

Notes from River Plan / South Reach – Recreation Stakeholders Meeting - 3/6/18 @ Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability, Rm 7A

ATTENDEES

Andrew Wall, President, DragonSports USA;
Willie Levenson, Ringleader, Human Access
Project;
Jeffrey Sher, Board member, David Valentine,
Manager, and Rachael Ellis, Willamette Sailing
Club;

David Cohen, Interim Director, Intertwine;
Robert Spurlock, Metro;
Emily Roth, Portland Parks & Recreation staff;
Debbie Bischoff, Jeff Caudill, and Sallie
Edmunds, BPS South Reach project staff

NOTES

Debbie explained the purpose of this meeting – to gain initial input from key stakeholders to help inform existing conditions work and help frame the project. Today’s meeting is focusing on in water and on land recreation in the South Reach. Project staff are meeting with other groups, e.g. environmental stakeholders.

Jeff provided an overview of the River Plan / South Reach planning effort and timeline, referring to the one-page project handout.

Meeting attendees then spent the rest of the meeting providing input to staff. The following is a summary of comments received at this meeting:

Unique Character of South Reach

- Meeting attendees shared that they have very personal and special relationships with this stretch of the Willamette River. An example is viewing bald eagles and other wildlife while kayaking on the river.
- Should be celebrated as one of the City’s largest public spaces!

Transient Boaters

- Meeting attendees raised concerns about transient boaters and campers on Hard Tack Island beach and at other locations. They are concerned about sanitation and safety of nonmotorized boat users (transient boat lines across the river, lack of lighting on these boats, etc.) These boats are also an eyesore in natural areas.
- Ross Island Sand and Gravel (RISG) is interested in seeing transient boaters removed from Ross Island. The understanding of the group is that RISG is discussing installing no trespassing signage; the location and content of signage are currently under discussion.
- Suggestion made for State to develop enforceable policies on short-term river use – no long-term usage outside of permanent structures and homes.

Access

- Need more places for “toes in the water” – Human Access Project believes physical access for people should be prioritized.
- Would like to see access points for in-water recreation publicized.
- More access needs for kayakers on both sides of the river, including docks without railings.
- Sellwood Riverfront Park and Oaks Crossing beach used extensively. PP&R negotiating with Multnomah County for boater and swimmer access near Sellwood Ferry Road on west side of river.
- Need to be creative in activating the riverfront and getting people to the river.

Trails/Connections

- Comment about underutilization of the Willamette Greenway Trail (on west side of river) as a bicyclist using the trail, and an appreciation of the South Reach riverfront “hard to believe it’s in our city”.
 - Comment response that there are more bicyclists on the trail since the rebuild of the Sellwood Bridge.
- Information also provided on Metro’s long-range regional trail plan including southern trail connections.
- Question asked about South Reach planning’s relationship to Lake Oswego? Suggested Lake Oswego be a partner on regional trail connectivity. Metro offered to talk more with project staff regarding regional trail connectivity.
- Tryon Creek connection mentioned, trails that meet with culvert. South Reach part of a bigger system.
- Information provided on a river-based trail along the Willamette River – Oregon State Parks, Department of State Lands (DSL) and Willamette Riverkeeper, are promoting a long distance non-motorized river trail. Amenities are desired along the river trail including signage, restrooms and overnight camping for these boaters.
- Elk Rock Island tunnel on Bishops Close is too narrow for a trail and rail service to co-exist.

Recreation Demand

- Willamette Sailing Club (WSC) representatives expect that with Portland’s population increasing, there will be more demand for boaters.
- DragonSports USA membership limited by number of boats.
- End of SE Spokane St. may be a good option for a formal non-motorized boat launching area.

Recreation Conflicts/Safety Concerns

- WSC has the largest youth learning to sail program in the NW. Concerned about reckless and drunk motor boaters. WSC has hired Multnomah Co. River Patrol to patrol the river during WSC events.

- Group support for “no wake zone” or safety corridor with reduced boater speeds. Appreciative of no wake zone in Holgate Channel and enforcement of boater speeds.
- The river can be shallow at places in the summer – more dangerous for boaters, reinforces need for safety corridor area. Want safe waterways not grounded boats.
- Suggestion for safety corridors based on width of river.
- Comment shared that it is often safer to paddle in the wider river industrial area than South Reach.
- It was assumed that a new lower speed zone would be supported by others, e.g. Oregon Yacht Club.

Boat Storage

- Nonmotorized boaters need accessible to river boat storage for personal use and rentals.
- The Portland Boathouse and Lewis and Clark College have contacted Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) ask for boat storage/access in the South Reach.
- Need to look for opportunities under bridges for boat storage containers and replace eyesore spaces with boat storage containers.

Agency Collaboration – Rail ROW to South

- Information provided on the railroad corridor that runs parallel to the river on the west side: it is co-owned by 6 government entities provided that rail use continues. If rail service were to go away, the rail right-of-way ownership reverts to adjacent property owners per an agreement years ago.
- A brief history of a rapid streetcar planning project from South Waterfront to Lake Oswego was provided. The plan nearly went through except for opposition for neighbors along the corridor and Lake Oswego City Council.

Environmental Concerns

- Sellwood Bridge work changed the river’s topography, e.g. new sandbar north of Willamette Park.
- Willamette Park Management Plan includes the laying back of the riverbank for habitat and a swimming beach area, separate from boating area.
- Want solutions to eradicate algae bloom in the Holgate Channel by Ross Island. Suggested irrigation canals/removing Ross Island land bridge (fill) to break up algae bloom.

General

- DragonSports USA draws members from all over region (Salem, Vancouver) and South Reach is a central location for dragon boating and outrigger canoeing.
- Look at connectivity adjacent to the South Reach boundary, for example, Zidell riverfront redevelopment project and how might that project change our thinking about the South Reach.

Suggested Contacts

- Suggested for land-based trails: Jim Sjulín from 40-Mile Land Trust. This group is interested in trails at Sellwood Riverfront Park and Oaks Bottom.
- Project can interact with Intertwine and quarterly Trails meeting (April 25) and a trails event (June). Intertwine newsletter distributed to 6,000 people.