

MARION COUNTY PARKS COMMISSION MEETING

February 12, 2004

Attending: John Brandt, Wynn Cudmore, Robert Garrett, Laura Graves, Michael Higgs, Nick McDonough, Jyll Smith, Tanya Beard, Orville Rice, Jeff Bickford, Matt Thorburn

Recorder: Diana Craig

Introductions:

- Matt T. announced that his involvement with our parks program will now be limited, as 75% of his time will now be spent on regulatory compliance for MCPW.
- Laura G. works for Bureau of Land Management.
- Michael H. had previously worked for MC parks department and is now retired.
- Jyll S. is the development director of Girl Scouts.
- Tanya B. is the botanist for MCPW parks and is closely involved with our vegetation management program. As our botanist she will be the contact for the parks commission board.
- Jeff B. is the supervisor for the Environmental Services Department, of which Parks is a division, and is a solid waste environmental engineer.
- Nick M. is retired from the Forest Service, director of planning in Arizona, and spent time in the Peace Corp in Africa. He now lives in Stayton.
- Orville R. is the Parks Coordinator for Marion County Parks.
- Wynn C. is a life sciences teacher at Chemeketa Community College. Working with undeveloped parks is a special interest for his classes.
- Rob G. has 20 yrs. park experience and was previously a "Friends" organizer. Public interest is his motive for helping out with the parks commission. His background is in the mental health field as a counselor.
- John B. has been on the parks board for many years and is a retired teacher.

Jeff noted that the parks board is now fully staffed. Orville gave the group an update on the storm damage caused by this past winter's snow event. There was a lot of minor damage and numerous trees down, but no buildings were damaged.

The announcement was made that Stayton's new parks project is now official. Property currently owned by Oregon State Parks and Rec., potentially may be leased to the City of Keizer for park use. There is a possibility to acquire up to a total of 155 acres for that area. Mid-Willamette Connections is interested in a river trail. The primary goal is to start with a river trail from the Buena Vista ferry to Wheatland ferry. Initially it may be a water trail. It might be several years to develop a land trail for biking and hiking.

Bonesteele Park, just received a seed stripper that will be used to harvest grass seed. We plan to sell or plant specific grasses with those harvested seeds. It would be very beneficial to install a counter to track numbers of visitors to this park.

Handouts:

The material presented would be a great help in determining direction for the parks commission with the process of setting up a master plan.

Marion County Parks Master Plan

Summary of Intent

The intention for this master plan is to create a defined but living document under which the County can better manage its parks.

The initial stage of this creation will incorporate the efforts of the Marion County Parks Commissioners who will help provide some insight into potential needs in our parks, as well as assist with defining possible method for attaining those needs.

The first step is to create short-term goals. Those should be attainable over the course of the creation of this document, or approximately two years. Those goals and ideas, and how best to attain, them will then be taken to several community meetings (not yet arranged) for public input. Community members will also be asked for their thoughts regarding the long-term goals for Marion County Parks. The information gathered at these meetings will then be compiled and brought back to the Parks Commission for further discussion.

Once compilation and review are complete, the remaining details can be identified and refined. Items such as long-term goals for the Parks division will include: setting priorities for improvement areas, defined goals for each park, including growth/maintenance: defined park access: defined park users: ways to increase usage: and, ways of handling donated properties. Once we've completed this process, the budget refinement can be organized and prioritized into a working document. That completed document will then be moved through the Board of Commissioners for their review and final approval. At this point, the Parks Division will be able to move forward with implementation of the plan. Periodic review of activities and progress by the Parks Commission will be part of the arrangement.

Define Goals first for the Parks Program

- Determining a reasonable time frame to create the new master plan.
- This process may take up to take several years to draft and implement the complete master plan.
- With our current level of incoming revenues shrinking, it is imperative to research new sources of revenue in order to reach our goals.
- Set level of service desired.
- Start with setting up short-term goals.
- Continue to work towards these goals, while the main plan is being developed.
- Take a close look at the budget to determine what goals are currently within our reach.
- Review existing conditions in our parks and evaluate immediate and long-term needs.
- Determine what our Marion County citizens feel is the best use of our parks.
- Strategic partnerships with the community to provide environmental education programs.
- Brainstorm ideas to generate revenue for our parks.
- Are there any ways our parks can generate revenue?
- Recruit community partnerships to generate volunteers & revenue.
- Research the possibilities to take advantage of available grant monies.
- With dwindling budgets, protect the park programs we already have in place.

- Collaboration with other agencies.
- Potential for involving private businesses for PR, involvement with environmental programs.
- Educating our educators, by letting them know that our parks are a great resource to provide educational opportunities.

Short-Term Action Plan

Develop Master Plan

- Individual “needs assessment” for each park
- Level of service that is being provided currently
- Community outreach programs
- Understand other providers

Maintenance

- Focus on high-use parks
- Parks tour w/ Parks Commission
- Restoration

Long-Term Action Plan

- Funding for maintenance

[Parks Presentation \(PDF format\)](#)

Park Categories

- Natural Heritage – environmental appreciation with some recreation
- Canyon – outdoor recreation, Santiam River
- North Fork – more outdoor recreation, North Fork of Santiam
- Rural Community – in small country settings, typically away from major thoroughfares
- Neighborhood – within more densely populated communities

NATURAL HERITAGE PARKS

Bonesteale

- Between Salem & Aumsville
- 31 acres in restoration – 5 acres mixed woodland, 5 acres semi-restored oak savannah, 19 acres in process to upland prairie
- Partnerships with USFWS, USDA/NRCS, Grant School, Willamette University, and a variety of volunteer groups

Aumsville Ponds

- A 77-acre park with open water, wetland areas, a small forest and upland
- Previously an ODOT mitigation site
- Currently in process of being recreated and enhanced for recreation, wildlife habitat and environmental studies
- Partners include Waldo Middle School, Chemeketa Community College, ODFW, USFWS, Marion SWCD, NRCS

CANYON PARKS (HWY. 22)

Minto Park

- Borders Santiam River
- Good fishing, beautiful views, hiking trails – undeveloped but possible

- Established picnic areas
- Previous Boy Scout and Eagle Scout restoration projects
- Adopted by Northwest Steelheaders & Albertina Kerr Centers

Packsaddle

- Borders the Santiam River
- The only county park with a boat ramp
- The smallest and often most well-used of our canyon parks
- Adopted by Santiam River Guides Association

Niagara

- Exceptional views of the Santiam River and waterfalls
- Woodland trails, one with a suspension bridge
- Quiet picnic opportunities
- Historic value

NORTH FORK PARKS

Little North Fork

- Excellent river access (lots of swimming happens during the summer)
- A remarkable place for a picnic
- Somewhat family-oriented with regard to clientele
- Short hiking loops
- Adopted by the Lorne Schleufer Family

Bear Creek

- Great picnic area
- Potential for camping sites
- Improved access with brand new stairway

Salmon Falls

- Scenic area
- Short hiking trails
- Picnic areas
- Fish ladder, operated by Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

RURAL COMMUNITY PARKS

Joryville

- South Salem hills
- Short, steep paved trail to top of hill
- Picnic area next to small stream
- Horse corral and horse trails

Rogers Wayside

- Formally Evergreen Wayside – renamed in honor of a man who was very active in the community, especially Parks
- Adjacent to Oregon Gardens
- Large ball field
- Picnic shelter

Scotts Mills

- Wading pool
- Attractive open field
- Picnic areas
- Playground
- Historic value

St. Louis Ponds

- Multiple inter-connected ponds for fishing, some are ADA accessible
- Dog training area (currently the only dog-friendly area in Marion County Parks)
- Park host present during summer (represents the Fish & Wildlife Dept. who maintains adjacent land)
- Picnic areas

Spongs Landing

- Two picnic shelters that can be reserved during the summertime
- Multiple picnic tables
- A slide, and lots of space for additional play equipment
- Ball field
- Open spaces

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Denny

- Attractive small park one street off NE Lancaster
- Densely wooded
- Existing play equipment
- Recent removal of some diseased trees (requires constant monitoring)
- Adopted by neighborhood association

Labish Village

- Our smallest developed park
- Half-court basketball court
- Playground equipment
- Softball field
- Picnic areas

Santana

- Multi-use basketball and tennis court
- Horseshoe pits
- Picnic area
- Softball field
- Large, open area (Frisbee, volleyball, dog walks)
- Adopted by Houck Middle School

One of the group's immediate goals is to set up 3 to 4 community meetings to cover the complex regional areas of the county to assess the community's input on what they see in the future for their parks. Let the community know the scope of the "lack of funds" and what is currently available; possibly include a survey for the community's input with our next Environmental Service's "Waste Matters." This insert goes out county wide with the Statesman Journal newspaper twice a year. The deadline for this publication is coming up by the end of March. If we can take advantage of this opportunity, the cost would be very affordable.

The Parks Commission group plans to conduct extensive research to review county's priorities, and review our possible opportunities for raising revenues and determining the public's needs for our parks. They can then begin to start developing our long-term goals.

Next Commission meeting: set up a tour of the parks for the commission members and tentatively schedule tour around mid-summer. Work out the logistics on which parks to visit.

There will be updates at our next meeting (i.e., what's going on in the parks, maintenance accomplishments, upcoming needs, problem areas, etc). We plan to look at the preliminary outline of the strategic plan that we have developed so far. Also, an update is planned of what we've accomplished towards our goals for the next upcoming projects. Upcoming improvement projects include: trail restoration, footbridges, and the repair of Scotts Mills parking lot . To get started on improvements for Spongs Landing, we need to be successful in obtaining grant funding.