

# Now is the time for county officials to open Madrone Wall Park to public

## COMMUNITY SOAPBOX

by Keith K. Daellenbach

**T**oo infrequently do we have the opportunity to secure an amazing civic treasure for future generations.

Clackamas County officials have this opportunity now by opening Madrone Wall Park in an area currently deprived of public parks. The foresight of local civic-minded visionaries saved Lewis and Clark State Park (1936), Forest Park (1948) and Tryon Creek State Park (1975) from certain development. Today, nobody looks at these parks and thinks they were a mistake. They make the region special as one of the best



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places to live, work and play in the United States.

Clackamas County has owned this spectacular 44-acre bluff, soaring over the lower Clackamas River just east of Carver, since 1937. For decades it was a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts including hikers, rock climbers and picnickers. Over 100 native wildflowers, including the iconic Pacific madrone, are endemic, and it is the source of clean drinking water for nearby neighbors and the wild and scenic Clackamas River.

The county closed it in 1997 so it could mine the natural 100-foot cliff formed by a basalt lava flow a half million years old. An ECO Northwest mining study co-funded by Madrone Wall Preservation Committee (MWPC) and Clackamas County showed that, even under the most favorable circumstances, mining the site would be an economic mistake. The county halted plans and an economic misadventure (not to mention a disaster of habitat destruction, noise, dust, dan-

gerous traffic and effluent discharge) was narrowly averted. Still, the county has kept this public land closed for nearly two decades, a dubious distinction for being singularly unique among all of the 2,600 acres of county land.

In spite of this, we have patiently and collaboratively worked within the county's process to complete many positive, forward-looking developments in recent years to finalize groundwork for a park. For instance, a two-year Clackamas County Parks' planning process incorporated the input of hundreds of citizens to complete the county's final Park Concept Plan calling for a primitive park, with attendant low operational costs, and a quarter-mile aggregate access road resurface and small parking area.

The Board of County Commissioners issued Order No. 2010-70 in 2010, to "dedicat(e) former Hardscrabble Quarry, as Madrone Wall Park." A county conditional use hearing detailed site improvements needed for park opening. A three-year, pro bono effort with T. Y. Lin International civil engineers and MWPC, valued at \$30,000, finalized the engineering construction documents detailing the site improvements and received County Transportation Department and Boring Fire District 59 review.

All Carver area businesses have gone on record supporting the park because, through increased tourism, it will support jobs in rural Clackamas County, an area underserved within a broader economic recovery. Increased local spending is estimated at \$185,000 annually to these local businesses

when this public property is once again accessible. Rural Clackamas County deserves its fair share of economic stimulus and should not be held back any longer from applying its abundant natural resource heritage to do so.

MWPC worked with Clackamas County Parks to organize multiple volunteer stewardship events, which amounted to 800 hours of pro bono work worth thousands of dollars if the county had to actually pay for it, of citizens' freely donated time to remove several dump trucks of illegally dumped rubbish and invasive plants, and built new hiking trails all in good-faith preparation for a new park.

In 2012, Clackamas County Parks further invested funds to improve it by completing a fuel reduction effort to mitigate future wildfires. We reached out to the Oregon National Guard's 1249th Engineering Battalion and, with County Parks, jointly submitted an application for a public-public project between the Guard and Clackamas County which would train soldiers for their road building mission and reduce county opening costs by an estimated \$57,000 because of essentially "free" National Guard labor. The National Guard is interested in a partnership project possibly in 2016. We all talk about "supporting our troops" so let's do that in a meaningful way so the soldiers can get the training they require, and citizens can enjoy the lasting legacy.

With no less than 19 separate major site studies completed, this site is arguably the most studied — and most publicly supported — in Clackamas

County. There have been a variety of ill-conceived plans to blow up this treasure and squandered and wasted years and missed opportunities to proceed. The public wants a park.

In the last week alone, over 800 letters have been sent to Clackamas County officials supporting a park opening, adding to already over 1,000 letters, in spite of the fact that the site has not been accessible for a generation! By finishing the work that we started, it will be a "win" for county commissioners and Clackamas County Parks. The first park opened in many years will create jobs in rural Clackamas County as well as generating new tax revenues from prospering businesses.

MWPC has successfully raised tens of thousands of dollars from multiple grant agencies including Mazamas, Access Fund, REI, Patagonia, Meyer Memorial Trust, Jubitz Family Foundation and we have demonstrated our proven commitment to raise additional funds, possibly through Oregon Parks and Recreation Department or Clackamas County Tourism Commission, needed to support Clackamas County Parks to move this effort over the finish line — and, importantly, well into the future as a long-term "friends of" partner.

With renewed county leadership, this site will be opened as a park in a maximum of two years for recreational, educational and ecological activities, local student school field trips and scout-leadership projects. Please communicate your support to open Madrone Wall Park to county commissioners and Clackamas County Parks leaders today!

*Keith K. Daellenbach is a founder and director of the all volunteer, nonprofit Madrone Wall Preservation Committee.*