



## **Oregon Solutions**

### **Cottonwood Canyon State Park Experience Center Project**

#### **Declaration of Cooperation**

October 2012

*Sponsored by:*

*Oregon Parks & Recreation Department*

*Sherman County*

*Gilliam County*

*Oregon Solutions*

**Oregon Solutions Process:** Oregon Solutions (O/S) is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University. The mission of Oregon Solutions is to develop solutions to community based problems that support sustainable objectives for the economy, the community and the environment and are built through the collaborative efforts of citizens, businesses, government and non-profit organizations. The O/S approach integrates and makes efficient use of public and private investments, elevates the visibility of the project and engages communities in creating solutions. The process provides a neutral forum – a place where various interests and stakeholders can come together as parties in a “Project Team,” in a manner that is more neutral than a meeting sponsored or hosted by one of the parties at the table.

**Purpose of Declaration of Cooperation:** Through the Oregon Solutions process described above, collaboration among parties on the Project Team is anticipated to develop and evolve as the process continues, with the intent to foster or facilitate agreements amongst the parties about which potential actions, or suite of potential actions, may be taken to cumulatively lead to successful project outcomes, including preliminarily identifying which party may be appropriate to take specific potential actions, how and when. This collaborative work product is documented at the end of the O/S process in the “Declaration of Cooperation,” which can be understood as a non-binding *implementation plan*. The Declaration, including the stakeholder commitments, is considered to be a “living” document that shall continue and may evolve with the opportunities for parties to amend by unanimous consent from time to time, to represent changing situations often found during project development, until project completion or until suspended by mutual agreement.

**Background to Project:** In September 2013, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) will open the state's newest, and eventually the largest, state park. Cottonwood Canyon State Park is located along the Lower John Day River, between Sherman and Gilliam Counties, and will be a unique addition to the OPRD system.

In early 2011, OPRD joined in discussions with the Lower John Day Conservation Collaborative (LJDCC) regarding an "education and interpretive" center to be located at the park. The vision for the center included museum-quality conservation, historical, and cultural programming, educational facilities and print materials about Cottonwood Canyon State Park and the surrounding region. Both entities describe the education/interpretive center as an opportunity to create a "gateway" to the John Day River and the four counties it occupies. From this "gateway," students, tourists, residents, and technicians could learn about and conduct research in the high desert and the John Day Basin.

Between the LJDCC and OPRD, there was recognition for assistance with capacity and bringing together multiple participants from the community to ensure that a center would provide not only useful information about the Park, but would also tell the story of those who have been an integral part of the Lower John Day Basin and the surrounding community.

In July of 2011, the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) jointly with OPRD submitted a request for consideration as a designated O/S project. Based on the potential scope, cost, and diverse interests involved, Oregon Solutions was seen as the ideal forum through which to bring together the diverse interests and lay out an implementation plan for the center.

In November 2011, Governor John Kitzhaber designated the project as an Oregon Solutions effort and selected AOC Executive Director Mike McArthur and former Gilliam County Judge Laura Pryor to be co-conveners.

The project team had their kick-off meeting in Moro on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012. A list of project team members can be found in **appendix A**.

**Project purpose & vision:** The O/S project team came up with a purpose statement which helped to guide the discussion and subsequent commitments. The statement is as follows: *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.* This will be accomplished within the provisions of the Comprehensive Government Management Plan (2001).

**Achieving the Vision:** Achieving the vision above will require the commitments of all parties as identified later in this document. These commitments and this Declaration of Cooperation

signify the substantial completion of the Oregon Solutions process. However, the success of the Cottonwood Canyon State Park Experience Center project will require an ongoing collaborative effort and the continuation of a *Project Implementation Team* to coordinate ongoing commitments and to provide on-going community-based support and information to the parks department, to be known as the Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council ("C5"). As a group of community leaders and stakeholders, this group will provide insight and connections to members of the community, and reflect the values and interests of those communities in discussions with OPRD. It is recognized that the C5 is not a decision making body, but is expected to provide feedback and direction to OPRD. Membership in C5 is completely voluntary, and membership is obtained through self-selection. Administrative management of C5 is anticipated to be minimal, with coordination of times and locations for meetings, and distribution of meeting materials. The C5 will meet bi-annually, with additional meetings as needed. Agreements to participate in the C5 are included in the stakeholder commitments.

**This Declaration of Cooperation, while not a binding legal contract, is evidence to and a statement of the good faith and commitment of the undersigned parties. The undersigned parties to this Declaration of Cooperation have, through a collaborative process, agreed and pledged their cooperation to the following findings and actions:**

***Association of Oregon Counties (AOC):***

As an advocate for county government and county officials in their relationships with the Oregon Legislature and state agencies working on behalf of all counties in Oregon, the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) has an interest in supporting county development and recreation. Therefore, AOC commits to:

- Continue to coordinate among the counties in the Lower John Day region ;
- Continue to coordinate between the involved counties and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department;
- Receive and review "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) related emails and updates, comment when appropriate, and attend meetings when capacity allows.
- Provide connections or information as requested from the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) team
- Mike McArthur will participate as convener when the project team reconvenes within the first year anniversary of the signing of this declaration.



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\_\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_\_

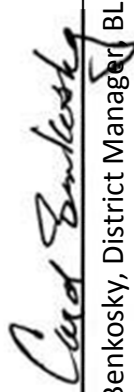
Mike McArthur, Executive Director

Date

***Bureau of Land Management (BLM):***

The BLM in Oregon and Washington boasts a wide range of programs and initiatives that put keen focus on good stewardship of the lands entrusted to its care. Alongside local partners, cooperating agencies, and active volunteers, the BLM is committed to ensuring that our spectacular views, abundant fish and wildlife habitats, productive timberlands, exciting recreational opportunities, functioning rangelands, and healthy watersheds will be nourished to thrive for generations to come. BLM's emphasis and commitment to the management of the Lower John Day public lands is as follows.

- BLM's is committed to continuing to manage public lands adjacent to and surrounding the State Park in accordance with the Wild and Scenic River Act; protecting the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the John Day River for present and future generations.
- BLM will continue to look for advantageous opportunities to assist the Oregon Department of Recreation achieve their objectives of outdoor education and restoration through projects and messages that support these values.
- BLM will continue to forge and maintain relationships critical to the management of the John Day as an acting member of the John Day Core Team and the Lower John Day Collaborative.

  
Carol Benkosky, District Manager, BLM Prineville

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_  
Date

***City of Condon:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, the City of Condon commits to:

- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) ;
- If needed, provide back-up administrative assistance/support to the C5
- Participate in discussions or presentations by MCEDD regarding providing venture capital to local vendors.

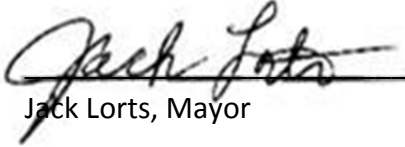
  
Dale Thompson, Mayor

\_\_\_\_10-10-12\_\_\_\_  
Date

***City of Fossil:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, the City of Fossil commits to:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) ;
- If needed, provide back-up administrative assistance/support to the C5
- Participate in discussions or presentations by MCEDD regarding providing venture capital to local vendors.

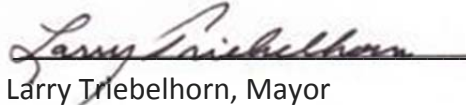
  
 Jack Lorts, Mayor

\_\_\_\_10/30/12\_\_\_\_  
 Date

***City of Moro:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, the City of Moro commits to:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) ;
- If needed, provide back-up administrative assistance/support to the C5
- Participate in discussions or presentations by MCEDD regarding providing venture capital to local vendors.


  
 Larry Triebelhorn, Mayor

\_\_\_\_10-25-12\_\_\_\_  
 Date

***City of Wasco:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, the City of Wasco commits to:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) ;
- Becoming a partner in the Educational Opportunities related to the promotion of the John Day River Region.

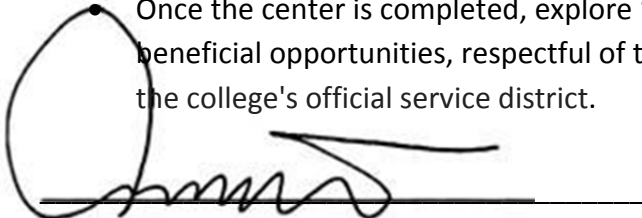
  
 Karen Kellogg, Mayor

\_\_\_\_8/21/2012\_\_\_\_  
 Date

***Columbia Gorge Community College:***

With an organizational mission to build dreams and transform lives by providing lifelong educational programs that strengthen our community, Columbia Gorge Community College commits to:

- Provide general information about the Cottonwood Canyon Experience Center with students interested in visiting or studying the John Day region.
- Once the center is completed, explore “distance instruction” and other mutually beneficial opportunities, respectful of the limitations based on the park being outside the college's official service district.



Dan Spatz, on behalf of Dr. Frank Toda, President

\_\_\_Oct. 10, 2012\_\_\_  
Date

***Condon Chamber of Commerce:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, the Condon Chamber of Commerce commits to:

- Work with park rangers and the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council”(CS) to get relevant displays, signage and brochures to the Experience Center.
- Work with Gilliam County to prepare for, welcome and attract park visitors to our communities.
- Assist with posting announcements and other opportunities that relate to the park on our website and face book pages.



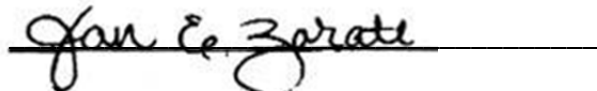
Canda Rattray, Condon Chamber Vice President

\_\_\_Oct. 10, 2012\_\_\_  
Date

***Condon School District:***

With an interest in educating local children by fostering a connection to the place and region in which they live, this is a commitment to:

- Include the landscape of Cottonwood Canyon and the surrounding areas into the appropriate curriculum;
- Work with OPRD on planning educational field trips to the park and;
- Consider ways in which students can capture and share data with others, for both short term and long term projects.



Jan Zarate, Superintendent

\_\_\_Oct. 15, 2012\_\_\_  
Date

***The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon:***

With reserved treaty rights and cultural interests in management of the John Day River System, including use of the river and surrounding lands for hunting, fishing, food gathering and ceremonial purposes, The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs commits to:

- Provide input and oversight in the development of interpretive materials describing pre-European occupation and use of the John Day Basin by Native Americans;
- Provide input and oversight in the description of the 1855 Treaty and the reserved right of The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs;
- Provide general information regarding contemporary tribal member use of the John Day River canyon for fishing, hunting and traditional food gathering;
- Provide material and information regarding the Tribes' role both as one of the largest private landowners in the basin, but also as co-manager of natural resources in the John Day Basin;
- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) ;



Robert A. Brunoe, Natural Resources General Manager

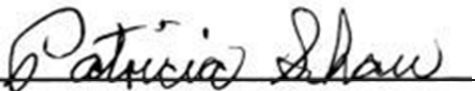
10-2-12

Date

***Gilliam County:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, Gilliam County commits to:

- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) ;
- If needed, provide back-up administrative assistance/support to the C5
- Participate in discussions or presentations by MCEDD regarding providing venture capital to local vendors.



Patricia Shaw, Judge

10-10-12

Date

***Gilliam County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)***

With an organizational mission of conservation and education, the Gilliam County SWCD commits to:

- Provide access to educational materials regarding soil and water conservation in the region for the experience center;
- Participate in educational presentations at the experience center.

Walter Powell  
Walter Powell, Director

10-29-12  
Date

***Gilliam/ East John Day Watershed Council***

With an organizational mission of conservation and education, the Gilliam/ East John Day Watershed Council commits to:

- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) ;
- Provide access to educational materials regarding soil and water conservation in the region for the experience center;
- Participate in educational presentations at the experience center.

Sandy McKay  
Sandy McKay, Director

10-10-12  
Date

***John Day River Territory (JDRT) Advisory Committee:***

The purpose of the JDRT Advisory Committee is to act as destination marketing organization representing Gilliam, Grant, Sherman and Wheeler counties to promote and develop the four-county region as a premier destination in Eastern Oregon. As such, JDRT makes the following commitments:

- Assist with development of tourism-related displays at the park by providing information, making contacts and like activities
- Include the park through regional marketing efforts
- Help connect the park to communities in the region as desired by the park and communities
- Through Jessica Metta, participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) in order to enhance regional tourism connections

Jessica Metta  
Jessica Metta, Project Manager

10-8-2012  
Date

***Maryhill Museum***

With a connection to the local history and community, and as a potential beneficiary of expanded economic benefits, the Maryhill Museum commits to:

- Work with park rangers and the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) to coordinate relevant community &/or student displays at the Experience Center;



- Provide guidance with displays and showcases as personnel capacity allows;
- Assist with volunteer coordination by posting announcements and other opportunities where current museum volunteers can access it.

  
 Colleen Schafroth, Executive Director

October 15 2012  
 Date

### ***Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD)***

With a mission to promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry within the five-county district, MCEDD makes the following commitments:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) in order to enhance Sherman County economic development connections
- Work with Sherman County and its communities to prepare for, welcome and attract park visitors, and connect them to commercial centers
- Host a seminar with the goal of building partnerships between OPRD and local businesses in Sherman County
- Help connect the park with economic development contacts in the region

  
 Jessica Metta, Project Manager

10-8-2012  
 Date

### ***Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)***

As the state’s regulatory agency whose job is to protect public health and the environment, DEQ makes the following commitment:

- Assist with coordination of interns through the Eastern Oregon University - NE Regional Solutions Center Internship Program which includes:
  - fostering internship program development;
  - student placement;
  - developing student’s Scope of Assistance
- Provide permit streamlining and coordination with regard to:
  - water and wastewater permit requirements
  - alternative treatments/solutions
- Assist with communications and education by providing or coordinating information for Experience Center displays

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5)
- Provide watershed information and coordination:
  - DEQ and the Regional Solutions Center can assist in providing information about the John Day river basin and connection to groups operating within it (e.g., watershed councils, chambers of commerce, economic development councils/districts, small business development centers, Travel Oregon, etc.).

  
 Randy Jones, DEQ Regional Solutions Liaison

\_\_\_\_ 10.10.12 \_\_\_\_  
 Date

### ***Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)***

ODA’s mission includes protecting the natural resource base for present and future generations of farmers and ranchers, and promoting economic development and expanding market opportunities for Oregon agricultural products. Therefore, ODA is interested in connecting Oregon State Parks and those engaged in messaging and creating resources for the Cottonwood Canyon State Park, with entities that already have materials or interests to share. This will include but is not limited to:

- **Educational materials from the Oregon Department of Agriculture:**
  - Farmers’ markets brochures
  - Brochures about Oregon’s agriculture industry
  - Brochures about agriculture’s efforts to improve water quality and watershed health (see #5)
- **Educational materials from the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Program:**
  - Display materials that may include “take away” handouts, flyers, educational materials, and other agricultural literacy publications;
  - Teacher training opportunities correlated with the schools, and the availability of the teacher lending library;
  - Information about the student art calendar contest.
  - The "Grown in Oregon Map," showing where predominant crops and livestock are produced.
  - "Get Oregonized" 4-5th grade history book profiling the regions of the state, written by Oregon teachers, for use in local schools (funding will need to be addressed).
  - Lessons on Oregon soils and Oregon's geology. <http://aitc.oregonstate.edu>
- **Outreach to area agriculture organizations (Wheat League and Cattlemen’s Association) to invite grower involvement in:**
  - Placing roadside crop signs along their fields.
  - Promoting area guest ranches and lodges.

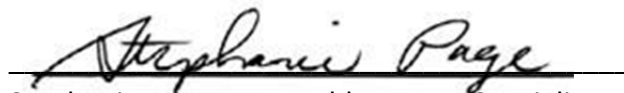
- **Communications and Education:**

- assistance with Interpretive Facility display material suggestions and review.

- **Watershed Information and Coordination:**

- ODA can assist in providing information about the John Day river basin and connection to farmers and ranchers, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and others engaged in agriculture-related watershed projects. ODA can also provide language for displays about agriculture's work to protect streamside areas and improve water quality and watershed health in the John Day River Basin.

- **Providing a connection to the Oregon Century Farm Program:** connecting farms in the area which have the "Century" designation of continual family operation for over 100 years, and County Historical Societies.

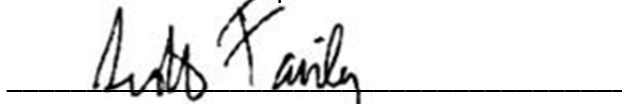
  
Stephanie Page, Renewable Energy Specialist

October 10, 2012  
Date

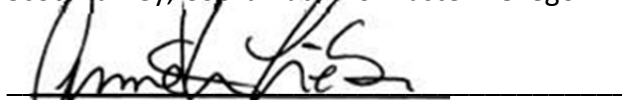
***Oregon Governor's Office/ Regional Solutions Centers***

On behalf of the state of Oregon, the Governor's Regional Solutions Centers will:

- Assist with state agency coordination as needed for permitting or information sharing in regard to developing the Cottonwood Canyon Experience Center and encouraging local economic development.

  
Scott Fairley, Coordinator for Eastern Oregon

10-30-12  
Date

  
Annette Liebe, Coordinator for Central Oregon

10/15/12  
Date

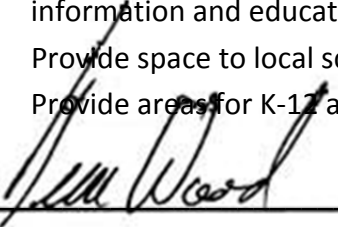
***Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD):***

As the stewards and responsible agency for Cottonwood Canyon State Park, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) commits to the following actions and measures for successful implementation of the Cottonwood Canyon State Park Experience Center.

OPRD will:

- Stay connected to the community by convening the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) with regard to education and interaction opportunities at the Experience Center. This will include providing reports and updates on a semi-annual basis, and seeking feedback and information on opportunities to partner with the community;

- Be accessible and responsive to ideas and suggestions for ways in which OPRD can share information and education about other tourist opportunities in the area;
- Provide space to local school groups free of charge;
- Provide areas for K-12 and adult education (research and integrated learning)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Wood, Director

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Oregon Solutions:***

In support of achieving the Cottonwood Canyon State Park project vision, Oregon Solutions commits to the following:

- Highlight the CCSP project as part of the Oregon Solutions website and other promotional materials.
- Take the lead in re-convening the project team within the first year anniversary of the signing of this declaration.
- Perform a post-project evaluation and share a summary of what was learned from the evaluation with the project team.

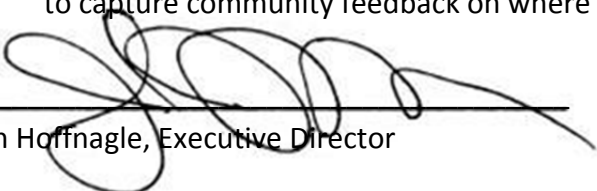
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Beverly Stein, Director

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Oregon State Parks Foundation:***

As the only statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing Oregon's magnificent state parks system and Oregon's outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic, and recreation sites for the enjoyment of present and future generations, the Oregon State Parks Foundation participates in park projects across the state. With the addition of Cottonwood Canyon State Park as the newest park in the state, and with an interest in the unique education opportunities available therein, the Foundation commits to:

- Organize and manage a capital campaign to raise funds to supplement the OPRD budget for building and maintaining the Experience Center;
- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) in order to capture community feedback on where funds should be allocated;

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Hoffnagle, Executive Director

\_\_\_\_10-10-12\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Oregon Travel Experience (OTE):***

With a mission to create a great visitor experience by providing direction to destinations, connecting travelers with Oregon's resources, and ensuring safe and convenient travel, OTE will:

- Continue its on-going collaboration with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to promote the Cottonwood Canyon State Park and other OPRD parks and programs through OTE's Travel Info Centers located in safety rest areas;
- Assure that OTE safety rest area staff at the Memaloose, Boardman and Stanfield rest areas are aware of the opening of Cottonwood Canyon State Park, its location, and the driving directions needed to help motorists find the state park;
- Continue to collaborate with OPRD to support the missions of both agencies.



Tim Pickett, Interim Director

October 22, 2012

Date

***Port of Arlington:***

The purpose of the Port of Arlington is job creation for the citizens of Gilliam County. The Port will develop, support and attract projects that insure the sustainability and economic stability of the county into the future. In as such, the Port of Arlington is willing to serve and make the following commitment:

- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) in order to enhance Gilliam County economic development opportunities
- Work with Gilliam County and its communities to prepare for, welcome and attract park visitors to ensure a sustainable and vibrant park



Peter Mitchell, Port Manger/  
Economic Development Officer, Port of Arlington

October 16, 2012

Date

***Sherman County:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, Sherman County Commits to:

- Participate on the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) ;

- Provide access to educational materials regarding soil and water conservation in the region for the experience center;

Participate in educational presentations at the experience center

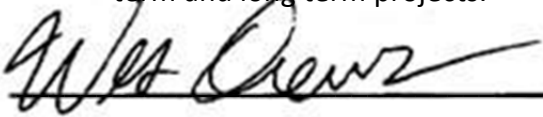
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Thompson, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_  
Date

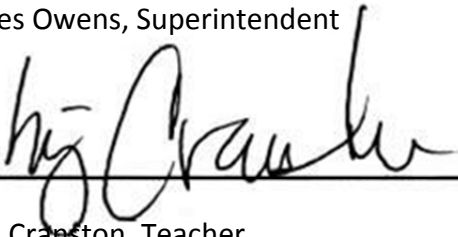
***Sherman County School District:***

With an interest in educating local children by fostering a connection to the place and region in which they live, this is a commitment to:

- Include the landscape of Cottonwood Canyon and the surrounding areas into the appropriate curriculum;
- Work with OPRD on planning educational field trips to the park and;
- Consider ways in which students can capture and share data with others, for both short term and long term projects.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Wes Owens, Superintendent

\_\_\_\_10/15/12\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Liz Cranston, Teacher

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Sherman County Museum:***

With a connection to the local history and community, and as a potential beneficiary of expanded economic benefits, the Sherman County Museum commits to:

- Work with park rangers and the "Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council" (C5) to get relevant community and/or student displays at the Experience Center;
- Provide guidance with displays and showcases as personnel capacity allows;
- Assist with volunteer coordination by posting announcements and other opportunities where current museum volunteers can access it.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gladys Wesley, Interim Director

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Sherman County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD):***

With an organizational mission of conservation and education, the Sherman County SWCD commits to:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) ;
- Provide access to educational materials regarding soil and water conservation in the region for the experience center;
- Participate in educational presentations at the experience center.



Brian Stradley, Director

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_

Date

***Wheeler County:***

As a potential economic beneficiary of Cottonwood Canyon State Park activities, Wheeler County Commits to:

- Participate on the “Cottonwood Canyon Community Coordinating Council” (C5) ;
- Provide access to educational materials regarding soil and water conservation in the region for the experience center;
- Participate in educational presentations at the experience center.



Chris Perry, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_10/10/12\_\_\_\_

Date

Appendix A

**Oregon Solutions Cottonwood Canyon Experience Center Project Team Members**

<u>First</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Carol	Benkosky	BLM
Jeanne	Burch	Wheeler County
Steve	Burnet	Sherman County
Alan	Christensen	Western Rivers Conservancy
Carrie	Clark	Maryhill Museum
Joe	Colby	Condon Elementary School
Liz	Cranston	Sherman County Elementary School
Brian	Cunninghame	Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
MG	Devereux	Oregon Parks & Recreation Department
Scott	Fairley	Regional Solutions Center- Eastern
Chip	Faver	BLM
John	Hoffnagle	Oregon State Parks Foundation
Randy	Jones	Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Annette	Liebe	Regional Solutions Center- Central
Jack	Lorts	City of Fossil
Mike	McArthur	Association of Oregon Counties
Sandy	McKay	Gilliam/East John Day Watershed Council
Jessica	Metta	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District/John Day River Territory Advisory Committee
Peter	Mitchell	Port of Arlington
Stephanie	Page	Oregon Department of Agriculture
Chris	Perry	Wheeler County
Walter	Powell	Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District
Laura	Pryor	Gilliam County
Canda	Rattray	Condon Chamber of Commerce
Brent	Searl	Oregon Department of Agriculture
Dan	Spatz	Columbia Gorge Community College
Bev	Stein	Oregon Solutions
Brian	Stradley	Sherman County Soil and Water Conservation District
Jamie	Swan	Bonneville Power Administration
Dale	Thompson	City of Condon
Larry	Triebelhorn	City of Moro
Mike	Weimar	Gilliam County
Gladys	Wesley	Sherman Co. Museum
Tim	Wood	Oregon Parks & Recreation Department





## WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

November 8, 2012

Lauren Beeney, Oregon Solutions  
National Policy Consensus Center  
Hatfield School of Government  
Portland State University  
PO Box 751-NPCC  
Portland, Oregon 97207-0751

RE: Cottonwood Canyon State Park Education and Interpretation Committee

Dear Lauren,

As we have discussed, Western Rivers Conservancy wishes to contribute to the Declaration of Cooperation with a specific proposal that fits our current role and activities on the former Murtha Ranch, which is now Cottonwood Canyon State Park. Upon completion of our activities related to restoration and monitoring, our active participation in the State Park will end. However, in the next several years we feel we can provide guidance, mentoring, and opportunity in efforts to bring children to the park for resource related activities and environmental education. Following is a synthesis of the initial proposal we made in August.

### **Proposal: Monitoring and Implementation of Restoration Efforts Directly Involving Local Schools**

Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) purchased the Murtha Ranch in October 2008. Located along the Lower John Day River between Wasco and Condon, the property was comprised of about 8000 acres of fee title land and was intermingled with over 8000 acres of BLM land. The property straddled both sides of the Lower John Day River and included roughly 16 miles of shoreline. In October of 2011 Oregon State Parks and Recreation (OPRD) completed purchase of the property from WRC and committed to opening a new State Park in 2013 to be called Cottonwood Canyon State Park.

While the property was in WRC ownership, there were extensive efforts to initiate noxious weed control, control livestock grazing in riparian areas, restore riparian habitats, and restore former agricultural fields to desirable conditions. Efforts included hundreds of acres treated with herbicides to control noxious weeds in cooperation with local agencies, thousands of trees and shrubs being planted to encourage restoration in key riparian habitats, reseeding former agricultural fields with desirable grasses, removal of woven wire fences that inhibited big game movement, and halting livestock grazing



for the time being. The focus of these restoration efforts was on the lower three miles of Hay Creek, a small but important and unique cold water tributary that supports the spawning and rearing of wild steelhead.

Concurrent with these Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) funded restoration efforts was the initiation of a basic monitoring plan funded with another OWEB grant to document the success of recovery efforts. The focus of the monitoring is largely qualitative and includes water temperature and flow, survival of planted vegetation, success in controlling noxious weeds, numerous photo points, and aquatic insect sampling. The grant for this monitoring ends in December 2014.

WRC contacted Arlington High School and on three occasions students participated in planting and monitoring efforts in fall and spring. Generally 15-20 students came to the site for a day. This experience with student involvement in WRC activities formed the basis for our proposal to the Committee. During discussions of the Cottonwood Canyon Education and Interpretive Committee, the issue of educational involvement via "hands on" experiences with schools has been strongly supported. The presence of a State Park within 40 minutes of Condon, for example, makes its use as an "outdoor educational center" easy to visualize. Given the current status of education budgets any new program will likely be difficult to launch without new funding.

Specifically, WRC proposes to assist the Committee, or a subset of the Committee, in the preparation and submittal of a grant proposal that would continue and expand the existing monitoring efforts in Hay Creek and other points along the main river and include a stronger education component. Key elements in the proposal are:

1. Proposal to be submitted by Condon School District/Sherman County School District and, possibly, in partnership with the local watershed district and the SWCD.
2. The proposal would add new areas to the monitoring "footprint"; specifically the upcoming CREP project just below Cottonwood Bridge and, potentially, a new restoration effort on the riparian areas just above and below Cottonwood Bridge (this proposal has been submitted to OWEB and initially funded). These would be proximate to the Center planned for construction at Cottonwood Canyon. Hay Creek would continue to be included.
3. The proposal would add a new wildlife element to the monitoring; specifically the monitoring of birds. Birds are among the best groups of wildlife for monitoring because they are visible, vocalize during many seasons of the year, can be captured and handled relatively easily, and respond quickly to habitat changes. Birds are also extensively monitored across the United States and a new effort in Cottonwood Canyon SP would be benefitted by existing studies, data and groups/agencies engaged in avian monitoring.



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4. WRC has had initial discussions with several avian groups that are interested in participating in educational efforts as part of monitoring and would bring expertise, equipment, and, possibly financial support/matching funds to a proposal for Cottonwood Canyon.
5. The monitoring proposal "horizon" would be for at least a decade and, hopefully, would establish what would become a continuous effort with a strong educational component and multiagency funding that assures stability.

### Summary:

WRC would assist in the development of a proposal to OWEB and other funding sources to continue and increase student involvement in monitoring efforts on the Cottonwood Canyon State Park with a heightened emphasis on the educational component and inclusion of numerous partners to bring expertise, equipment, and , potentially, financial support. This proposal would build upon existing monitoring efforts in Hay Creek and include that site in future monitoring.

Unlike governmental agencies that will have a perpetual relationship with the new State Park and local residents, WRC will move to other projects once our role on the former Murtha Ranch is ended. Therefore, we feel this type of proposal is more in keeping with what we can bring to the larger effort in building a long term relationship between the new State Park and the enormous opportunity that it presents for the involvement and enrichment of students and residents in the local area.

Alan Christensen, Project Manager  
Western Rivers Conservancy