

What We've Learned About River Recreation in the South Reach

The following summary is based on public input from project meetings and events, presentations at community meetings and the draft *River Plan/South Reach Existing Conditions* report.

Access to the River and Needed Improvements for River Recreation

Touching the river for boating, swimming and wading fosters a greater appreciation for and understanding of the river and the surrounding environment. This is in addition to overall enjoyment of river-recreational activities. Below are ways to increase river access. Additionally, numerous river recreation opportunities and experiences can be improved to support continued use and an anticipated increase in use of river recreation activities. Ideas for improvements are also highlighted.

For boating access and needed improvements:

Eastside

- Develop new public docks for motorized and nonmotorized boating including on the eastside to serve Brooklyn neighborhood
- Improve the end of SE Spokane St. as a public nonmotorized watercraft launch
- Locate nonmotorized boat storage under bridges and close to SE Spokane St. and Sellwood Riverfront Park
- Pursue partnerships for a dock at Oaks Amusement Park that brings visitors to Oaks Amusement Park by boat and can also serve nonmotorized boating groups
- Enforce the “no wake zone” in the Holgate Channel
- If in the future Ross Island Sand and Gravel no longer uses Ross Island, develop a boating venue with a boathouse for rowing races in the lagoon. Public use by other boaters and water skiers would also be welcome

Westside

- Provide safe access and nearby parking for non-motorized boating at Staff Jennings open space site
- Improve Staff Jennings open space site for small watercraft use

Overall

- Build nonmotorized docks without railings
- Provide more access points along the river for a variety of boating activities and publicize them
- Provide a new boat ramp
- Provide a boat fueling station

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- Provide boat storage and rentals for nonmotorized watercraft
- Make the South Reach stretch of river a safety corridor and implement a no wake zone due to the proximity of floating homes, use of the river by nonmotorized watercraft, and important natural habitat areas that are affected by significant erosion and damage to structures from motorized wake boats. It also addresses impacts to shallow water areas in the river during summer season.
- Publicize the Willamette River as a State-designated river trail and provide signage, restrooms and overnight camping for boaters

Swimming:

Overall

- Locate and create more public access points into river for swimming and wading
- Resolve the algae bloom issue in the Holgate Channel.

For swimming needed improvements:

Eastside

- Consider a public-private partnership for development and management of a public swimming beach at Oaks Amusement Park
- Consider restructuring retaining wall at Sellwood Riverfront Park to extend and create a larger beach area
- Redesign river access at Sellwood Riverfront Park area to add more opportunities for river users to access the river and reduce the current bottleneck due to somewhat limited access via narrow steps, (also applies to nonmotorized watercraft launching from the park)

Westside

- Implement Willamette Park Master Plan concept for laying back riverbank and providing a seasonal swimming beach; access to the swimming beach needs to be clearly marked so that public use does not negatively impact the adjacent habitat restoration area
- Formalize the swimming beach at the end of SW Pendleton Ave
- Improve Staff Jennings open space site for swimming

Fishing improvements:

- Build small piers along the river for fishing to replicate historic Native American fishing locations; new piers could be used by Native Americans, immigrants and others who fish today
- At the area under the west side of the Sellwood Bridge, replace dock for fishing

Other needed improvements:

Eastside

- Encourage more river-supporting businesses at the Sellwood bridgehead (e.g. boat rentals, cafes, etc.)

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- Provide for recreational camping at Ross Island

Overall

- Have the City develop a new program that provides ecological river tours
- Publicize river user education for all watercraft; provide more enforcement of river user rules and best practices (e.g., make sure Stand Up Paddleboarders wear a vest, have a whistle and know river etiquette)
- Advocate for a State fee for nonmotorized boaters that would support improvements for these river users

Minimizing Conflicts Between River Users, Nearby Residents and the Environment

River recreation activities have existed for a long time on the Willamette River. In the Portland region, there's been an increase in population and the Big Pipe project has led to a cleaner, healthier river; resulting in an increase in river recreation activities. There has also been an increase in houselessness with some choosing to shelter in live-aboard boats mooring in the river. These factors have contributed to occasional conflicts.

Potential solutions provided to date include:

- Work with the Oregon State Marine Board to institute a safety corridor (a no wake zone) for motorized boats, e.g. wake boats for surfing/skiing and other motorized boats create tremendous wake impacts that cause problems for nonmotorized boaters, floating homes and natural area/riverbank erosion
- Address live-aboard boaters who tie up at public docks for lengthy times (overnights) and conflict with other boat users who want to use tie up at a dock temporarily (e.g. Sellwood Riverfront Park dock)
- Address live-aboard boaters who anchor in the river and cause conflicts with nonmotorized boaters. For example, sailors get caught up in live-aboard boater lines while sailing.
- Consider locating a right-to-float area for live-aboard boaters. This could be in the shallow water and low current area southwest of Ross Island, where floating porta-potties are provided
- Have river patrols increase enforcement of drunk and reckless motor boaters on the river
- Address traffic conflicts on SE Spokane St. near Sellwood Riverfront Park entrance and the Springwater Corridor Trail that will be increased if a nonmotorized boat launch is developed at the end of the street