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Climbing over the red tape

Clackamas County should open Madrone Wall to the public



Joan Zuber, South Clackamas Citizen Planning Organization vice chair, knows a good wall when she sees one.

An avid mountaineer and rock climber, Zuber has scaled walls at Yosemite and Joshua Tree in California, Enchanted Rock in Texas and

**WILLAMETTE
OUTDOOR
ADVENTURE**

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Oregon's own famed rock-climbing destination, Smith Rock.

Last spring she took a tour of the scenic, 44-acre Madrone Wall area, which is located south of Damascus along Highway 224.

"It was awesome," Zuber said of the wall. "It has interesting routes, it's bolted ... it's in a beautiful setting, the trees provide shade and cover — I was impressed."

There was one thing that Zuber did not like about that visit: all the "No Trespassing" signs.

Clackamas County, which owns the land, closed the wall to the public in the fall of 1997, much to the consternation of Zuber and the other 10,000 or more rock climbers who call Portland and its surrounding area home.

One of whom used to be Ian Caldwell, quite possibly Oregon's best rock climber. Caldwell moved from Portland to Redmond to be closer to better rock-climbing sites and regularly scales routes with a 5.14 difficulty rating. Few, if any, Oregon residents can make that claim.

"Madrone Wall is arguably the second best climbing area in all Oregon," said Caldwell, noting Madrone has both sport and traditional routes. "The beauty of Madrone is that there is a large population of climbers in Portland, and they



Photo by Keith Daellenbach

The 44-acre Madrone Wall area, located just south of Damascus on Highway 224, has been closed to the public since 1997. County commissioners are currently seeking input on how to use the land.

could go climbing in the evenings and not have to drive three hours on the weekend."

When the county's risk management committee had Madrone Wall closed because of liability concerns, Caldwell was so upset that he and several others started a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving the wall and getting it reopened: the Madrone Wall Preservation Committee. When Caldwell moved away from the area, his duties with the preservation committee were picked up by three directors, one of whom is Keith Daellenbach, an outspoken proponent for reopening Madrone Wall.

"I moved back to Oregon in 1996," said Daellenbach, who previously lived in New York City. "A friend introduced me to the (Madrone Wall) site — it was still open at the time — and I came away thinking this is absolutely a special place. This is why I moved back home. I was astounded by it."

Daellenbach said Madrone Wall is similar to Smith Rock in that it was used by more than rock climbers before its closure, but also by hikers, horseback riders and other outdoor enthusiasts.

He believes the area to be an "outstanding natural area, totally unique to Clackamas County," noting Madrone Wall's "incredible views" of the lower half of the Clackamas and the diverse topography, including the 100-foot high basalt cliff, wetland bogs, a clear creek that feeds the Clackamas, old-grove Douglas Firs and the many Pacific madrone trees.

"It's a unique treasure in North Willamette Valley," Daellenbach said.

After closing the site, Clackamas County planned to quarry it for gravel. The site, also known as Hardscrabble Quarry, was used by the county in the 1960s and again in the '80s as a source of rock, but a recent cost analysis of the site showed the county it would be

cheaper to buy the gravel than quarry it.

The county commissioners then considered selling the area and obtained a quote between \$750,000 and \$2.5 million for the land's value, depending on what it would be used for.

Now the county commissioners are soliciting public input to figure out what to do with the land. Options include turning it into a public park, possibly in conjunction with other public land in the area; quarrying or timbering the land; selling it to a private quarrying company; selling it for housing; or doing nothing.

"I'm inclined to make it into a park," County Commissioner Martha Schrader said. "It's an absolutely stunning piece of property (and has) one of the most stunning views of all Clackamas County."

Dan Zinzer, Clackamas County parks manager, has overseen the area for the

Turn to WALL on Page 12

The Clackamas County Commissioners are soliciting public input to determine the future of the 44-acre publicly-owned Madrone Wall located amongst the Clackamas Bluffs near Carver. On one hand, this amazing civic treasure faces irreversible destruction as a rock quarry or housing development and, on the other, as a park which present and future generations can enjoy. It is one of our last, best, local natural treasures and if not saved now, it will be gone forever.

Contact the Commissioners TODAY and urge them to preserve the Madrone Wall
2051 Kaen Road, Oregon City, Oregon 97045, bcc@co.clackamas.or.us

Wall: Would you rather have a rock quarry?

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county for the last 12 years. He said several steps must be taken before it can be a public park, including establishing staff to clean it, constructing bathroom facilities and zoning parking.

Zinzer said the county is currently in the process of conducting a cost analysis to see how much money it would take to turn Madrone Wall into a public park.

Daellenbach noted that the Madrone Wall Preservation Committee has committed it 1,000 hours of community service to improve old trails, make

new trails and post educational signage at Madrone Wall, should the county open it to the public.

Before the commissioners decide what to do with the Madrone Wall land, they want to hear from the public.

Schrader said she has received "lots of letters for support of Madrone Wall opening," and she would like to hear from everyone who has an opinion about the site.

The commissioners are meeting with people who have recreational interest in the area on Sept. 14 at Sunnybrook Service Center, 9101 Sunnybrook Blvd.

They can be reached by phone at 503-655-8581 or by mail at 2051 Kaen Road, Oregon City, OR 97045. County parks can be reached at 503-353-4427 or parks@co.clackamas.or.us.

I encourage everyone who has an appreciation for the outdoors to contact the commissioners and tell them to open Madrone Wall to the public.

This whole issue seems like a total no brainer to me. Madrone Wall is public land and should be available to the public.

Keeping the land closed because of liability issues makes

no sense because there are laws in place to ensure government is not held liable for accidents on public land.

Two other favorite rock climbing sites in the local area are on public land: Rocky Butte, which is city of Portland land, and Beacon Rock, which is Washington state land.

If the Madrone Wall area is sold, the only people who will benefit are the few rich people who purchase trophy homes or the private quarrying company employees who will ensure their paycheck keeps coming.

After talking with Zinzer, it sounds like the only people who do not want Madrone Wall turned into a park (other than the private quarry companies) are the people who live in the surrounding area. They are concerned that a park would negatively impact the neighborhood. To those people I ask, "Would you rather have a rocky quarry?"

This is one of those issues where it will be interesting to see just how much our representatives listen to the public. Should they not open Madrone Wall, I think it will be safe to say public comment is falling on deaf ears.

Schrader said she hopes to have a decision by the end of the year.

