

CHAPTER **

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration is the lifeblood of initiatives to create public recreational facilities and opportunities. Multi-partner strategies and programmatic approaches such as the Rivers to Ridges Vision in the county's metropolitan area, and the Siuslaw Estuary Trail System in western Lane County, provide for public recreation, open space and natural resource assets for the long term. As part of its long range plan, a high priority for the County Parks Division will be to continue to strengthen and expand its relationships with other agencies, organizations, and individuals who promote or have an interest in public parks and recreation.

In addition to routinely collaborating with public agencies and the private sector on public recreation and natural resource protection efforts, the community at large includes numerous individuals and organizations with important connections to Lane County Parks. In 2006, more than 1,100 volunteers donated over 10,000 hours of their time to County Parks. This included advisory committee work, hosting, riverside cleanup, organizing and staffing Run for the Mountain at Mt. Pisgah, Trail Patrol, Adopt-A-Trail and Adopt-A Park programs, youth projects, and staffing booths at area events. Many private individuals also take time out of their busy lives to care for Lane County Parks on their own initiative, near where they live. Highlights are provided in this chapter.

Community Connections

PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Parks Advisory Committee consists of seven at-large community volunteers appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. Lane Manual states that the Parks Advisory Committee "Advises the Board of County Commissioners on park needs of County residents and visitors regarding County park facilities. Recommends priorities for projects, including financial and operational development and acquisition. Also provides recommendations regarding long-range planning for future park programs and future park needs. Serves as a liaison group representing the concern of the community with regard to parks." The Committee is an important player in the management of the county parks system, and a valuable community connection.

CARETAKERS, HOSTS, AND CONCESSIONAIRES

Caretakers and hosts, especially at overnight facilities, are often the first contact a park user has with a county park representative. They perform a variety of services and may live at a park seasonally or year round. Caretakers work under contract, and live in residences at all overnight facilities and some day use parks. They take reservations, collect fees, oversee maintenance, cleaning, and repairs, address customer concerns and complaints, provide information, report problems, and help ensure parks are operating smoothly. Hosts are present at overnight facilities and some day use areas to generally provide a presence, literally acting as hosts for park guests. They also perform some maintenance and act as a communication link with Parks staff.

In addition to their important role as customer service providers, caretakers and hosts are key to promoting safety and reducing vandalism at parks.

Concessionaires currently operate seasonally at two Lane County parks – Baker Bay and Orchard Point. In addition, Camp Lane has a kitchen staff available for hire.

Caretakers, hosts, and concessionaires are all considered a part of the County Parks Division 'family'. Many go above and beyond their obligations to make county parks a welcoming, safe place.

WATERSHED COUNCILS

Lane County's five watershed councils are officially recognized by the Board of County Commissioners, and a Commissioner sits on each watershed council. Oregon revised statutes provides that watershed councils are voluntary local organizations convened by the County to address the goal of sustaining natural resource and watershed protection and enhancement within a watershed. They are unique in providing an officially recognized, private forum for convening a diversity of interests who share a common resource: the watershed basin, the natural resources it sustains and host of values and uses it supports. Watershed councils are an invaluable link between Lane County and the larger community served.

Lane County's Watershed Councils include Siuslaw, Long Tom, Coast Fork Willamette, McKenzie, and Middle Fork Willamette. The McKenzie Watershed Council joined Lane County Parks in creating the Crilly Nature Trail, produced an interpretive trail brochure, and help with ongoing trail maintenance. The Long Tom, McKenzie, and Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Councils served on the Technical Advisory Committee for the Lane County Parks Master Plan update. Councils obtain grants and other funding for watershed restoration projects, often working with Lane County Public Works on fish-friendly road culvert replacements.

McKenzie River Cooperative Maintenance Partnership

In 1993, the McKenzie Watershed Council was instrumental in organizing the McKenzie River Cooperative Maintenance Partnership (MRCMP) made up of public and private entities committed to promoting safety, stewardship of the McKenzie River, and reduced littering and vandalism along the river banks. The Eugene Water and Electric Board, City of Eugene, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and Lane County are co-signers on an intergovernmental agreement for the partnership. As part of the agreement, Lane County Parks provides maintenance to these sites, from Rodakowski Park on Harvest Lane to Jennie B. Harris Wayside near McKenzie Bridge.

McKenzie River Guides Association

While not a co-signer on the MRCMP agreement, the McKenzie River Guides Association plays a leadership role in the partnership by promoting river conservation and boat launch upkeep and through such programs as life jacket placements in local stores for free loan to the boating public. In existence since 1931, the McKenzie River Guides Association has a longstanding tradition of stewardship of the McKenzie River, including numerous county-maintained boat landings.

Richardson Creek Restoration

The Long Tom Watershed Council initiated Lane County's sponsorship of a project to restore Richardson Creek, a project involving the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Northwest Youth Corps. Lane County received a grant on the Watershed Council's behalf from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to restore the creek in 2000.

"FRIENDS OF" PARKS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

Mt. Pisgah Arboretum

The Mt. Pisgah Arboretum has leased and managed approximately 209 acres of the Howard Buford Recreation Area (HBRA) for 30 years. The Arboretum works with area natural resource experts and other nonprofit organizations including the Native Plant Society and Cascade Mycological Society to offer educational events, workshops, summer camps, and hikes for all age levels to learn about and celebrate the Arboretum's diverse ecology and botanical resources. The annual Wildflower Festival in May and Mushroom Festival in October are two popular Arboretum events.

The Friends of Buford Park

The Friends of Buford Park employs grants to study and restore the natural features and native plants in the HBRA. Many volunteers and other organizations participate in these efforts. In 1998, following inventory work by staff from

Oregon State University and Oregon Department of Agriculture Plant Conservation Program, FBP volunteers worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Lane County in a 10-acre native plant and western pond turtle restoration effort. In 2003 Lane County Parks awarded a contract to the FBP to procure grants from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the American Bird Conservancy, for floodplain restoration, a native plant nursery, and oak habitat enhancement.

Kiwanis Club of the Emerald Empire

The Kiwanis Club of the Emerald Empire has for years been a devoted volunteer force at Camp Lane as part of the Adopt-A-Park program. Projects they've accomplished include the design and construction of Camp Lane's Les Calder multi-use covered athletic court, construction of tree houses, restoration of the lodge chimney, construction of thirty bunk beds for Camp Lane's Adirondacks sleeping units, and annual clean-ups.

Lane County Sheriff's Mounted Posse

The Lane County Sheriff's Mounted Posse is a group of private volunteers who use their equestrian skills to assist the Sheriff's office and Lane County citizens. The Posse obtained a grant to construct a horse arena in the HBRA's north bottomlands area. They help maintain the arena and the HBRA's equestrian trails. The Posse assists the Sheriff in search and rescue efforts and performs a variety of charity work and civic activities. They also help the 4-H Club and other organizations with horse-related education and events.

Bohemia Mine Owners Association, and the Cottage Grove Prospectors and Goldiggers Association

The Bohemia Mine Owners and the Cottage Grove Prospectors and Goldiggers Association are dedicated stewards of Bohemia Saddle Park as part of the Adopt-A-Park program. The remote location of this park make this volunteer assistance especially invaluable to Lane County. Association members patrol the area, assist park visitors, and remove trash. Cottage Grove's annual Bohemia Mining Days celebration includes a traditional pancake "Prospectors' Breakfast on the Saddle" in the park every year as part of the festivities.

Friends of the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery

This Friends association is a non-profit organization formed in 1997 to care for the Old McKenzie Trout Hatchery on Highway 126 near Leaburg. Their statement of purpose is "to establish, perpetuate, and maintain the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery to achieve the highest quality for the public benefit; to enhance the historic features of the property, to encourage economic development in the McKenzie River Valley, to encourage use of the site for educational purposes, and to provide facilities for the public enjoyment and use of its natural and historic features." The Friends envision a McKenzie River Museum of Water, Fish and Boats, including renovation of the main hatchery building into an interpretive center, a renowned drift boat collection, and environmental education center.

Fall Creek Park Association

The Fall Creek Park Association participates in Lane County Park's Adopt-A-Park program and includes neighbors in the area who provide stewardship for Fall Creek (Unity) Park.

Friends of Wildwood Falls Park

The Koch Family of Creswell is another Adopt-A-Park program participant who cares for this park by picking up and discouraging litter, and maintaining a presence to reduce vandalism.

Deerhorn Neighborhood Watch Association

The Deerhorn Neighborhood Watch Association maintain a presence at this park and have a contact telephone number posted at the park.

Friends of Zumwalt Park

The Friends of Zumwalt Park recently joined the Adopt-A-Park program in response to the near closure of Zumalt and many other parks when Lane County faced a severe budget crisis in its 2007-2008 fiscal year.

Youth Groups

Approximately 300 Boy Scouts converge on Perkins Peninsula Park each Autumn and clean up trash and brush. The Northwest Youth Corps performs trail maintenance at HBRA and other parks, and have donated many hours to constructing the Eugene to Pacific Crest Trail. Oregon Youth Conservation Corp performs parking lot striping and other maintenance activities for three months each year.

Other Park Volunteers

Lane County Parks participates in the annual SOLV (Stop Oregon Littering and Vandalism) Down by the Riverside waterway clean-up and enhancement day. Businesses and other organizations also take on special projects at selected County parks as part of the United Way of Lane County's Day of Caring.

The Oregon Hunters Association, Emerald Chapter, Backcountry Horseman, Emerald Chapter, and Oregon Equestrian Trails, Eugene Chapter participate in the Howard Buford Recreation Trail Patrol Program and perform trail maintenance along with many other trail volunteers. They answer visitor questions, provide education about trail etiquette, and acts as a communication link for the Parks Division.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Lane County's scenic beauty contributes to a high quality of life and economic vitality. Parks, recreation, and open spaces are essential ingredients.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau of Lane County, Oregon (CVALCO) is an important County Parks partner. CVALCO employs a variety of strategies to bring tourism dollars into Lane County. This includes disseminating information about Lane County and providing services for tourists, conventions, and other business travelers that may result in increased visits to Lane County parks. At the same time Lane County Parks are a resource that CVALCO can use to advertise Lane County as a place to visit and recreate.

Each year, Recreation Equipment, Incorporated (REI) sponsors "Run for the Mountain", a 5-kilometer trail run and 1-mile hike held each June. Proceeds benefit Mount Pisgah. REI helps out at the event, sells Lane County park passes, and does volunteer trail maintenance. Other stores that sell park passes include Joe's, an Oregon based sports and auto accessory store, and Mather's Market (Walterville), Pleasant Hill Feed and Farm Supply, Fern Ridge Market, and Randy's Riverside Market (Mapleton).

Area businesses often use Lane County Parks for corporate picnics, photo shoots, and product demonstrations. Parks are also used for company retreats. A wide array of businesses profit from the enjoyment of the outdoors, such as through the sale of outdoor equipment and gear, maps, picnic supplies, and other supplies and services.

Partner Highlights

Partnering is vital to parkland acquisitions and facility improvements efforts. Since its beginnings over fifty years ago, Lane County Parks has joined other public agencies and private entities to bring countless projects to fruition. Highlights of a variety of partnership efforts follow.

FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCY FUNDING

Federal and state agencies provide critical financial support to Lane County Parks. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) financed County Park infrastructure development and capital investments at Orchard

Point Park, Harbor Vista Park, Jasper and Lowell Parks that are now state parks, and Alton Baker Park, now a City of Eugene park.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) grants funded many Lane County Parks facilities, including Harbor Vista Campground near Florence, Baker Bay Campground near Cottage Grove, and Richardson Park's campground and large picnic shelter at Fern Ridge Reservoir.

The Oregon State Marine Board has awarded grants making possible the construction of the Richardson Park and Orchard Point marina facilities. Marine Board grants have funded boat ramps and docks throughout the county park system including Armitage Park, Baker Bay, Bender Landing, Triangle Lake, Mercer Lake, Perkins Peninsula, and Munsel Landing.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) oversees approximately 400 acres of reservoir lands on which Lane County Parks operates six parks under long term leases. Over the years, the Corps has worked with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to create more than 900 acres of wetlands at Fern Ridge reservoir, managed independently from the reservoir's elevation, providing stable habitats for numerous bird species and other wildlife in Fern Ridge marshes.¹ The wetlands draw visitors to nearby Lane County Parks to view wildlife, and Corps staff sometimes make educational presentations at Richardson Park's amphitheater. Lane County also has constructed and maintains many boat ramps on ODFW river boat landings.

PARKS MAINTENANCE CONSOLIDATION AGREEMENT

In the late 1990's, the USACE, OPRD, and Lane County jointly entered into an Interagency Parks Maintenance Consolidation Agreement, exchanging parklands in order to improve respective operating efficiencies. Lane County turned over all of its parks in the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed, in the Highway 58 corridor, to USACE and OPRD, receiving Armitage and other parks along the McKenzie River in the transaction. The exchange resulted in an estimated combined savings of \$300,000 and earned the agencies a "Hammer Award" from former Vice President Al Gore.

LOWELL COVERED BRIDGE AND INTERPRETIVE CENTER

At the annual Lowell Blackberry Jam Festival in July 2006, the Mayor of Lowell joined County Commissioners and others to celebrate completion of the restored Lowell Covered Bridge and Interpretive Center. Partners in the endeavor included the City of Lowell, local volunteers, the U.S. Forest Service-Willamette National Forest, Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Department of Transportation-Western Lands Division, the Covered Bridge Society of Oregon, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Bridge Engineering Consultants (OBEC), Sea Reach, Ltd., and 2G Construction. The new center includes several interpretive panels, a viewing promenade, picnic tables, an expanded parking lot, and a restroom. In the future, a floating dock is envisioned to serve as the starting point for the annual Covered Bridge Regatta. The Lowell bridge is the fourth covered bridge in the county to officially become a county park.

EUGENE TO PACIFIC CREST TRAIL (EPCT)

A grassroots effort that began in 1979, the EPCT will extend 108 miles from Eugene's Skinner Butte Park, through Springfield, Lowell, and Oakridge, to the Pacific Crest Trail where it traverse the Waldo Lake Wilderness on Lane County's eastern boundary. Now more than 95% complete, the trail goes through Lane County's Howard Buford Recreation Area. Partners in planning, design, and construction include the Oakridge Chamber of Commerce,

¹ "Fern Ridge Dam repair: What about the birds?" by Kat Beal, USACE biologist, Lane County Audubon Society website (December 26, 2006).

Emerald Valley Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of America, the Disciples of Dirt mountain bikers, Northwest Youth Corps and many others.

In 2000, Lane County awarded a \$6,000 Special Tourism Grant to produce EPCT brochures.

RIVERS TO RIDGES VISION AND STRATEGY

The City of Springfield, Springfield's Willamalane Park and Recreation District, the City of Eugene, and Lane County jointly adopted the *Rivers to Ridges Vision and Strategy* in June 2003. With financial backing from the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan jurisdictions, including \$20,000 from Lane County, the *Vision and Strategy* was developed by the Lane Council of Governments with extensive local community input. Envisioned is a system of public open space anchors connected by scenic ridgeline and riparian corridors surrounding the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. Many of the key anchor components are already in public ownership, such as Lane County's Fern Ridge Park system and Howard Buford Recreation Area; Eugene's Spencer Butte Park and West Eugene Wetlands complex; and Springfield's Dorris Ranch Living History Farm and Day Island Park.

CITY RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLANS

Several Lane County cities recently adopted park plan updates, many incorporating the Rivers to Ridges Vision and Strategy. The Cities of Coburg and Creswell updated their Parks and Open Space Master Plans in 2005. The Willamalane Park and Recreation District's Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the District, Springfield, and Lane County in 2004. One of its priorities will be to develop the Middle Fork Trail between Clearwater Park and Dorris Ranch, and explore the possibility of other connections, such as a pedestrian bridge across the river to the county's Howard Buford Recreation Area. The City of Eugene Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan was adopted by the City of Eugene as the basis for a successful open space bond initiative passed by city voters in 2006. It covers a diverse range of open space, recreation, and natural resource objectives, including potential expansion of the Ridgeline Trail to other trail systems outside the city.

The Cities of Oakridge and Westfir are a gateway to a wealth of recreational resources on surrounding federal forest lands, including numerous hiking and biking trails, and scenic byways. The area is increasingly popular to mountain bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts, and families looking for multi-age recreational opportunities. With this in mind, the City of Oakridge is developing a strategy to integrate opportunities for sight-seeing, historic tourism, and recreation via multi-modal connections within and outside the City.

The City of Veneta is in the process of promoting multi-modal bicycle and pedestrian connections between Veneta, Lane County's Fern Ridge parks, and the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. The Veneta City Council endorsed the vision for the trail system in July 2007. Partnering with other agencies such as Lane County will be key to promoting these efforts. The City's trail project was made possible through assistance from the Americorps program, Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (R.A.R.E.), administered through the University of Oregon.

WATER TRAILS

The 2003-2007 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) identified a 138% increase in non-motorized boating participation over the past 15 years.² The concept of water trails provides increased water access by establishing and mapping routes, campsites, picnic areas, boat launches, distances, water hazards and conditions, vistas and points of interest, and wildlife viewing opportunities. Water trail programs open doors to

² Oregon Trails 2005-2014: Water Trails Plan, Executive Summary, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

partnership formations and maximize recreational services by providing links between recreational lands – both public and private, and creating possibilities for multi-model recreational travel. Water trails offer opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to access and learn about the natural environment.

The Willamette River Water Trail is an initiative that grew from two years of public and private commitment beginning at the community level, involving many federal, state, local agencies, private individuals and businesses, and nonprofit organizations. The Willamette Water Trail is fully mapped from Portland to Eugene with navigational hazards, safe launch sites, camping sites and other information provided by the Willamette Riverkeeper, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and other partners.³ Lane County's Hileman Park and Whitely Landing provide boating access to the river.

The Port of Siuslaw plays a leadership role in promoting Lane County's coastal recreation economy. A long term Port vision involving numerous partners is the Siuslaw Estuary Trail System, a land and water, hike-bike-paddle trail system that expands access to coastal recreation facilities. Lane County is partnering with the Port on a pilot project funded by a National Park Service grant. It involves three water trail segments on the Siuslaw River using established boater and waterfront facilities. One route follows the North Fork of the Siuslaw between Lane County's Bender Landing Park and the Port's Florence Public Boat Ramp in Old Town. Concept planning for the Siuslaw Estuary Trail System was a University of Oregon graduate thesis project.⁴ Planning for the initiative was carried out by the Port, City of Florence, Siuslaw Watershed Council, area businesses and local paddlers with assistance from the Rivers and Trails Program of the National Park Service. Future water trail routes will link to established access sites operated by the Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon State Parks, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Lane County Parks, Port of Siuslaw and City of Florence.

Demand for water trails on the central Oregon coast is evidenced by the popularity of the Siltcoos River Canoe Trail, sponsored cooperatively by the U.S. Forest Service-Siuslaw National Forest Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area and City of Dunes City. Lane County's Westlake Park on the west shore of Siltcoos Lake provides access to this water trail and has an interpretive sign about it.

SCENIC BIKEWAYS, BYWAYS, AND TOUR ROUTES

Scenic Bikeways are another resource to connect recreational facilities and increase recreational access by mapping routes and providing information about public parks and other places to stop along the route. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department recently implemented a scenic bikeway program. Their first route is the Willamette Valley Scenic Bikeway, extending from Champoeg State Park north of Lane County, to Armitage Park, a Lane County Park. OPRD received assistance from the Oregon Department of Transportation and Cycle Oregon in defining and signing the route. OPRD is now looking at a second route, the Calapooya Scenic Bikeway, from Armitage Park to Oakland, Oregon, traversing the southern portion of the Willamette Valley. Lane County's road and off-road bike path system, and its spectacular landscape, including historic covered bridges, wineries, and other sightseeing and visiting opportunities attract cyclists from throughout the country and internationally. Lane County Parks, and recreation facilities managed by its many partners as described in this Chapter, provide stopping places and potential opportunities for additional signed scenic biking routes.

Four of Oregon's 23 official Scenic Byways and Tour Routes traverse Lane County. They are the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway, also designated as an "All American Road"; the West Cascade and McKenzie Pass-Santiam Pass National Scenic Byways, and the state-designated Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Tour Route. All covered bridges on this tour are Lane County-owned, and three are part of the County parks system.

³ www.willamettewatertrail.org (July 2007)

⁴ Siuslaw Estuary Water Trail, Comprehensive Design Project, by Jordan Sector of the Department of Landscape Architecture (Spring 2002)