

Cottonwood Canyon State Park Education and Interpretive Center
April 30, 2012 Meeting Notes
Condon, Elks Club

Public Comment Period:

- Strategy: to educate visitors on the rugged and fragile nature of the area. We need to highlight that visitors are guests in the area and in the community.
- OPRD is working with ODF on fire management. They are also working with emergency management to determine issues, training opportunities and cost-sharing possibilities. This involves:
 1. Anticipating a neutral impact at least and at best, OPRD staff becoming additional emergency management resources in the area.
 2. Using the OPRD-Sherman County agreement to assist when needed with additional funding for fire, weed management, and communications as a framework.
 3. Continuing the discussion about other funding options and opportunities, such as grants or funding from other partners (Parks Foundation, OR State Parks Trust).
- Economic development is likely to be an indirect outcome of CCSP; local benefits will be gained as people come through town for gas and food.
 - OPRD has a focus on land management, but is interested in hearing if there is anything the department can do at the park to assist in encouraging visitors into the surrounding community, including working with Chambers of Commerce to leverage town amenities – preparing in advance is important.
 - OPRD is open to continued dialogue and suggestions for improvement or further areas of discussion.
- There is an elevated interest in knowing how OPRD is going to do “people management” at the park.

Purpose Statement Discussion:

A lively discussion took place that included the project’s scope and physical area. The proposed purpose statement has been revised:

To work collaboratively towards a proposal for the programming, facilities, infrastructure and governance of an educational experience center for all ages based at Cottonwood Canyon State Park, which incorporates the values of the community and region including the natural history of the John Day River Basin.

The discussion also brought up values that have been collected and utilized by OPRD in their planning process:

1. Protecting a natural, rugged place.
2. Accessing the natural landscape.
3. Enjoying outdoor recreation.
4. Honoring traditional use.
5. Preserving the complete history.
6. Integrating natural and historical perspectives.
7. Strengthening ties to the community (*additional info and details available via attachment*).

Center Content Discussion:

- There is a weighty responsibility on OPRD to manage the area appropriately – it is the largest of the un-dammed rivers in the Western United States.
- We agree that it would be beneficial to simplify the content into categories, and then add pieces to general themes.
 - OPRD's seven values (above) may be a good place to start.
- We would like a way to link communities to economic opportunities.
 - OPRD has thought about “catalyst projects”, which show “how it’s done” – this is an area for further discussion.
 - We would like to see examples of “gateway communities”, such as Oakridge (mountain biking) and Astoria (forward thinking regional process and optimization of Oregon Coast and Fort Stevens)
- We need to think about the scale of the project:
 1. Park/footprint
 2. LJD Basin/around footprint
 3. Entire river/regional
- Other ideas:
 - The center is a destination, but it could also be a repository of local knowledge and a place to collect data on local projects.
 - A place to teach fire safety, suppression, wild land fire management to the community at large; a place to learn about fire damage, including recent landslides.
 - A place to teach survival.
 - A place to teach visitors about changes to the landscape and the community over time, particularly the last 40 years (especially the relationship and interaction of soil and water, and the importance of interconnectedness).
 - A place to showcase stewardship and changes in land management (SWCD's); a place to teach urban dwellers how changes in farming practices have improved the management and stewardship of the land (example: wind farms).
 - A place to study soil (where did it come from? what grows in it? what do we eat from it?). Have farmers put up signs about their crops or soil, or what kinds of practices are happening on the riverbank.

- A place to study geology and erosion.
- A place to learn about the roles of the wheat and cattle industries in the region.
- A place to learn about regional wildlife and the impact they have on the landscape.
- A place to tie different elements together; explain the interconnections within the region (watershed, farming, and community resources).
- A place to grow native plants from seed and have sprouts for sale at a greenhouse on the park site.
- A place to watch the night sky – include solar system information and/or an observatory.
- A regional hub for teacher education – teach teachers, so they can teach other teachers (however we want to start by focusing on teaching children).
- Century Farms Program (highlights farms that have been family-owned for over one hundred years) in Gillam and Sherman Counties.
- Teach agriculture in classrooms (grades 5-10).
- Teach water quality (grades K-12) – monitoring stations, animals, aquifers, fish, native plants, identification, chemistry, flooding, erosion.
- Extend existing outdoor school- planting, riparian management, steelhead run (Salmon Watch), wildlife management, wildlife life cycles
- Expand interest in the outdoors- geocaching, compass work, fire management, GPS, GIS.
- Involve OSU Extension Service (note: they are involved in this project).
- Moving beyond use – the John Day Basin area is like a foreign language. It is necessary to understand the region to value it.
- A way to connect local people to the park (as tour guides, local experts, or service providers).

Moving Forward:

- We want to create project teams, who will meet for “sub-committee” discussions using technology.
 - We should focus on four areas: **programming, facilities, infrastructure, and governance** (includes management).
 - These will be committee categories and will be open online to all project team members and guests.
- From a programmatic standpoint, OPRD has wiggle room in their approved master plan to implement concepts without having to get re-approved; however, depending on the recommendations and ideas, the physical infrastructure decisions may require revising the plan and getting re-approved.
- The BLM RPP (Recreation and Public Purposes) Act land transfer is currently in progress.
- The LJD River from Service Creek to Tumwater Falls is a designated Wild and Scenic River. We need to continue the dialogue about protecting scenic areas.