

BMPRD RESOLUTION NO. 409

A RESOLUTION OF THE BEND METRO PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADOPTING PROCEDURES FOR A COMMUNITY PROCESS TO DETERMINE BEST ROUTE AND METHOD TO CONNECT THE DESCHUTES RIVER TRAIL ALONG BEND'S SOUTHERN BOUNDARY

Whereas, Bend Metro Park and Recreation District (the "District") has a responsibility to plan for connectivity of the Deschutes River Trail, equitable access to outdoor recreation and education opportunities throughout the District, and fully account for impacts to fish and wildlife habitat in the process; and,

Whereas, since the conclusion of the 2017 State Legislative Session, the District has taken no action to pursue a bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the Deschutes River at or near Bend's southern boundary,

Whereas, in the District's 2017 comprehensive plan needs analysis, trails were the top ranked need among Bend residents; and,

Whereas, a bicycle and pedestrian bridge at or near Bend's southern boundary is included in local transportation system plans, recommended in the Deschutes National Forests Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study (2015), is identified in the District's system-wide trails plan, and is one of several projects specifically called for in Measure 9-86 (2012); and,

Whereas, trails offer healthy recreation and transportation options to communities, allowing people of all ages to walk and bike to key destinations, engage with community and connect with nature; and,

Whereas, the District believes the best way to build the next generation of conservation supporters involves opportunities for them to enjoy the outdoors in an environmentally sound manner; and,

Whereas, the District is the park and recreation provider for the City of Bend and manages 49 percent of the riverfront within the District boundaries; and,

Whereas, the District has a history of rehabilitating riverfront habitat along the banks of the Deschutes River on properties owned by the District and is committed to continuing and improving upon past work with community partners to rehabilitate and manage riverfront habitat; and,

Whereas, the District recognizes that there have been past processes, including an Oregon Park and Recreation Department (OPRD) process about whether to alter scenic waterway rules and a District process to select a desired trail alignment for a possible bridge, and that neither process fully considered conservation goals within the reach of the river where a potential bridge may be located; and,

Whereas, the District proposes to participate in a broad community process to develop and build community support for a preferred trail alignment connecting the Deschutes River Trail along the Deschutes River;

Whereas, the preferred trail alignment should offer net benefits to nearby fish and wildlife habitat; and,

Whereas, the District has a responsibility to ensure that habitat impacts of recreation are minimized to the greatest degree possible and that wherever possible, investments in outdoor recreation and education are accompanied by conservation investments resulting in net habitat improvements.

NOW THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of the Bend Park and Recreation District does hereby resolve as follows:

1. The District supports a process to consider connection of the Deschutes River Trail, conducted by a neutral, third-party facilitator with demonstrated expertise and success facilitating natural resources, recreation and community issues.
2. The fundamental question that the process would seek to address is: “How should the community provide for trail connectivity in this reach of the Upper Deschutes River to provide for human needs while achieving a net benefit to fish and wildlife habitat?”
3. The District understands that a community process may not lead to a bridge across the Deschutes River at or near the location in question. Conversely, the District would hope that other participants accept the possibility that a bridge, if properly designed and conditioned upon achieving certain conservation outcomes, may stand out as the preferred alternative.
4. The District supports a data-driven process informed by the most current assessments of the impacts of recreation activities, trails and bridges on river ecosystems and wildlife habitat within the area in question, as well as the growth and development projections for the Bend metropolitan region. The process should include an assessment and evaluation of past, present and desired future conditions in order to identify the most appropriate ecological outcomes.
5. The process will fully consider conservation measures, including both rehabilitation and operational, that would bring a net benefit to fish and wildlife habitat while providing for trail connectivity in partnership with the USFS and conservation groups.
6. The District supports a community process where participants would include a group of representatives from different stakeholder groups (to be vetted by the facilitator) including:
 - Community and neighborhood interests
 - Recreation interests

- Conservation and environmental interests
 - Relevant local, state and federal agencies including the United States Forest Service, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, City of Bend, Deschutes County and Bend Park and Recreation District.
7. The District resolves to honor any broadly-supported outcomes that aim to complete the Deschutes River Trail and asks other participants to do the same.
 8. District will not pursue any other avenues to plan, develop or construct a bridge within the Upper Deschutes River, or support such activities by others, while this process is underway and until it has concluded.

District's goal is that such a process would not only resolve a very complex local matter in the context of a specific State Scenic Waterway, but participants in the collaborative process would gain a better understanding of how to address concerns over recreation projects on Scenic Waterways statewide. We ask the State Legislature to take into consideration the potential for collaborative problem solving among local conservation, environmental, recreation and community interests.

ADOPTED by the Board of Directors on this 20th day of February 2018.

Nathan Hovekamp, Board Chair

Attest:

Don P. Horton, Executive Director