



Why a Statewide Trails Plan?

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is currently in the process of conducting a Statewide Trails Plan for Oregon. The primary reason for the planning effort is to provide long-range direction for OPRD administered grant programs including the State Recreation Trail Fund (a federal aid assistance program) and the All-Terrain Vehicle Program (funded with revenue collected from ATV user permit sales and a percentage of gasoline tax dollars related to ATV use). A portion of these funds go directly to providing recreational opportunities and trail facilities for all Oregon residents and visitors.

The trails plan will also address a growing interest in developing additional paddling routes (water trails) throughout the state. Water trails are typically designed for users of small watercraft such as canoes, sea kayaks, rowboats, hand-carried sailboats and drift boats. Like other recreational trails, water trails are corridors between specific locations. Water trails are comprised of recreation facilities including a safe place for the public to put in, parking for motorized vehicles, sanitation facilities, a safe place to take out, and in some cases day-use sites and overnight camp sites. Water trails are intended to manage a significant growth in non-motorized boating activity which has occurred in recent years. A 138% increase in annual non-motorized boating user occasions was reported between 1987 and 2002 in the 2003-2007 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

The Planning Process

OPRD began the 2-year planning process in January 2003, by compiling and reviewing a large collection of current trails plans from across the country. During this review, we examined methodologies used in the evaluation of trail supply, demand, public involvement, and needs assessment. The Oregon Statewide Trails Plan will adapt the "best planning techniques" identified from these trails plans. The effort involves separate (but concurrent) motorized, non-motorized and water trails planning components. The final products will include 3 planning documents, packaged into one volume. Final documents are scheduled for completion in December 2004.

The 2005 Oregon Statewide Trails Plan will include the following primary components: 1) a regional planning approach; 2) planning assistance from steering committees; 3) identification of regional and statewide trails issues; 4) a statewide trails inventory; 5) a statewide trail user survey; 6) a critical resource list; and 7) a statewide trails planning website. Below is a description of these planning components.

1. A Regional Planning Approach

The 2003-2007 SCORP identified 11 distinct planning regions in the state. These boundaries provided the most practical basis for providing recreation information needed by federal, state and local units of government to identify key recreational issues, facility and resource deficiencies and supply and demand information for their planning efforts. After a discussion of potential regional boundaries, OPRD planning staff identified a total of 6 regions for the trails planning effort (combinations of 2003-2007 SCORP planning regions). Each region is of sufficient geographic differences to have a unique set of issues and associated management concerns.

2. Planning Assistance From Steering Committees

Early in the planning effort, OPRD established 3 separate steering committees (motorized, non-motorized and water) to assist with the concurrent planning process. Steering committee members were selected to ensure adequate agency/organizational and geographic coverage and trail-user group representation. Steering Committee Members are responsible for the following planning tasks: reviewing the basic planning framework; determining the basic plan outline; identifying significant regional and statewide trails issues and solutions; recommending actions that enhance motorized, non-motorized and water trail opportunities in the state; reviewing survey methodology

and instruments; and recommending a set of project evaluation criteria for the OPRD administered Recreation Trail Program and All-Terrain Vehicle Grant Programs.

3. Identification of Regional and Statewide Trails Issues

During the months of April and May 2003, OPRD staff conducted a series of regional trails issues workshops across the state. Each workshop included an afternoon session open to all public recreation providers and an evening session open to the general public. Approximately 230 people attended a workshop, including representatives from 56 public-sector recreation provider organizations. During the workshops, 281 motorized, 292 non-motorized and 160 water trails issue comments were gathered and recorded.

A complete listing of issues can be found on the SCORP Planning Website at

http://www.prd.state.or.us/trailsplanning_issues.php OPRD would like to encourage individuals and organizations to submit additions to the issues lists included on the website. Please submit your comments through the interactive website **by July 16, 2003**.

At the conclusion of the planning process, a set of goals, objectives and strategies will be developed for the top motorized, non-motorized and water trails statewide issues. These goals, objectives and strategies will be developed for use by recreation decision makers across the state to develop policies and actions for resolving the top statewide trails issues.

4. A Statewide Trails Inventory

The Oregon Statewide Trails Inventory is intended to provide a systematic review and inventory of the entire public trails system in Oregon. The overall goal of this project is to create databases containing trail information that can be accessed by government agencies, libraries, and recreationists for management and trip planning purposes. The databases will be compatible with geographic information systems (GIS) and will allow agencies and other users to identify and map trail resources and characteristics for public lands in Oregon. Trail resources in the statewide inventory will include existing and proposed significant roads, trails and accessible areas for legal off-highway vehicle (OHV) operation; non-motorized recreational trails; and water trails.

5. A Statewide Trails User Survey

The 2003 Oregon Trails Survey will assess the opinions of approximately 1,500 Oregonians (500 for each of the 3 participation groups) who have participated in trail (motorized and non-motorized) and non-motorized boating activities in the state during the past 12 months. The survey design will provide statistically reliable results for each of the 3 participation groups allowing for analysis at the statewide level. Survey objectives include identifying barriers to participation; key trail issues; state funding priorities; level of satisfaction with current facilities and services; facility preferences; and level-of-challenge preferences.

6. A Critical Resource List

The plan will also include a list of critical informational resources such as trails related participation studies (National, Regional, State); federal, state and local trails planning information; maintenance and design standards; accessibility standards; and socioeconomic benefits associated with trail development. In addition, an up-to-date list of trail-related governmental and private grant resources will be presented.

7. A Statewide Trails Planning Website

The Statewide Trails Planning Website is now online at <http://www.prd.state.or.us/trailsplanning.php> The site includes a wide variety of information related to the statewide trails planning effort. Please look for additions to the website as the planning process continues.....