.

**Recommended Phased Strategy for Chartering the OCT Policy Board
and Implementing the Governance Framework**

- Phase I – Early 2023
 - The OCT Statewide Landowners Group
 - Signal concurrence with the Action Plan, and
 - agrees to collaborative governance framework that includes oversight by a policy board.
 - A working group is identified to develop a charter based on the framework.
- Summer/Fall 2023
 - Working group completes a charter and a policy board is established
 - Implement short term governance (with OPRD lead) until charter can be fully implemented through supporting documents and agreements.
- Phase II – 2024
 - Complete IGAs and related agreements as needed for implementing the charter
- Phase III – 2025 and beyond
 - Transition to the long-term governance structure

Attachment 1

Ownerships Comprising the Preferred OCT route presented in the Action Plan

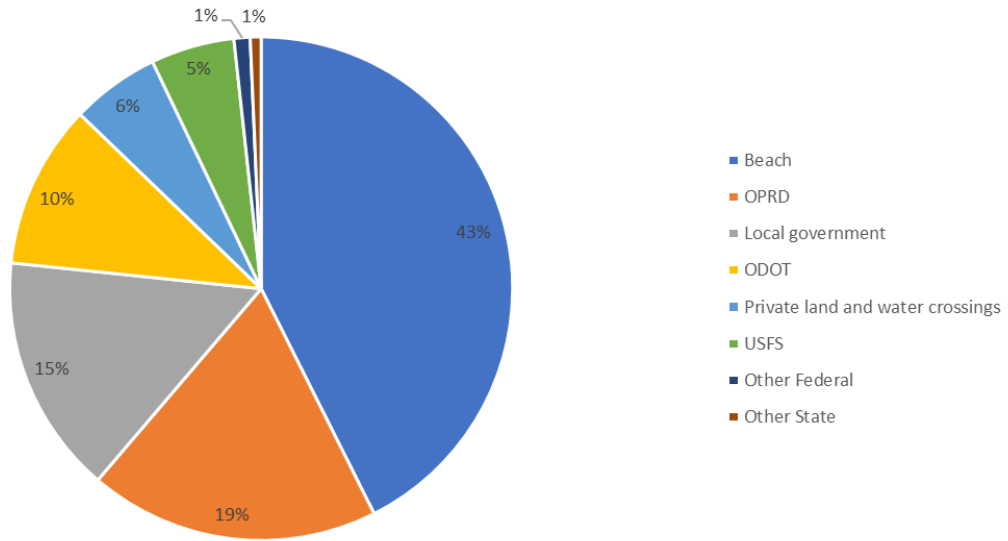
The OCT crosses lands managed by numerous public and private entities as well as lands important to Native Americans since time immemorial. This includes 7 counties, 28 cities, numerous special districts, several state agencies in addition to OPRD, at least 5 Federal agencies (USFS, USFWS, BLM, USACOE and the US Bureau of Reclamation), numerous Indian Tribes including 5 that are federally recognized and privately owned lands. The preferred trail alignment identified in the Action Plan is approximately 412 miles. Just over 175 miles of the route is on Oregon’s beaches. Along the way, the OCT crosses twenty-six (26) bays and rivers, seventeen (17) capes and headlands, and passes through eighty-four (84) state parks.

Ownership Summary

42.6% Beach
18.7% OPRD
15.4% Local government
10.5% ODOT
5.7% Private land and water crossings
5.4% USFS
1.0% Other Federal
<u>0.7%</u> Other State
100.0%

Including the state’s beaches, OPRD administers approximately 61% of the lands that the OCT crosses (State Parks – 18.7%, Beach – 42.6%). Approximately 34 miles of beach are adjacent to the USFS-administered Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. These 34 miles represent about 8% of the total length of the OCT. The USFS and OPRD cooperate in the management of this section of the coast. Another 22 miles (5%) of the OCT is, or is proposed to be, on lands within the Siuslaw National Forest.

Oregon Coast Trail
Land Ownership for the Preferred Route
As of 11/2022



Detailed Breakdown of Ownerships

Owner	Total Distance (miles)	%
Beach	175.3	42.6%
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department	76.9	18.7%
County or city right of way	58.2	14.1%
Oregon Department of Transportation	43.4	10.5%
US Forest Service	22.1	5.4%
Private	19.9	4.8%
Local public land	5.2	1.3%
Water (ferry)	3.6	0.9%
US Fish and Wildlife Service	2.2	0.5%
Other Oregon State land	1.8	0.4%
Oregon Department of State Lands	1.1	0.3%
US Bureau of Land Management	0.9	0.2%
US Dept of Defense	0.9	0.2%
US Bureau of Reclamation	0.3	0.1%
Total	411.7	100.0%