

STATEWIDE WORLD CLASS TRAILS NETWORK RESEARCH

Stephanie M. Noll Consulting for Travel Oregon



“It shall be the policy of the State of Oregon to supply those outdoor recreation areas, facilities and opportunities which are clearly the responsibility of the state in meeting growing needs; and to encourage all agencies of government, voluntary and commercial organizations, citizen recreation groups and others to work cooperatively and in a coordinated manner to assist in meeting total recreation needs through exercise and appropriate responsibilities.”

-1971 Oregon Recreation Trails System Act

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OREGONIANS LOVE TRAILS

This project set out to accomplish three goals: 1. Discover what Oregon can learn from peers in other states who are successfully collaborating to build and maintain an inspiring system of trails. 2. Learn from trail advocates and volunteers, land managers, and trail planners across Oregon about the hurdles they face. 3. Identify how we can best work together to address those hurdles to build and maintain a world class network of trails.

Almost every interview yielded at least two more recommendations of passionate Oregon trail advocates to reach out to, and it is probable that not one of us is fully aware of the huge amount of volunteer energy being leveraged by local groups in all corners of the state to advocate for, build, and maintain trails.

Despite the amazing work being accomplished at the local and regional level, there is a broadly held sense that with more collaboration on the statewide level, we could do more to build truly inspiring trails, to preserve Oregon's amazing natural and cultural assets, and to ensure broader access to public lands and to outdoor recreation and active transportation for all.

Oregon is ripe for a statewide trails coalition that can convene trail advocates, planners, and land managers to learn from each other, work together to address hurdles and conflicts, and build a unified voice for trails in funding and policy arenas.

"An organization is needed that is representative of all areas of Oregon and has expertise and political weight. There is a need to balance and reflect the multiple range of needs across the state so no one interest is allowed to dominate. There is also a need to come to grips with how to get agencies within the framework of their operating mandates to coordinate funding (state and flow through dollars) for maximum impact." -Terry Edvalson, Joseph Branch Trail Consortium

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thanks to Travel Oregon for supporting this research and to all of the trail advocates and volunteers around the state who have invested immeasurable time, passion, vision, energy, and elbow grease into trail projects that create opportunities for all of us to experience Oregon's many special places.

Thank you also to the following individuals for taking the time to broaden my knowledge with conversations that informed this report:

Jerry Bentz, Back Country Horsemen
Chris Bernhardt, Sentieros Consulting
Frank Burris, Wild Rivers Coast Mountain Bicycling Association
Gary Chapman, Corvallis to the Sea Trail
Julie Chick, ORTAC, North Oregon Coast
David Cohen, The Intertwine Alliance
Ernest Drapela
Drew Dupuy, Rails to Trails Conservancy
Terry Edvalson, Joseph Branch Trail Consortium
George Fekaris, FHWA
Alison Graves
Jay Graves
Jorge Guzman, Vive NW
Chris Havel, OPRD
Dana Hendricks, Pacific Crest Trail Alliance
Mel Huie, Metro
Chuck Humphreys, Sisters Trails Alliance
Andrea Imler, Washington Trails Association
Zach Jarrett, Bureau of Land Management
Tom Kloster, Trailkeepers of Oregon
Yvonne Kraus, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Al LePage, Oregon Coast Trail
Jenna Marmon, Jackson County, Bear Creek Greenway, OBPAC
Jeff Mast, United States Forest Service
Kim McCarrel, Oregon Equestrian Trails
Lake McTighe, Metro
Scott Mizee, 40-Mile Loop
Georgena Moran, Access Recreation
Rika Nelson, Discover Your Forest, Deschutes National Forest
Susan Peithman, ODOT
Jocelyn Gaudi Quarrell, Northwest Trail Association (NwTA), Gateway Green

Elizabeth Quiroz, Bicycle Transportation Alliance
Bruce Schroeder, Central Oregon Trails Alliance (COTA)
Steve Schulz, Cycle Oregon
Robert Spurlock, Metro, ORTAC
Kristen Stallman, ODOT, Columbia River Highway State Trail
Lauralee Svensgaard, ORTAC, Yachats Trails Committee
Jim Thornton, USFS, 44 Trails
Gabriel Amadeus Tiller, Timber Trail
Laura Underhill, OPRD
Joanna Valencia, Multnomah County
Matt Weintraub, Cannon Beach, NWTA, formerly of IMBA
Robin Wilcox, PLACE
Dennis Wiley, OPRD, Salmonberry Trail Project Manager

RESEARCH PROCESS

OREGON INTERVIEWS

Stephanie M. Noll conducted thirty-two interviews via phone and in-person conversations. Attempts were made to get broad geographic perspective as well as capture perspectives from a variety of trail user groups, new and established trail efforts, land managers, volunteers, and professionals. Individuals were given a summary of the goals of the project and asked open-ended questions. The overarching research question was:

“What hurdles does Oregon face in building and maintaining a world class network of trails, and how could we work together to address those hurdles?”

Interviewees were also asked if they or another representative of their group/agency would be interested in participating in some kind of statewide collaborative effort.

Interviewee responses were then grouped under thematic headings that emerged throughout the process.

The individuals working in Oregon formally interviewed for this project follow:

Jerry Bentz, Back Country Horsemen
Frank Burris, Wild Rivers Coast Mountain Bicycling Association
Gary Chapman, Corvallis to the Sea Trail
Julie Chick, ORTAC, North Oregon Coast
David Cohen, The Intertwine Alliance
Ernest Drapela
Terry Edvalson, Joseph Branch Trail Consortium
Jorge Guzman, Vive NW
Dana Hendricks, Pacific Crest Trail Alliance
Mel Huie, Metro, Chair of Metro Quarterly Trails Forum
Chuck Humphreys, Sisters Trails Alliance
Zach Jarrett, Bureau of Land Management
Tom Kloster, Trailkeepers of Oregon
Al LePage, Oregon Coast Trail

Jenna Marmon, Jackson County, Bear Creek Greenway, OBPAC
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Jocelyn Gaudi Quarrell, NWTa, Gateway Green
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Steve Schulz, Cycle Oregon
Robert Spurlock, Metro, ORTAC
Kristen Stallman, ODOT, Columbia River Highway State Trail
Lauralee Svensgaard, ORTAC, Yachats Trails Committee
Gabriel Amadeus Tiller, Timber Trail
Laura Underhill, OPRD
Joanna Valencia, Multnomah County
Matt Weintraub, Cannon Beach, NWTa, formerly of IMBA
Dennis Wiley, OPRD, Salmonberry Trail

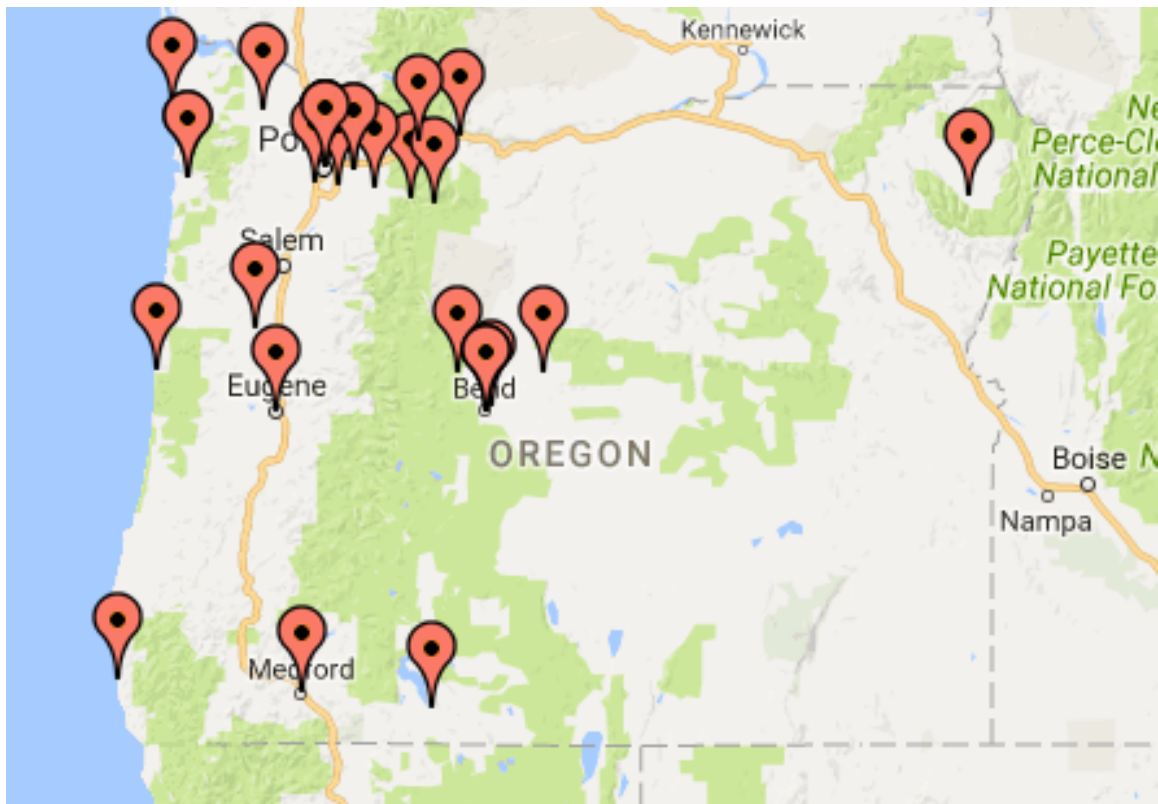
Notable gaps that remain in capturing important Oregon perspectives include: ATV trail advocates, tribal land managers, more diverse cultural perspectives.

CASE STUDIES

Web research and phone interviews were conducted to identify instructive case studies of statewide trails organizations and collaborations from other states. The individuals interviewed for the external case studies follow:

Drew Dupuy, Rails to Trails Conservancy
Andrea Imler, Washington Trails Association
Yvonne Kraus, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

FIGURE 1: MAP OF AGENCIES AND EFFORTS REPRESENTED IN OREGON INTERVIEWS



Findings

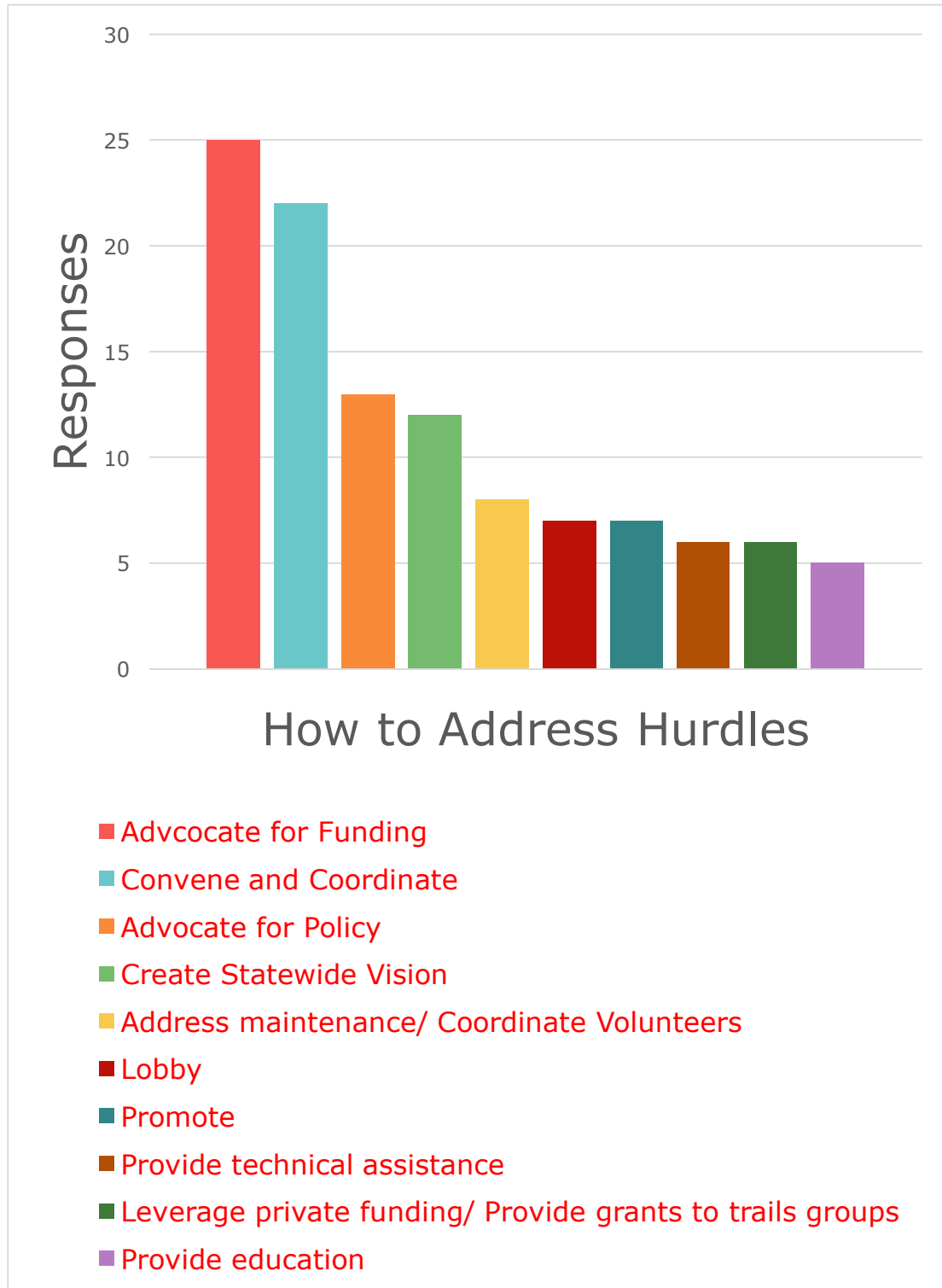
Interviews with Oregon stakeholders revealed near-universal interest in being a part of some kind of collaborative structure like a statewide trails coalition.

It should also be noted that a series of open conversations were held between 2011-2012 on the subject of a statewide trails coalition, and the findings of this project hold many commonalities with the notes shared by those involved in those earlier conversations.

While some interviewees identified value in seeing more user-group-specific statewide collaboration (e.g. statewide mountain bike caucus or organization) they too saw value in a “big tent” organization that brought together and advocated on behalf of all trail users across the spectrum of activities and types of trails, or at the least, all non-motorized uses.

A broad range of needs were identified that interviewees would like to see addressed on some level by a statewide collaboration.

FIGURE 2: INTERVIEW RESPONSES



This report will treat the two top responses, *Advocate for Funding* and *Convene and Coordinate*, in detail, as well as provide a summary of the input in the other eight categories.

ADVOCATE FOR FUNDING

Twenty-five of thirty-two interviewees expressed a need for coordinated statewide funding advocacy. Funding was identified as a hurdle for new trail development, trail maintenance, and for education and outreach programs. Many interviewees also expressed a need for assistance to local trail groups in navigating the various funding sources available.

Stakeholders recommended pursuing separate funding streams for urban/transportation trails and natural surface recreation trails as there is such a significant cost differential between paved, AASHTO-compliant trails and natural surface trails.

Some stakeholders also expressed a concern that funding advocacy not further concentrate funding in population centers; rather that new or expanded funding sources should support key connections in all regions of the state.

The following funding mechanisms were identified as potential opportunities for funding advocacy:

- **RTP Funding:** From OPRD website: "Recreational Trails Grants (RTP) are national grants administered by OPRD for recreational trail-related projects, such as hiking, running, bicycling, off-road motorcycling, and all-terrain vehicle riding. Yearly grants are awarded based on funds voted on by the U.S. Congress. RTP funding is primarily for recreational trail projects, rather than utilitarian transportation-based projects. Funding is divided into 30 percent motorized trail use, 30 percent non-motorized trail use and 40 percent diverse trail use." In 2016, almost \$4 Million was awarded to both motorized and non-motorized trails projects. The program requires a minimum 20% match. Advocacy related to RTP funding could include federal advocacy to preserve and expand funding for the program and working closely with OPRD to ensure that the program criteria supports the needs and goals of Oregon.
- **Connect Oregon:** Connect Oregon is a lottery-backed bond initiative administered by ODOT to invest in air, rail, marine,

transit, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure to ensure Oregon's transportation system is strong, diverse, and efficient. Thirty percent match is required. In 2016, the OTC awarded almost \$8 million of a \$49.5 million pot to seven bike/ped projects around the state, primarily trails. Connect Oregon must be reauthorized by the legislature each year, so advocacy is needed to preserve this funding source for trails, and potentially to expand the amount of Connect Oregon funding supporting trails. Advocacy and technical assistance on the local and regional level to put forth strong trails proposals is the other key strategy to maximize Connect Oregon funding for trails.

- **FLAP:** The Federal Lands Access Program is an FHWA program to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands. The allocation to Oregon is about \$35 million/year. Several trail projects have been funded through this source. Typically, ten to twenty percent of the funding goes to "enhancement" type projects which often are a good fit for trail projects. Sometimes big capital projects can also include investments like creating new trailheads. Coalition advocacy and technical support for putting forth strong project proposals could potentially help maximize FLAP investment in trails.
- **STIP-Enhance:** Oregon's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program- Enhance is the chief structure through which ODOT programs funding for multi-modal projects including urban bike and pedestrian trails. Under previous federal transportation bills, there was dedicated trails funding and eligibility for trails projects under the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program. In the current federal transportation bill, many programs including trails and Safe Routes to School are all lumped together as eligible uses for Transportation Alternatives Program funding- some of which gets programmed directly on the regional level, and the rest of which is programmed through STIP-Enhance. Some interviewees believe advocacy is needed either to maximize funding for trails under the current STIP-Enhancement structure, or to call on ODOT to reevaluate the STIP-Enhance process which is not giving adequate funding for urban trails.

- Urban Trails Fund: In 2009 The Urban Trail Fund was established by the Oregon legislature after advocacy by bike advocates to include bike and pedestrian trails in the state's transportation bill. The Urban Trails Fund serves to allocate funds to the Department of Transportation "to develop and maintain within urban growth boundaries multiuse trails for non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians that supplement or provide links to roads, highways, footpaths, bicycle trails and public transit." The program was authorized one time with \$1 million, but has not been reauthorized since. Advocacy is needed to encourage the state legislature to reauthorize this dedicated fund for trails.
- New funding sources: There is interest among those interviewed in pursuing new statewide funding sources for trails. Ideas range from excise taxes to a statewide parks and trails bond. Further research is needed to determine what kind of funding streams for trails would be most effective and politically viable among Oregon policy makers and the public.

CONVENE AND COORDINATE

For a group of individuals that largely share an appreciation for engaging in quiet or even solitary recreation, the trail advocates and professionals interviewed shared a huge appetite for more opportunities to get together, coordinate efforts, and partner toward larger goals.

Many interviewees expressed a desire for an annual statewide meeting and/or full conference with opportunities to "learn from each other's successes and blow-ups," gain technical knowledge, better understand how goals and projects in one region connect to what's happening in other regions, provide a positive context to work through and beyond typical conflicts between different trail user groups, and work together to create a cohesive vision and sense of priorities for the state. Interviewees saw value in a big tent approach that brought together different types of trail users and addressed different types of trails.

"Anything that gets us together and out of our individual sports silos is fabulous." -Kim McCarrel, Oregon Equestrian Trails

Interviewees pointed to the following events as potential models for convening advocates, volunteers, trails professionals, and land managers around the state:

- *Washington State Trails Coalition Conference*
- *California Trails and Greenways Conference*
- *Oregon Active Transportation Summit*
- *Travel Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership Summits*
- *Regional efforts such as Metro's Quarterly Regional Trails Forum and the Central Oregon Trails Collaborative (modeled after the Deschutes Forest Collaborative)*

Some individuals expressed a desire for more-than-once-a-year learning opportunities as well citing opportunities like webinars, conference calls, trainings, and/or guest lectures on specific topics.

Although also interested in a "big tent" convening, interviewees representing the mountain biking community expressed a sense of need for an MTB-focused annual meeting or summit, or possibly a fully MTB-focused statewide organization.

In addition to convening the trails community to support the personal and professional development of individual trail advocates and professionals and trails groups around the state, many interviewees also articulated the need to coordinate and convene the trails community so they could be effectively activated on key policy and funding issues.

**"Numbers talk. Our group has about 400 members. If we were partnering with other people, we'd have larger numbers, and folks are more likely to listen."
-Jerry Bentz, Back Country Horsemen**

Interviewees from land management agencies also expressed appreciation for the ease and clarity that is created when there is a coordinated, statewide voice on trails issues, at least in regards to specific user groups. Likewise, trail advocates expressed a need for more coordination among land managers as well.

"The interface of Federal and other lands really could profit from a coordinated and not helter-skelter, project-by-project, attempt at working together. This

is especially true for environmental assessment work." -Gary Chapman, Corvallis to the Sea Trail

ADVOCATE FOR POLICY

Many interviewees identified a need for coordinated statewide policy advocacy particularly in regards to land management agencies and funders. Common themes included:

- Advocacy for access to public lands: particularly new trail development and trail preservation on Forest Service and BLM lands. Prioritize recreation and trails in USFS, BLM, and other agency policy and resource allocation.
- Advocacy for a renewed commitment to trails leadership from OPRD including reinstatement of a state trails coordinator position (Note: OPRD currently is operating with a "trails team" that includes an RTP program coordinator, technical expertise in trails planners working within the Parks system and supporting external efforts, and the Senior Planning Manager providing overarching policy guidance and staffing ORTAC.)
- Advocacy for ODOT to reevaluate the STIP-Enhance process in regards to bike and pedestrian project and trail spending.

CREATE STATEWIDE VISION

"On the vision, a key question for trail proponents is whether we are building trails for "us" (as users, an amenity for our community, etc) or as an economic asset -- for the local (and state) economy -- given the crucial role that outdoor tourism plays in Oregon, especially for local communities. This is the heart of some of the conflict -- I want a trail for myself, but I don't want outsiders coming in and making it crowded. Trails are in fact a recreational amenity for locals but they are also an economic asset (especially in Central Oregon). But which is given emphasis is a

crucial vision question." -Chuck Humphreys, Sisters Trails Alliance

Interviewees identified a number of questions that were important for trails advocates and professionals to meaningfully wrestle with as a community. Additionally, many interviewees expressed a need for a broad engagement process to determine statewide priorities- in regards to specific big, signature trails projects, and in regards to serving different users in each region of the state.

It should be noted that earlier in 2016, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department published a 232-page plan, *Oregon Trails 2016: A Vision for the Future*. The state's 10-year recreational trails plan includes data from thousands of surveys and input from public workshops and advisory committees. It identifies many priorities for the state and associated actions, but does not designate any specific trails projects as priorities.

Interviewees expressed the following needs in regards to a statewide vision for Oregon:

- Identify statewide priorities and clear priorities from each region
- Agree on/build signature trails AND key regional connectors. Many stakeholders noted that in order to amass the necessary resources, funding, and political will to overcome the challenges in building big, inspiring signature projects, widespread support and agreement on those projects as statewide priorities was needed.
- Better see where the gaps are in service in each region.
- Answer hard questions like: How many trails are enough? What constitutes overcrowding? How to manage overuse?
- Provide public support for land managers to act boldly for trails. Many interviewees noted how historically, recreation as not been central to the mandates governing the decision-making processes and resource allocation of land managers. A sense of strong public support for trails is needed to help our land management agencies negotiate conflicts and serve as even more active partners in developing and maintaining trails.

ADDRESS TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND COORDINATE VOLUNTEERS

Land managers interviewed indicated that their limited capacity to maintain trails was the number one barrier to developing new trails.

Perhaps one of the most under-told stories in Oregon is the enormous time and energy commitment of local and regional volunteers groups in maintaining and building the trails they use. Oregon Equestrian Trails and Backcountry Horsemen have active chapters throughout the state that maintain equestrian and shared use trails and horse camps. There are a number of local and regional mountain bike groups around the state, many of them IMBA chapters, that strive for strong relationships with their local/regional land managers, and do great work to recruit and engage strong volunteer contingents.

“We encourage folks to come out and not just ride, but to come out to build and maintain trails. You’ve got to earn your dirt.” –Jocelyn Gaudi Quarrell, NWTA

Many towns and many specific trails have their own groups that put in consistent volunteer hours in reoccurring work parties. Trailkeepers of Oregon, though currently made up of a core group of about 25 volunteers, has a statewide mission and vision to someday have the capacity to play a volunteer coordination and advocacy role for trails statewide.

Many interviewees expressed satisfaction with their current trail maintenance partnerships at the same time as identifying volunteer recruitment and retainment as a perennial challenge. Several interviewees identified state-level coordination of volunteer maintenance partnerships and volunteer recruitment and training strategies as an effort that would bring great value to the state.

LOBBY FOR TRAILS AND TRAILS FUNDING

Lobbying for trails and trails funding is called out independently of other advocacy needs in this report only in that if lobbying is deemed a necessary function of a new statewide coalition or organization, that may dictate that the coalition stand independently from any public agencies and obtain independent tax status in order to properly track lobbying resources according to IRS guidelines. Seven of the individuals interviewed explicitly called out the need for a group to play a lobbying role for trails and provide a consistent voice for trails in Salem.

PROMOTE TRAILS

Several interviewees identified the need to promote trails both locally and to potential visitors. The reasons behind promoting trails included building more public support for trails, attracting visitors to Oregon towns to strengthen local economies, and engaging individuals in their local environment to become partners in conservation.

“If we can get people outdoors and involved with nature, they begin to see it, and embrace it, and to be intimate with the environment around them. This is what can lead to conservation and stewardship - developing and engaging in a sense of a place.” - Julie Chick, ORTAC, North Oregon Coast

PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Two types of interviewees identified the need for more technical assistance for trails groups statewide- those representing volunteer organizations, and those reviewing funding proposals from communities across the state.

The following technical assistance needs were identified by interviewees:

- assistance understanding and navigating the various funding mechanisms and grant programs for trails
- assistance developing strong project proposals for trail grants
- assistance conducting environmental assessments
- assistance with organizational strategic planning
- assistance with how to build a strong volunteer maintenance program
- assistance navigating local opposition to trail efforts by individuals or local agencies

LEVERAGE PRIVATE FUNDING/ PROVIDE GRANTS TO TRAILS GROUPS

Some interviewees identified the very local focus of their work as a barrier to going after larger funding opportunities and hoped that a statewide effort could leverage new funding for trails that would translate into grants for local trail groups or investments in local efforts. Two industries called out specifically in interviews as potential

sources for private funding were the outdoor industry and the healthcare/health insurance industry. Providing direct funding to local trail efforts would certainly demonstrate direct value of a statewide organization, but more research is needed to determine whether a statewide coalition would be more effective in leveraging private or public funding for its own grant program, or whether its focus would be better targeted at expanding trails funding as part of public agency programs.

PROVIDE EDUCATION

Several interviewees expressed a need for a statewide group to play an education function. Education fell into two categories: Education directly for trail users and the public and education for land managers, trail planners, and trail groups (much of which might be effectively conveyed through the efforts outlined under the “Convene and Coordinate” section of this report).

Educating trail users and the larger public

- Educate trail users about how to use trails to keep them nice.
- Educate trail users about how to interact with other user groups.
- Educate trail users about “leave no trace” practices.
- Educate trail users about the ecological and cultural history of the places where they are recreating.
- Educate trail users on conservation and how they can get involved: whether in directly protecting the place where they are recreating or in making other lifestyle choices to protect the climate and reduce impact on the earth.
- Tell the public the incredible story that it’s often volunteers that are building and maintaining trails on public lands.
- Educate the public on the health, economic, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation and trail stewardship.

Educating Trail Providers

- Educate planners and land managers about specific trail needs and desires of different user groups and different activities.
- Educate those publishing information on trails on inclusive information practices that provide people with disabilities and all of us with the information needed to decide which trails are trails we want to try.
- Educate land managers and public agencies in how to conduct effective outreach with diverse cultural communities; increase understanding of what recreational activities are relevant to diverse cultural communities.

CRUCIAL PERSPECTIVES

“Lack of economic stability is a huge barrier to outdoor recreation. The outdoor industry is huge in Oregon, but very few positions are held by people of color.” –Jorge Guzman, Vive NW

Two interviews stood out as expressing a different set of goals than many of the other interviews. Unsurprisingly, these two interviews were with individuals speaking on behalf of organizations that represent communities severely underrepresented in outdoor recreation careers in Oregon: people with disabilities and Latinx Oregonians.

Although the issues identified in interviews with Georgena Moran of Access Recreation and Jorge Guzman of Vive NW were not widely echoed as common themes, they are shared in this report as crucial perspectives that are often missing from trails dialogues, efforts, and resource allocation. These perspectives will aid us in developing a world class trails network that serves all Oregonians and visitors to our state.

Access Trails

Access Trails is a four-person team made up of people with different types of disabilities. Their goal is to conduct trail assessments in order to “share information about the trails as they are, so that people with disabilities can make their own determination about whether to try a particular trail or not.” Access Trails is in the process of conducting 36 trails assessments that not only address concerns of people with disabilities, but that will benefit all trail users and “set a new standard that should be applied to all hiking trail descriptions.” Support for their project is provided by a Metro Nature in the Neighborhoods grant.

Statewide needs identified by Access Trails include:

- Fully inclusive information published for trails across jurisdictions
- Education of trails groups and land manager on how to provide inclusive information
- Trails accessible by public transit

- Funding for assessing trails and providing/updating inclusive trail information
- Volunteer recruitment and training to conduct trail assessments and provide information on conditions of existing trails

Vive NW

“Vive NW aims to connect local Latino communities to the outdoors and the wealth of experiences offered by this landscape. Our objective is to provide valuable information and outdoor experiences that will empower the diverse communities to live a healthier and more engaged lifestyle while creating a sense of ownership and stewardship towards the environment.”

The efforts of Vive NW fit into three categories:

- Access to Nature: Efforts to connect Latino families, children, and working professionals to the outdoors
- Health in Nature: Data collection on what are the barriers to Latinos in accessing the outdoors and how that lack of access affects their health
- Economic opportunities: increase opportunities for Latinos in environmental science and outdoor industry

“We need to answer the question: Is spending money on new trails the answer? Or should we invest in making current trails more diverse? If diverse communities are not included in development and planning, they might not use the new trail once it’s built.” –Jorge Guzman

Statewide Needs Identified by Vive NW:

- More funding for programming and outreach
- Diversifying outreach and public engagement efforts of land managers and government agencies in planning processes
- Diversifying the workforce of the outdoor industry, environmental science sector, and land managers

Washington State as a Case Study

Many other states within the U.S. have coalitions or organizations working statewide to provide one or more of the functions described above. One common model is “Trails and Greenways” foundations that may operate either in close partnership with or relatively independent from state agencies funding trails. In many states, much of the focus of statewide trails groups or foundations seems to be on urban transportation trails and “Rail Trail” type multi-use paths serving primarily walkers and bikers as both transportation and recreation corridors.

The State of Washington is unique in that it is home to a number of strong statewide trails groups along with a unique public agency that administers a number of trail grant programs.

WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Quick Facts:

- 33 full time staff + part time and seasonal staff
- Focused primarily, but not exclusively on hiking trails
- Founded 50 years ago
- Nearly 70% of funding from individuals; 14,000 member households
- Provides advocacy, communications and publications, programs, trail development and maintenance
- Recreation *and* Conservation mission
- Leverages thousands of trail volunteer hours each year

WTA first started as a newsletter called “Signpost,” that published trip reports, trail information, and information on early trails advocacy issues. WTA was first an organization doing education, communications, and advocacy and added their trail maintenance program in the 1990s. Adding the trail maintenance program was a strategy to build partnerships and relationships with land managers

and engage the hiking community by chipping in and giving back to trails.

People do want to give back to the outdoors. A WA study showed 54% of people hike at least once a year. 90% walk, hike, bike, or mountaineer at least once a year. It's a huge constituency.

WTA is a part of a number of formal and informal coalitions working together on conservation and outdoor recreation issues.

They are engaged in federal and statewide advocacy, and occasionally in local project advocacy.

EVERGREEN MOUNTAIN BIKE ALLIANCE

Quick Facts:

- 25 full time staff; 48 staff including part-time instructors
- Focused on mountain biking
- Membership organization (roughly 3100 members; 2900 statewide members; 200 local chapter members)
- Directly involved in lobbying, advocacy, education, trail building and maintenance, events

"Evergreen acts as a single point of contact representing thousands of mountain bikers across Washington when working with land managers, politicians and other government agencies. We regularly team up with a variety of other organizations to work towards common goals of resource protection and recreational access."

Most of Evergreen's full time staff work out of their headquarters, but the organization has chapters across the state. Chapters are relatively independent in determining local priorities and choosing how to spend their membership dues, but do participate in monthly calls to stay informed on and give input on statewide issues. The headquarters provides insurance and membership processing for all local chapters along with advocacy, training opportunities, and other resources. Evergreen is active in advocacy on land acquisition, policy, budgets; hosts MTB lobby days in budget years. In non-budget years they participate in Outdoor Alliance joint lobby day.

WASHINGTON STATE TRAILS COALITION

Quick Facts:

- Volunteer Board
- Big tent organization that includes all trail users, planners, agencies, etc including biking, walking, MTB, equestrian, motorized, ATV, skiing, water trails, recreation and transportation, etc
- Organizes biennial 3-day Washington State Trails Conference and biennial one-day trails caucus
- Does not play a direct advocacy role in the state

“Founded in 1999, the purpose of the Washington State Trails Coalition is to provide an effective and interactive forum centering on protecting, promoting, and enhancing a statewide system of trails. Membership is open to anyone with a passion for trails, including motorized and non-motorized outdoor recreation and transportation. The primary focus of WSTC is a biennial statewide trails conference and an off-year caucus.”

WASHINGTON RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

The Washington Recreation and Conservation is a unique public agency that is the home to the state’s grant programs for recreation trails. The RCO “manages grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and farmland, and help return salmon from near extinction.”

Since the agency began in 1964, it has awarded more than \$1.9 billion in grants and contracts to more than 8,400 projects. Since 1990, the agency averages 264 grant awards for \$69 million every fiscal year. The RCO office administers 3 different grant programs that support trails

- NOVA- Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program is funded by a portion of the state gas tax (\$7 million biennially) and has motorized, non-motorized, and boating components.

- RTP- The Federal Recreational Trails program equivalent to Oregon’s program; about \$2 million annually
- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) \$65 million per biennium in bond funding; requires 10% match and funds conservation/wildlife, non-motorized trails and parks, both hard surface and soft surface trails

WASHINGTON WILDLIFE AND RECREATION COALITION

Quick Facts:

- Six staff and large volunteer board and honorary board that includes former governors and many public sector and private sector leaders
- Has more than 280 organization and agency coalition members
- Serves as the chief advocate for the WWRP program

“In 1989, the Coalition partnered with the Washington legislature and then-Governor Gardiner to establish the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), our state’s premier conservation and recreation grant program which provides matching funds to create new local and state parks, protect wildlife habitat and preserve working farms.

The Coalition is the chief advocate for the WWRP and has successfully leveraged over \$1.3 billion for more than 1,200 projects, creating not only parks and wildlife habitat, but also jobs, revenue, and increased quality of life throughout the state.”

The Coalition continues to engage in legislative advocacy each budget cycle to support commitment of funds to the WWRP and commitment of Land and Water Conservation Fund funding to conservation projects.

Recommendations

Oregon will be best poised to support the development and maintenance of a world class network of trails for all if we move forward with the following: (1) formation of a new, staffed, central organizing body independent of any state agency; (2) strong, niche-based organizations (staffed and unstaffed) that continue to forward efforts with passion and expertise focused on a signature trail, region, and/or specific user base; (3) renewed commitment and leadership from federal, state, and local agencies in recognizing trails as vital to transportation, recreation, conservation, public health, and economic development.

A NEW COALITION FOR TRAILS IN OREGON

A new, statewide trails coalition should be centered around the following three goals:

- increase non-motorized trails funding through successful advocacy
- convene trail advocates, user groups, trail planners, public agencies, and land managers to better coordinate efforts, share best practices, learn from each other, and collaborate on shared goals; work toward biennial conference
- foster a statewide voice for trails that is inclusive of all trail users and puts forth an inspiring vision for a world class trail network in Oregon. This statewide voice for trails should hold the following as core values: collaboration, conservation, strong rural economies, and access to outdoor recreation and active transportation for all Oregonians.

Next Steps

- Early 2017: Further engage stakeholders in informing the structure of a statewide trails coalition through surveys, interviews, and input sessions at events such as the Oregon Active Transportation Summit

- Early 2017 and ongoing: Meet with additional stakeholders including policy makers, outdoor industry leaders, and private sector trails professionals
- Early 2017: Secure initial funding to launch statewide trails coalition
- Early 2017: Build a board of advisors and an engaged board of directors that includes broad geographic representation and representation of diverse user groups, including those currently underrepresented in trail efforts
- Early 2017: Incorporate as 501c3 non-profit organization or identify umbrella organization for initial coalition efforts
- 2017: Engage board of directors in developing a strategic plan and financial plan that includes at least one staff position to administer the coalition and biennial conference, biennial legislative action day, annual statewide trails meeting, and annual trails stewardship day
- Spring 2017: Host 2017 Legislative Action Day to educate legislators about the need for trails funding and about the amazing trail projects and project visions around the state
- Fall 2017: Host Statewide Trails Meeting
- 2018: Host Oregon State Trails Conference
- 2018: Partner with trail groups across the state to promote a Statewide Trail Stewardship Weekend in a campaign to raise awareness of local/regional trail efforts and recruit new trail maintenance volunteers across the state with the goal of making it an annual event.

USER-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND TRAIL MAINTENANCE PARTNERSHIPS

Equestrian groups dedicated to trail and horse camp maintenance and equestrian access in Oregon already have two statewide structures through which to convene their members: Oregon Equestrian Trails and Back Country Horsemen. The organizations have annual member meetings and serve as a resource to and convener of local chapters.

The mountain biking, hiking, and water trails communities could benefit greatly from similar opportunities to coordinate statewide, share resources, and create a unified voice.

Trailkeepers of Oregon (TKO) is a group that has a strategic vision to grow into a staffed organization coordinating volunteers, advocating for hiking trails, and filling in gaps in trail stewardship statewide. Seed funding to assist TKO in growing their organization to the next level could help address the maintenance challenges that are threatening the closure of hiking trails across the state. Exploration should also be made as to if TKO or a statewide coalition could best serve as an umbrella organization for newly forming trail groups with aligned, but more-focused missions.

None of the mountain bike advocates interviewed identified their organizations as having a strategic vision to grow into a statewide headquarters for mountain biking, but some advocates expressed an interest in having a statewide organization that served as an Oregon alternative to IMBA. Smaller groups expressed a desire to learn from the more established groups and partnerships. Exploration should be made as to if a new, statewide mountain biking organization or a general statewide trails coalition could best serve as an umbrella organization for new, local MTB groups and established MTB groups with interest.

There is also desire among water trail users and advocates to have some kind of statewide coordinating body. In recent years, the Oregon State Marine Board convened a non-motorized advisory group to provide recommendations to the agency. It should be explored whether the Marine Board, a general trails coalition, or a specific state water trails organization could best serve as the convener of water trails users and advocates in Oregon.

Next Steps

- 2017: Invest seed funding in Trailkeepers of Oregon so that they may hire their first staff person to take on further development and statewide coordination functions
- Fall 2017: Host Statewide MTB Summit (possibly in conjunction with Statewide Trails Meeting) to better enable MTB community to identify next steps for statewide MTB advocacy and coordination

- 2017: Clarify the role of the Oregon State Marine Board in convening non-motorized water craft users and explore possibility of a state water trails caucus as part of general trails summit or conference
- Ongoing: Identify and address gaps in volunteer trail maintenance training, coordination, and equipment

PUBLIC AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

We will move furthest and fastest with strong partnerships between public agencies and between agencies and advocates. Public agency staff and policy makers must be engaged from the beginning as partners, advisors, and leaders.

Next Steps

- Share trail stories and future visions with state and local elected leaders and identify trails champions
- Enlist public agency staff as advisors in formation of state trails coalition and in programming statewide trails meetings and conferences
- Provide opportunities for agency staff to convene and coordinate across jurisdictions through statewide trails conference and other efforts

Glossary

AASHTO

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials; Provides standards for transportation trails that are often required standards for applying transportation funding to trails

FHWA

Federal Highway Administration. Administers the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)

FLAP Grants

The Federal Lands Access Program is an FHWA program to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands.

Inclusive Information

Web and print information that allows people with disabilities and all people to better assess whether a specific trail is one they want to try

IMBA

International Mountain Bicycling Association. Some local MTB groups in Oregon are IMBA members. Others have chosen otherwise.

MTB

Acronym for mountain bike

National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act

A Federal act currently in congress that establishes a framework for volunteer partnerships with land managers for trail stewardship

OBPAC

Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee; Reviews grant applications to ODOT for bike and pedestrian projects including trails

ODOT

Oregon Department of Transportation; administers several funding programs including ones eligible for transportation trails

OPRD

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Administers RTP and ATV grant programs and is the public agency empowered by State Statute to "establish and designate Oregon recreation trails."

Oregon Scenic Waterway Program

Began in 1969. Administered by OPRD; seeks to preserve, protect and enhance scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife and cultural values possessed by each individual scenic waterway.

Oregon Recreation Trails System Act

1971 Act that created ORTAC designates OPRD as the lead agency in establishing recreation trails in Oregon (ORS 390.950 to 390.990)

Oregon State Trails Plan

Ten Year Plan Updated in 2016. Housed in Oregon Parks and Recreation Department; Covers non-motorized, motorized, and water trails.

Oregon's All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) program

Began in 1985; improving motorized recreation trails and areas. Funding for this program comes from a portion of the motor vehicle fuel tax and from ATV permits. OPRD administers ATV program. ODOT administers Snowmobile program.

ORTAC

Oregon Recreational Trails Advisory Council: 7-member council appointed by OPRD Commission to serve 4 year terms; meet 4 times per year

RTP Grants

Recreational Trails Grants (RTP) are national grants administered by OPRD for recreational trail-related projects, such as hiking, running, bicycling, off-road motorcycling, and all-terrain vehicle riding. Yearly grants are awarded based on funds voted on by the U.S. Congress.

SCORP

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. To remain qualified for stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), each state must prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years. In Oregon, the plan functions not only to guide the LWCF program, but also provides guidance for other OPRD administered grant programs including the Local Grant, County Opportunity Grant, Recreational Trails, and All-Terrain Vehicle Programs.