

October 2005: Madrone Wall Update

Many of you have been curious recently about recent developments regarding the Madrone Wall. Please pass this information along to your friends, place on websites, and forward along to any email lists you think would be appropriate. The past several months has seen good progress and there is a great deal of support for preservation of this site. However, we're not completely out of the woods. Clackamas County's Parks Advisory Board (PAB) will be making a recommendation in November to the Board of County Commissioners on the future use of this site. After that, it is up to the Commissioners to make the final decision about future use. Although the opportunity to provide verbal input to the County has past, you still have time to write/email your letters to the County Commissioners urging them to preserve this site and re-establish access. A template letter can be downloaded from the www.savemadrone.org website if you need some help on writing a letter - any letter from you is better than none at all!

PAB Focus Group Meetings. Clackamas County officials held several focus group meetings with the following for groups: local residents (August 10), agencies (State Parks, Metro, Clackamas River Basin Council, The Access Fund - August 17), private rock quarry businesses, and, lastly, the recreationalists/conservationists (September 14). With the exception of the rock quarry meeting, all meetings were attended by the Madrone Wall Preservation Committee (MWPC) and The Access Fund representatives. The residents, agencies, and recreationalists unanimously supported preservation and a good representation at each of the three meetings requested immediate access, including the many Clackamas County residents. About 60 or so people showed up to the Sept 14th recreationalists meeting. Not a great turn out but not bad either.

Metro. Metro is exploring putting on the November 2006 ballot a new greenspace bond measure which, if it passes, would target willing seller land acquisitions in the area between the north bank of the Clackamas River and the Damascus area. In this area, the Madrone Wall is one of the only publicly owned parcels of land so preserving this site today could allow it to be an anchor site for future park acquisitions. In fact, with the Damascus UGB expansion and increasing urbanization of Damascus (Oregon's newest incorporated city will grow from 9,000 inhabitants to over 60,000, nearly the size of Beaverton, over the next couple decades) this entire area around the 44-acre Madrone Wall is being considered for an east side "Big Park" a la Forest Park called the "Clackamas River Bluffs and Canyons Natural Area". Metro's input to Clackamas County was crucial in regards to land management issues, liability, costs, and the many benefits of park space. Metro has become a strong ally in this preservation effort.

Strong Organizational Support. Now over 20 organizations, representing thousands of interested people, have written to the Commissioners and expressed their interest in preservation and renewed access to this site. The MWPC led a several month campaign to solicit and acquire this vital support requiring much time in meetings and presentations to each individual group with successful results. Organizations endorsing preservation and access include the following Citizen Planning Organizations (CPO's), as well as environmental, recreational, and educational organizations: Grant Park CPO (the area in which the Madrone Wall resides), Boring CPO, Rock Creek CPO, Eagle Creek-Barton CPO, South Clackamas CPO, Damascus for Open Space, Friends of Barton Park & Clackamas River, Friends of Mount Hood, Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Native Plant Society of Oregon, Sierra Club, Friends of Forest Park, Three Rivers Land Conservancy, Still Meadow Community, American Alpine Club, Federation of Western Outdoors Clubs, Outward Bound, Mazamas, Ptarmigans, and The Access Fund. The American Alpine Club, Mazamas, and The Access Fund have been especially generous in providing the MWPC critical grant funding in addition to the successful fundraisers organized by The Access Fund this year.

There are still some issues of concern that the County has, however, we've been able to provide them with answers and solutions to their concerns. These include:

1) Liability. Even though we know that ORS statute protect land managers from frivolous lawsuits, recreational liability is not a subject they apparently have fully researched. Members of the MWPC and

The Access Fund have done extensive research on this topic which we have shared repeatedly with the County over the past eight years since the site was closed to public access in 1997. Additionally, we had our attorney explore this matter with Clackamas County Counsel Steven Lounsbury who indicated that the County was no longer concerned with liability issues, especially in light of the recent *Waggoner v. City of Woodburn* case (December 2004) which confirms, in an Oregon Court of Appeals case, that local governments are insulated from liability for recreational use of government land. Mr. Lounsbury indicated to our attorney that what the County does with the site is now a policy decision for the Board of Commissioners.

2) Operational Costs. Clackamas County's public parks do not operate with general funds. The limited park space they have are funded by fees collected at a public golf course and the Carver Boat Ramp. The Madrone Wall property, however, is already publicly owned and it would not have to be acquired to become a park. Start up and operational costs for a park at the Madrone Wall have been identified by the County's parks manager as not being a "huge investment" (12/09/05, *The Oregonian*). We have provided Rocky Butte, Carver, and Broughton's Bluff as local models for primitive parks with limited facilities that have no access fees. Additionally, to help offset operational costs, The Access Fund and MWPC have promised a 1000 volunteer hours of service during the first year this site is established as a park. Other groups, such as the Mazamas, Scout Troops, school student groups, and other conservation groups constantly seek out volunteer projects. The Access Fund awards grants for such needs as bathroom installation and necessary trail signage. The MWPC has offered to evolve into a "Friends of ..." parks advocacy group to work directly with the County to make sure this becomes a park which all can enjoy.

What's Next? Take this last opportunity to write a letter to the County Commissioners! Following the November submission of future use recommendations to the Commissioners by the Parks Advisory Board, we can likely expect there will be deliberations on what to do with the site by the Commissioners. We will continue to offer constructive input to the County in the hopes that positive outcome will be achieved. The two upcoming monthly Parks Advisory Board meetings, at which the PAB will draw conclusions from public input and then finalize future use recommendations, will be held at 7:00 p.m. on 18 October and 15 November in Room 406 of the County's Sunnybrook Service Center (9101 S.E. Sunnybrook Blvd., Clackamas). These sessions, while open to the public, are generally not opportunities to take public comment as they are working sessions for the PAB. That said, The Access Fund the MWPC will be present and representing you at both. Until all issues are resolved, we continue to encourage you to respect the County's wishes with their "No Trespassing" posting at the site.

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