

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

July 17, 2013

Agenda Item: 11a

Information

Topic: Let's Go.. - Program Update

Presented by: Steve Janiszewski and Mark Davison

Background:

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) has a responsibility and role to engage parents, children, families, and diverse cultural groups through recreation and connecting them to meaningful outdoor experiences. The Governor's Bill of Rights, the Environmental Literacy Act, Richard Louves latest book *Last Child in the Woods*, and the creation of Nature Play Areas in Oregon demonstrate a growing concern that children and their parents are no longer connecting with nature and resulted in a movement to reconnect with the outdoors.

The first Let's Go Program event was offered to the public in 1998 as a once-a-summer overnight camping event at Milo McIver State Park. Recognizing the program's potential, OPRD decided to expand the effort to eight events, primarily held at state parks in the Willamette Valley. In 2010, the Let's Go Camping program expanded to a series of 12 statewide events, and by last year the program was held at 16 state parks across Oregon.

This year OPRD is increasing the program to cover activities beyond just camping including a new statewide Let's Go Birding program and a regionally focused Let's Go program in the Willamette Valley covering a variety of ranger or volunteer led activities including Let's Go Paddling, Let's Go Hiking, and Let's Go Disc Golf. This expanded set of opportunities will teach a wider variety of outdoor skills and introduce more recreational experiences that offer new park visitors greater opportunities to be outdoors.

The primary goals of the expanded Let's Go programs are to:

- Teach outdoor skills and encourage further exploration of cultural, natural and recreation opportunities.
- Bring in new visitors to state park properties.
- Learn how to effectively reach out to culturally diverse communities located in the Willamette Valley.
- Build a program which is self-sustaining and can be expanded in the future.
- Develop a blueprint that can be used by OPRD across the state as well as shared with partner agencies and organizations.

For the focused effort in the Valleys Region three locations have been selected as "gateway" parks. Willamette Mission State Park and Champoeg State Heritage Area are linked geographically along the Willamette River corridor while Milo McIver State Park has a variety of park facilities including easy access to water recreation. All three park locations are located within easy distance from Portland or Salem. Other parks in the Valleys Region with available staffing and resources such as Silver Falls, Stub Stewart, Southern Willamette, Tryon Creek and various parks in the Columbia River Gorge will also be providing Let's Go.. activities in the first

year. Ultimately, other parks all around the state will develop a similar framework and join in as the program expands.

Let's Go.. Program for Summer 2013

RECREATION	ACTIVITY	# Activities	Projected Attendance
	Paddling	2x/Week	360
	Hiking	1x/Week	325
	Disc Golf	2x/Week	220
NATURE			
	Birding	1x/week	350
CAMPING			
	Let's Go Camping	16/Summer	545
	TOTALS	79	1800

The total projected attendance for the Let's Go pilot project in the first year is 1800 participants. This number represents our efforts to connect the next generation of park users to nature, and is OPRD's attempt to work directly with on-the-ground programs to help fulfill the Governor's Bill of Rights for children in Oregon. At the end of the summer we will be reviewing the program expansion and considering next steps. The program has potential to be applied statewide for a wide variety of activities. There is also potential to work more with partner agencies and share this concept.



Prior Action by Commission: None
Action Requested: None
Attachments: None
Prepared by: Steve Janiszewski and Mark Davison

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

July 17, 2013

Agenda Item: 11b

Information

Topic: Cottonwood Canyon Update and Opening

Presented by: MG Devereux

Cottonwood Canyon State Park is poised to welcome visitors after over four years of work to acquire, plan, and construct potentially one of the largest recreation experiences offered in the OPRD portfolio. In September, the first phase of park development will be complete and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission will celebrate the opening of the park. Preparations for the opening include work in several areas.

Planning

Park Manager Tom Petersen has been working with local emergency services providers in Gilliam County to finalize the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) that will finalize the land use process. Previous efforts have secured a similar agreement with Sherman County, where the majority of facility development is taking place. The IGA will be completed in time to begin work at the JS Burres site. This is the final land use approval step for the park.

OPRD is also moving forward with lease discussions with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the federal property intertwined with State owned property. The BLM has begun to gather information that will be used to conduct a required environmental analysis. Much of the background work OPRD has done for the comprehensive plan can be utilized to shorten the time needed to complete the federal work. BLM anticipates that the lease process can be completed by the summer of 2014. This will facilitate the next phase of trail development.

Development and Construction of Visitor Experience Facilities

Opening Cottonwood Canyon State Park to the public has always been planned for the fall, largely to take advantage of the first full construction season after the park planning process was completed. The first phase of development focused on the primary visitor support facilities. The initial goal was to ensure that roads, parking areas, restrooms, a visitor contact station, and a picnic area were complete at opening. OPRD contractors and staff will meet this goal and also meet the reach goals of having the rustic campground, hiker biker camp sites, and site amenities that include unique interpretive opportunities. Despite delays in starting construction due to unforeseen land use delays, the construction contract is on schedule, and within budget.

The development of visitor experience facilities will continue to focus on a rugged experience that allows visitors to appreciate and understand the unique landscape of the lower John Day River. The first phase of trail development will allow visitors entry into the various canyons that surround the main development areas. Access for anglers, hunters, hikers, bikers, and wildlife watchers will be through a series of trails that utilize existing ranch roads and jeep tracks. Throughout this trail system, the ranch theme will be extended through a family of informational kiosks and trail markers that mirror rock-jacks and ranch style fencing.

The overall visitor experience is also being shaped by ongoing restoration efforts, primarily along the river in the main day use area. Agency staff has been working on weed control and re-vegetation. Some of this work will help screen any new development from the Scenic John Day River, some is also being supported at a part of a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) project. This is a federally funded program that helps preserve agricultural land through restoration of native plants. This program has helped supplement OPRD restoration efforts and will help re-establish native plant communities along the river bank. The CREP process was started by Western Rivers Conservancy and will be managed by OPRD.

Park Opening Event

The park opening celebration will be a celebration of the first phase of recreational facilities. It will also be a chance to welcome visitors to the park and to the communities that surround the park in Sherman, Gilliam, and Wheeler Counties. During the planning and development phase the input from local communities has provided valuable knowledge that has shaped park development. That input has extended to planning the opening celebration. A local planning committee has been developing a support network for the park opening. Local vendors and residents are helping to ensure that the opening ceremonies not only welcome people to the park, but also highlight the communities of the region.

The park opening event will focus on highlighting the accomplishments of the various people, organizations, and stakeholders that have come together to bring Cottonwood Canyon from concept to park opening. Park opening will also include an emphasis on art in the park, including a new poem written for Cottonwood Canyon by the Oregon Poet Laureate. The day will also include opportunities for short exploratory hikes and interpretive programming. An essential contribution of the local community is support for a wider vision of park opening. While the formal ceremony will be held during the Commission visit, plans are in place to extend the opening celebration to the weekend.

Prior Action by Commission: Approval of the Cottonwood Canyon Comprehensive Plan July 2011

Action Requested: None

Attachments: None

Prepared by: MG Devereux