

the January Observer

A NEWSPAPER FOR AND ABOUT THE COMMUNITIES OF DAMASCUS AND BORING, OREGON
Volume 12 No. 1

January 2006



FREE

January 2006

The Damascus/Boring Observer

Page 13

Future Use of Madrone Wall Up for Official Review

BY KEITH K. DAELLENBACH, SECRETARY/TREASURER, DIRECTOR

Madrone Wall Preservation Committee

A near decade-long public land preservation effort will be reviewed by city and county officials this month and may lead to establishing a new public park along the Clackamas Bluffs south of Damascus. Last November, the County's citizen-led Parks Advisory Board (PAB) finalized their recommendations for the future use of the Hardscrabble/Madrone Wall property. The PAB recommended that the commissioners not sell the Madrone Wall property and to include the site in the county's future parks master plan, which would lead to a future public park. If accepted by the commissioners, the PAB recommendation would effectively prevent the site from being quarried or developed into trophy homes and would provide permanent protective status as a park.

The PAB held well-attended public focus group meetings for citizens, public agencies, and recreationalists, which showed unanimous support establishing a park and opposed development. They reviewed over four hundred letters, emails, and signed petitions supporting preservation of the Madrone Wall, and re-established recreational access. There were zero communications to keep the area posted "No Trespassing," and there were zero communications to sell the site for development. The PAB recommended that the site include passive and active recreational uses (hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, bird watching, wildlife viewing) and potential continued timber harvest. The County's Parks Department has a goal to take the PAB's recommendation, in a work study session format, before the commissioners in late January.

Until this publicly-owned site, along County Scenic Road 224 two miles east of Carver, was closed to access in 1997 as an ill-conceived county quarry plan was pursued, the Madrone Wall

provided a public benefit for decades as a recreational outlet. This area includes an intact three-million-year-old natural basalt bluff offering views of the lower Clackamas River. It contains ancient old growth Douglas fir, Pacific madrone, and a panoply of springtime wildflowers. A wetland bog at the bluff's base and the headland above sports a clear, clean tributary stream that supports not only the endangered salmon in the Clackamas River less than a half-mile away, but also serves as the drinking and groundwater resource for many nearby residents. The site offers recreational and educational opportunities next to an increasingly urbanized and park-barren area.

With public closure, the county sought a zoning variance to open a publicly-funded hard rock quarry. The grassroots non-profit, all-volunteer Madrone Wall Preservation Committee (MWPC) incorporated and worked with local citizens. Studies co-funded with the county determined it was uneconomical even under the most ideal circumstances to quarry the site. The county agreed and an environmental disaster of habitat destruction, noise, dust, truck traffic, and effluent discharge was narrowly averted.

Community support is consistent and overwhelming to protect this resource. No less than five Clackamas County Community Planning Organizations (CPOs) have endorsed preservation, including the Grant Park CPO covering the area in which the Madrone Wall resides (others: Boring, Rock Creek, Eagle Creek-Barton, and South Clackamas). These CPO letters to the commissioners are a part of two dozen diverse organizations supporting preservation including the Clackamas River Basin Council, Damascus for Open Space, Friends of Barton Park & Scenic Clackamas River, Friends of Mount Hood, Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Or-

egon League of Conservation Voters, Native Plant Society of Oregon, Sierra Club, Friends of Forest Park, Three Rivers Land Conservancy, American Alpine Club, Federation of Western Outdoors Clubs, Oregon Equestrian Trails, Outward Bound, Mazamas, Ptarmigans, and The Access Fund. Carver businesses, including Carver Store, Carver Hangar, Echo Inn, and Still Meadow Community also support preservation. Last February, the Damascus City Council indicated that it was glad to see the Madrone Wall issue becoming more highly visible, although the council indicated that it preferred to let the process be citizen-driven. It reserved taking a position until completion of the PAB recommendations. With the PAB's recommendations now finalized, City Manager Steve Rhodes placed a discussion of the site's future use onto the Council's January 9th public meeting agenda. If the Council elects, it could offer support in the form of a letter to the Commissioners or pass a resolution showing their interest in saving the site from development and establishing a public park.

Several concerns were raised during the site's public closure. These include property value, liability, and the need for more parkland. In August, after reviewing the County-commissioned appraisal of Hardscrabble, the MWPC submitted an independent professional appraisal review that confirmed a maximum property value of \$770,000—far less than a previously discussed value of ten million dollars. Both the County-commissioned appraisal and the appraisal review confirmed that the mining rock from the forty-four acre site was "unrealistic" and "infeasible" from an economic perspective. Additionally, there is a significant revenue benefit for the county if the site were re-opened for recreation, which would be lost forever if the site were developed. The federal government employs

a money generation model in National Parks and National Forests to evaluate the economic impact of using a site as an outdoor recreation resource. A conservative valuation of direct and indirect spending to the local economy estimates that \$185,000 will be generated annually in Clackamas County based on only ten non-local people visiting the Madrone Wall each day. This money will come into the county's local diners and business establishments and will be churned over in the local economy as indirect spending thereby increasing the county's tax base.

Lingering questions over potential liability were researched. The County is clearly protected from frivolous lawsuits by the strong backing of the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) public use of lands section. Clackamas County Counsel Steven Lounsbury indicated that the county was no longer concerned with liability issues, especially in light of the recent *Waggoner v. City of Woodburn* case. In this case, the Oregon Court of Appeals issued a decision in December, 2004, affirming ORS 105.672 insulates local governments from liability for recreational use of government land. Mr. Lounsbury indicated that what the County does with the site is now a policy decision for the Board of Commissioners.

With increasing urbanization in the City of Damascus area, people recognize more parkland is needed, not less, which is consistent with the county's own park plans. County park master plans call for a minimum of 131 acres of parkland in the Damascus-Boring area in 1995 and 259 in 2015, yet the area currently offers zero acres. The author of



Basalt cliffs, estimated to be millions of years old, comprise the Madrone Wall near the banks of the Clackamas River. (Photo courtesy of the Madrone Wall Preservation Committee.)

this article serves on the Damascus-Boring Concept Plan's Natural Resource Technical Team (NRTT) and has given voice to this beautiful land residing within the Concept Plan's secondary study area which is under consideration for an "Big Park" within a Clackamas River Bluffs and Canyons Natural Area. A recent county survey showed a majority of citizens (69.9% positive) supporting "the idea of a big park located on the bluffs and down to the Clackamas River."

As this site is already publicly owned, no taxpayer-financed land acquisition costs are required to protect it. There is no need for "willing seller" negotiations either, because the land is already in the public inventory. With the Madrone Wall positioned strategically in the middle of the Damascus secondary study area, it could serve as an anchor site to an extensive eastside Big Park so appealing to local residents. With all the public input, multiple studies, and PAB recommendations now completed, it is up to city and county officials to make a determination of the future use of the Madrone Wall this month.



Endorsing Preservation:

- Grant Park CPO (Comm. Plan. Org.)
- Boring CPO
- Rock Creek CPO
- Eagle Creek-Barton CPO
- South Clackamas CPO
- Carver Store
- Carver Hangar
- Still Meadow Community
- Clackamas River Basin Council
- Damascus for Open Space
- Friends of Barton Pk. & Clack. Riv.
- Friends of Mount Hood
- Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition
- Oregon Natural Resources Council
- Oregon League of Conserv. Voters
- Native Plant Society of Oregon
- Sierra Club
- Audubon Society of Portland
- Friends of Forest Park
- Three Rivers Land Conservancy
- American Alpine Club
- Fed. of Western Outdoors Clubs
- Oregon Equestrian Trails
- Outward Bound
- Mazamas
- Ptarmigans
- The Access Fund

The Madrone Wall Preservation Committee is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) Oregon all-volunteer public charitable organization focused on preserving and re-establishing access to the Madrone Wall of Clackamas County and to act as a parks advocacy organization for a future park at the site of this amazing civic treasure.



Upcoming Events:

9 January 2006 (Monday) - 7:00 P.M.: Damascus City Council discussion of Madrone Wall's future use and possible action to show support to Clackamas County Board of Commissioners (Damascus City Offices, 19920 S.E. Hwy 212, Damascus, www.ci.damascus.or.us)

31 January 2006 (Tuesday) - 10:30 A.M.: The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners (BCC) will be reviewing the recommendations prepared late last year by the County's Parks Advisory Board in a work study session. **THIS BCC REVIEW WILL EXAMINE THE FUTURE USE OF THE MADRONE WALL.** While the BCC study session is open to public attendance, there is generally no opportunity to provide public comment as it is a work session between County staff and the BCC. Plan on attending (Clackamas County Public Services Building, Room 450 - 4th floor conference room, 2051 Kaen Road, Oregon City) if interested and note any changes to meeting time at the BCC weekly meeting agenda website: www.co.clackamas.or.us/bcc/ag_sch.htm.

8 April 2006 (Saturday): Specially-arranged MWPC public tour of Madrone Wall site with Native Plant Society of Oregon - Portland Chapter (meet for carpool at TriMet's Gateway/N.E. 99th Avenue Transit Center in Portland at 10:00 a.m., back by 1:30 p.m. - bring hiking boots for an adventurous, off-trail look at spring wildflowers); **RSVP to Keith K. Daellenbach if attending (kdaellenbach@att.net).**

Fundraiser: Wayne Wallace - Traverse of Washington's Picket Ranges

Where: Lucky Labrador Public House - Upstairs (Multnomah Village, 7675 S.W. Capitol Highway, Portland, www.luckylab.com)

When: 26 January 2006 (Thursday) at 7:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5.00 donation at door gets you one complimentary raffle ticket with prizes from US Outdoor Store and The Access Fund. There will be a no-host bar and no food service available. So get there beforehand if you wish to eat.

Sponsors: The Access Fund, Mazamas, American Alpine Club, and US Outdoor Store

Wayne Wallace, of Seattle and formerly Portland, is a top American alpinist. In a mountaineering career now spanning over three decades, he has completed thousands of climbs in North and South America and over 400 new routes up to 5.12c. In addition to his alpinism, he has completed many classic West Coast big wall climbs, guided on Denali, and was on the Portland-based K2000 expedition which attempted the north ridge of the "mountaineer's mountain" - K2 in the Karakoram. He will give a special benefit presentation on traverses of the remote and rugged Northern and Southern Pickets ensconced in the North Cascades National Park in Washington.



Wayne Wallace©, Peaks of the Northern Pickets (Swiss, Ghost, Crooked Thumb, and Challenger)

Check for the latest updates at: www.savemadrone.org

(Please continue to respect Clackamas County's current "No Trespassing" posting at the Madrone Wall.)