

# Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

February 5, 2014

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Agenda Item: 12a Information

Topic: State Scenic Waterways Program Study

Presented by: Jim Morgan

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**Background:**

The Scenic Waterways Act was passed in 1970 by a popular vote with a 2:1 margin. It was established, in part, to be a companion to the Federal National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, which was established in 1968 and applies to Federal lands. The Oregon Act attempts to strike a balance between protecting natural resources and scenic diversity of Oregon's waterways while supporting the needs of riverbank property owners. The goal of the system is to preserve and protect selected rivers "in a free-flowing condition and protect and preserve the natural setting and water quality...and fulfill other conservation purposes." The system currently includes approximately 1,150 miles on 19 rivers and Waldo Lake.

**Planning Efforts: 2013-2015**

As directed by the Oregon Legislature (ORS 390.855), OPRD is expected to study waterways for inclusion in the State Scenic Waterways program and submit periodic reports to the Governor, and with the concurrence of the State Parks Commission and Water Resources Commission, recommend the designation of additional rivers or segments of rivers to the Governor as State Scenic Waterways. The Governor directed the Department, in his letter dated September 23, 2013, to conduct analysis and study on a minimum of three waterway segments per biennium, depending on the availability of operational resources.

To cost-effectively evaluate and select potential State Scenic Waterways study areas, the department will integrate the selection process with the department's 10-year trails planning process that will be completed in 2015. Selection of the initial list of waterways for study from the state-wide comprehensive list will follow the methodology described in Attachment A.

An advisory task force composed of vested agencies and non-governmental organizations met in January 2014. They have reviewed and approved the selection methodology, screened the comprehensive list of potential river segments, and made recommendations for initial river segments for study in 13-15 biennium. For the remainder of 2014, the planning process includes a state-wide non-motorized boater survey, a web-based survey of recreational user groups, and regional issues workshops. By June 2015, a report will be submitted to the Governor that summarizes the process, provide a selected list of potential State Scenic Waterway study areas for future biennium, and report on the river segments under study for completion in the 13-15 biennium.

**Prior Action by the Commission:** None.

**Action Requested:** None

**Attachments:** Attachment A - Evaluating and Selecting Potential State Scenic Waterway Study Areas

**Prepared by:** Laurel Hillmann, Terry Bergerson and Jim Morgan

## ATTACHMENT A

### Evaluating and Selecting Potential State Scenic Waterway Study Areas

The following is a description of the methods used by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to generate an initial list of potential Scenic Waterway Study Reaches and to evaluate individual river reaches on the list.

1. Potential candidate list. A listing of 217 potential Scenic Waterway reaches was developed from a review of past planning efforts and studies conducted for Oregon waterways. Information sources included the National Park Service (NPS) National Rivers Inventory, an OPRD study entitled *Recreational Values on Oregon Rivers*, local jurisdiction Comprehensive Plans, and river segments included in Oregon Senate Bill 401 (2013 Regular Session).
2. Recreation Resource Quality. The recreation resource quality score was derived from results of a 1987 study entitled *Recreational Values on Oregon Rivers* which assessed the recreational importance of 186 Oregon river segments. Respondents included 165 organizations and individuals including recreational professionals and land managers, user groups such as recreational outfitters and guides, fishing, boating and hiking clubs. Respondents were asked to rate 9 distinct recreation activities including 1) power boating, 2) canoes/kayaks, 3) drift boats, 4) inflatable rafts, 5) sailboats/ sail boards, 6) salmon/steelhead fishing, 7) resident trout fishing, 8) warm water fishing, and 9) other recreation qualities (e.g., hiking, swimming, camping, nature viewing). The recreation quality score for each individual variable is 1=Outstanding recreational resources, 2=Substantial recreational resources, 3=Moderate recreational resources, 4=Limited recreational resources, 5=Little or no recreational resources, and 0=Unknown. The final recreation quality ranking for river reaches included on the spreadsheet is the MEDIAN VALUE for all nine recreation activity scores for the river corridor.
3. Scenic Quality Potential. The potential scenic quality of river reaches was derived from a GIS analysis of topographic range, slope diversity, and land cover variety of each river corridor. Each of these variables received a coefficient of 1. An additive summary provided an overall value for scenic potential. The scenic potential values were reclassified to low, medium, and high values based on the Jenks natural breaks optimization. Each water course was buffered by 1,500 feet as a surrogate for the ¼ mile jurisdictional boundary of the State Scenic Waterway rules. This allowed for variation in the location of riverbank between water courses and did not adversely affect the outcome. A tabulation analysis between the buffered areas and the classified scenic potential results determined the rank for each water course. The scenic value ranking score for river corridors included on the spreadsheet is 0=Low, 1=Medium, 2=High.
4. Evaluating Reaches. To reduce the long list of 217 potential corridors, all reaches with median recreation resource scores of 4 (limited recreational resources) and 5 (little or no recreational resources) were removed from the list. Potential corridors with scenic quality potential scores of 0 (low) were also removed from the list. The list was then sorted recreation quality ranking (1 highest) and scenic potential (2 highest).