

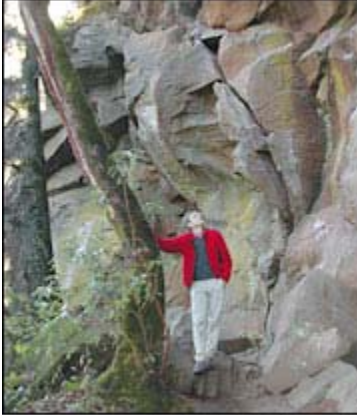
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### **The Long Climb To A New Park**

By Rob Manning

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Rob Manning/OPB News

(Oregon Considered) - Clackamas County commissioners Tuesday took a major step toward opening a 45-acre woodland that's been closed to the public for almost a decade.

Some say its location between the Clackamas River and the new city of Damascus, make it a perfect place for a park. But the county has kept the area off-limits for more than eight years out of fear people might fall from the site's most prominent feature - a 100-foot tall cliff.

Rob Manning hiked through the area, and has this report on its likely future.

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Rob Manning: So there's a No Trespassing' sign here - why are we able to get in here today?

Keith Daellenbach

Keith Daellenbach: We have been granted permission by the parks department, so we actually have permission to access this site, even though it's posted No Trespassing'.

That's Keith Daellenbach, a rock climber and community organizer who's been able to access this area dozens of times in recent years, thanks to park officials. But Daellenbach's goal is to open the place up to everyone for everything from picnicing to rock climbing.

On the way from Highway 224 to the cliff, you can see what else the area has been used for over the years - logging and rock mining.

Keith Daellenbach: Actually the area that was quarried is just off to the left, which is probably 100 meters from the base of the cliff itself. They did extract some rock for general road maintenance at the county. But this was the site where it was actually quarried - the wall itself is a natural rock feature.

Rob Manning: Wow - I'm assuming that's it?

Keith Daellenbach: Yeah -- this site is known by the county as the Hardscrabble site. The local community of citizens and folks who have recreated here in the past know it as the Madrone Wall. It's named that for obvious things we see here today -- one is the wall, which we can see from this meadow perspective. The other is the Pacific Madrone trees.

At 100 feet tall, the cliff face is imposing. Depending on the time of year, the natural colors of wildflowers create a strikingly beautiful scene.

Evergreen and Madrone trees block parts of the cliff, and after years of little maintenance, trails are virtually gone.

Cracks permeate the rock face, but Keith Daellenbach says the fissures go back to pre-historic times and won't crumble further. But he says what makes Madrone Wall such a hidden jewel for rock climbers is the number of possible routes- even if he can't handle the toughest parts at the top.

Keith Daellenbach: The one time that I visited this site before it was closed by the county in late 1997 - I was

not climbing that area - I was climbing off to the right in something that was more moderate. But for rock climbers one of the real distinct advantages, frankly, is that in Portland and this area - there are no areas like this site that have the diversity of rock-climbing routes - both from the really easy rock-climbing routes to the most difficult.

But what has concerned the county for some time is that climbers might not recognize their limitations, and could fall.

That's part of what closed the site eight and a half years ago, according to county community services administrator, Dan Zinzer.

Dan Zinzer: There was a concern about the liability of people climbing rocks and officially opening a park that doesn't have the conditional use permits to call it a park - I mean, we didn't have the proper land use to opening it up to recreation.

Getting those conditional use permits is now on the horizon. Over the last eight months, the county's Parks Advisory Board basically ruled out using the area in some other way.

Neighbors opposed going back to quarrying, or selling the land to real estate developers.

So, at a county study session, commissioners unanimously agreed to start planning how to re-open the Madrone Wall area as a park.

Commissioner Martha Schrader says that part of the appeal was protecting the watershed.

Martha Schrader: The Clackamas River is a pristine river, we do use it, you know for water purposes and so it also fits into the larger conservation piece that we want clean, pure water in that watershed. And it would also be open for recreation.

Whether or not logging and recreation can coexist peacefully is a significant financial question - one that will likely be confronted during the planning stage, which comes next.

Commission chair, Bill Kennemer, raised a different money question: the cost of running the park and that nagging issue of liability. The county owns the land, but Kennemer says he'd like to see Metro take over supervision.

Bill Kennemer: At least as I envision local parks I see them as neighborhood parks - they're for the resident that live there. I suspect if the Hardscrabble quarry is converted into the Madrone Wall climbing area, it's really going to serve the rock-climbing community.

Kennemer and Schrader both agree with advocates, like Keith Daellenbach, that eventually, the Madrone Wall could be part of a much larger network of parks along the Clackamas River.

That idea's been dubbed the big eastside park - to give the people who are expected to move to Damascus a natural area like Portland's Forest Park.