

Lane County Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update

Public Involvement Plan

Approved by Parks Advisory Committee on November 8, 2004

Approved by Lane County Planning Commission on November 16, 2004

VISION STATEMENT

Lane County Parks will be recognized for providing thriving natural areas, accessible and well-maintained facilities, and a variety of recreational opportunities in a fiscally responsible manner.

BACKGROUND

The Lane County Parks and Open Space Master Plan was first adopted in January 1981. The Plan is a component of the County General Plan and Rural Comprehensive Plan. Now 24 years old, an update to the 1980 Plan is long overdue. State land use requirements for Parks Master Planning have changed, and uses that the Parks Division would like to develop within the Parks must be a part of an adopted master plan. The population has grown 17.3% (1980-2000 Census), and the County has experienced significant demographic shifts and corresponding changes in the dynamics of demand for parks, recreation, and open space. Financial realities at the state and local level and within County government have concentrated public service priorities on basic health and safety, with major impacts on Parks Division operations.

As the 1980 Plan's relevance diminished over the years, and as circumstances changed, the County Parks Division has in many respects been forced into a reactive mode, doing what is necessary to make outdoor recreation available to County residents. In the absence of a plan that reflects current conditions and anticipates the future, it has been a challenge for the Parks Division to perform strategically and to stabilize funding. Management strategies respond to public open space and recreational needs with leaner approaches and by taking advantage of opportunities as they arise. Meanwhile, the population continues on a steady climb, ensuring that demand for recreational open space will continue to grow.

For all of these reasons, an updated County Parks and Open Space Master Plan is not only prudent but a necessary ingredient in County government efforts to continue to maintain a relatively high quality of life for Lane County citizens.

PURPOSE

The purpose of adopting a new Lane County Parks and Open Space Master Plan is to:

- Replace the outdated 1980 Lane County Parks and Open Space Master Plan;
- Comply with applicable state land use laws and other state and local policies and regulations;
- Forecast and document public need and demand for recreation and open space resources, and develop a corresponding set of goals, policies, and recommendations, consistent with the Parks Division Vision Statement, to meet this demand for the next 20 years;
- Market Lane County Parks to potential new users and financial sources; and
- Be a working document that serves as both a reference and a compass for Lane County Parks Division and other public and private interests working with the Division.

OVERALL PLAN CONCEPT

Generally speaking the Master Plan update will look at and document existing County Parks conditions, analyze needs and issues, and set forth goals, policies and recommendations. The effort will use a combination of substantive information and public involvement procedures to evaluate County Parks today and for the future. These include 1) Parks staff knowledge and participation in Plan development; 2) statistical data regarding population demographics and recreational preferences; 3) inventory data of parklands, facilities, and amenities; and 4) public outreach.

In January 2003, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department published the 2003-2007 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). It includes a detailed Demand and Needs Analysis, based in part on a 2002 survey of Oregon residents. The report is organized by region, and delineates recreational needs and demands for Lane County in two state regions—one east of the Coast range and one west, with the latter also covering coastal Lincoln County. In combination with public outreach efforts conducted by County staff for the Parks Master Plan update, the SCORP analysis, including the 2002 survey, will be an important piece of the needs assessment and future plans and recommendations for Lane County Parks.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT COMPONENTS

Staffing

Long range planning staff from two Public Works sections—Engineering/Transportation Planning and Land Management/Planning --will work with Parks Division staff to coordinate with other agencies, stakeholders, and the public in Plan development. This will include holding meetings, scheduling Parks Advisory Committee, Lane County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners work sessions and hearings, disseminating information to the public, as well as soliciting input, and communicating how comments are considered and dealt with.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff in the Transportation Planning Section are producing maps for the Plan.

Staff Visioning Retreat

In October 2004 the Parks Division held a staff retreat facilitated by long range planning staff. The day-long retreat covered several topical areas including critical issues, parklands, community, customer service, equipment and maintenance, and financing. The discussion provided a foundation of information about existing conditions, issues, and the future envisioned by Parks Division staff who are directly involved with Lane County parklands and users on a daily basis.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC will be composed primarily of agencies within and outside of Lane County government that have recreational land management responsibilities or other jurisdictional relationships to County, State, and City parklands. The TAC's purpose is to provide review and comment with regard to jurisdictional and technical issues.

Interested Parties Mailing List

The mailing list for the Plan update is one of the most important public involvement pieces because it allows us to directly contact individuals and groups with a known or potential interest in Lane County Parks. The list will be extensive, and is being developed from the following sources:

- a. Agency and stakeholder contacts on Parks Division mailing lists for the Parks Advisory Committee, picnic reservations, moorage holdings, and events;
- b. Board of County Commissioners agenda mailing list;
- c. Lane County Planning Commission agenda mailing list;

- d. Lane County City Councils, public service providers, private businesses, private service organizations, watershed councils and other nonprofit groups with a known or potential interest in parks planning.

Web Site

The Web has proven to be highly effective and efficient in disseminating information during previous long range planning efforts. The User Survey form (discussed below) is now available on the Parks Division web page. Draft Plan materials and supplementary information will also be published on the web site. The web site will encourage review of and written comment on the draft, provide information and updates about meetings and other aspects of the public involvement and adoption process, and provide staff contact information.

Focus Groups

There are few people in Lane County who would claim a lack of interest in parklands, so public outreach that casts a wide net is critical. Past experience shows that newspaper and other media outreach, no matter how concerted such efforts may be, do not achieve the level of notice appropriate for the level of interest that the Parks and Open Space master planning effort is expected to generate. Therefore, staff will make individual contact to specific, key interests, or 'focus groups'. Recreational interests, non-profit and quasi-public organizations, private recreation service and product suppliers, agencies responsible for safety, and tourism and chamber interests will all be contacted to meet in groups, individually, or by teleconference.

User Surveys

A half-page user survey was distributed during the 2004 Summer parks season primarily in developed parks in and near the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area, including Howard Buford Recreation Area and County parks surrounding Fern Ridge Reservoir. The form is also available in English and Spanish on the Parks Division web site. Staff is publicizing the survey through a news release to area print, radio, and television media, non-profit organization newsletters, and events. Comments submitted will be a part of the public record and used in developing Plan content.

Public Hearings

Lane Code Chapters 12 and 16 provide procedural requirements based upon state land use law for processing plan amendments. At least one hearing before the Planning Commission and one before the Board of County Commissioners is required prior to adoption. The public hearing with the Planning Commission will be scheduled jointly with the County Parks Advisory Committee. A news release will publicize the hearings to all print, television and radio media, and legal notices will be published in the Eugene Register-Guard.

After each hearing is concluded, staff will prepare written responses to issues raised. The draft Parks Master Plan Update will be amended as appropriate based upon direction of appointed and elected officials, and adopted by ordinance.

Public Record

All public processes will be documented in the record which will be made available to the Parks Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Board of County Commissioners. Written comments will be included in hard copy and summarized with staff responses and recommendations, and a record of any resulting revisions to the Plan documents.