

# SUNSET BAY MANAGEMENT UNIT ROCKY SHORE AREAS



Nature  
HISTORY  
Discovery

Draft Site Management Plan

2009

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sunset Bay Management Unit State Parks are located approximately 10 miles southwest of Coos Bay, near Charleston, in Coos County, Oregon. The parks are located approximately 220 miles southwest of Portland and about 90 miles west of Roseburg. From north to south, the parks are: Yoakam Point State Natural Site (SNS), Sunset Bay State Park, Shore Acres State Park, and Cape Arago State Park.

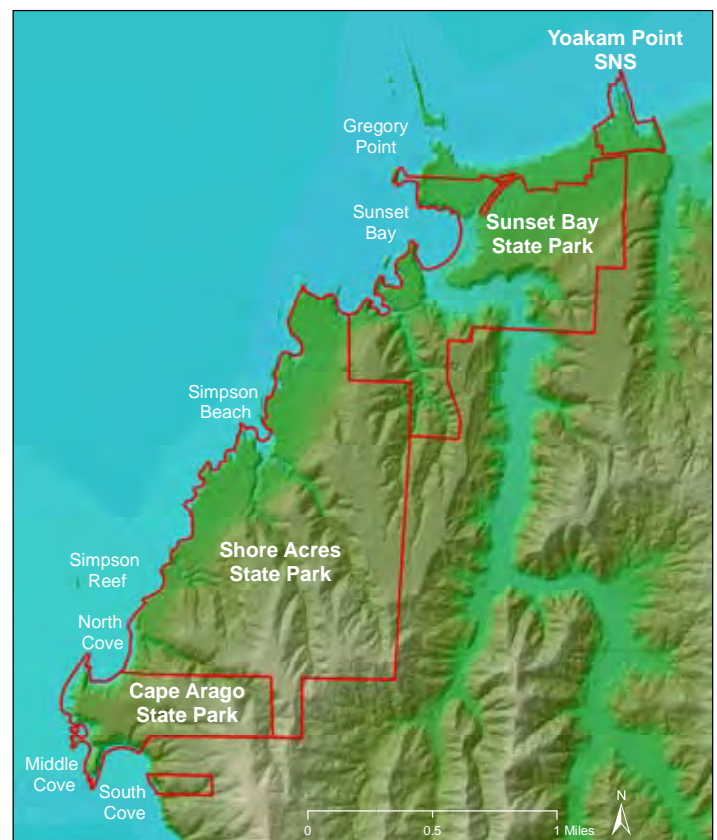
The focus of these plans is on improving management based on *existing* authorities and responsibilities. Current information is used, along with existing designations to work within OPRD jurisdiction, along with partner agencies to develop and implement this rocky shore areas site management plan. Upland issues not directly related to use of the ocean shore/rocky intertidal areas are not addressed in this plan. The plan will be used by OPRD staff, in consultation with its partners, to guide future rocky shore resource and recreation management, as well as minor facility improvements (e.g., trail maintenance, informational signage) and to improve interpretive opportunities. Advisory committees provided OPRD with their view of the issues and concerns, ideas and proposals for improving site management. Public input will be used to refine the draft plan.

The reasons for a site planning process for these locations include the following primary objectives:

- Plan for public enjoyment and protection of state park and ocean shore resources
- Provide a forum for stakeholder discussion and participation about each site
- Understand the current management designations and what they mean for use and access for each site
- Direct and educate visitors through on-site interpretation about the importance of the rocky shore resource and the particular site designation
- Address current recreational use levels, activities and patterns, and determine how best to provide for recreational use without harming the rocky shore and state park resources.

A number of issues have been brought up through the public interview process, as well as staff and stakeholder meetings regarding the parks within the Sunset Bay

Management Unit. Issues that can be addressed in this planning process are reflected in the goals and/or resource management guidelines. Not every issue identified as part of this process is appropriate to address in this plan. For example, this is not a Master Plan, so no development proposals are being made. Therefore, those issues that cannot be reasonably addressed are mentioned for potential future consideration by OPRD in other appropriate programs. Some issues will be addressed through related follow-up work, including suggested future studies and work with agency partners. As an over arching principle, adaptive management will be employed to periodically review, and as appropriate update these goals and strategies.



*Parks within the Sunset Bay Management Unit*

## Goals and Strategies Summary

The goals and strategies for management of the parks and adjacent rocky ocean shoreline are based on consideration of the recreation needs assessment, and evaluation of the issues identified in the planning process and summarized in this plan as well as statewide agency policies. Following are summarized descriptions of the five main goals and

potential strategies to achieve each goal. Strategies include individual steps or actions, which are designated with bullets and will be implemented when feasible and appropriate.

**Goal 1: Provide recreation opportunities and experiences that are appropriate for the park resources and recreation settings.**

Every effort will be made to provide visitors with an assortment of recreational experiences that continue to meet and exceed their expectations.

- Develop or rehabilitate recreational facilities, guided by indicators of need, the recreation settings, resource suitability, and the capacities of the parks to accommodate use without overcrowding, degradation of recreation experience, or conflicts with other uses.
- Discourage recreational activities that threaten to harm the natural, cultural or scenic resources and/or the safety of the visitors. Alternatively or in combination with discouragement, re-route them to alternate locations that are less sensitive.

The need for maintaining the current day-use experiences for park visitors is recognized, but potential future activities need to be anticipated. This is based on the anticipated increase in demand for recreation and recognizing parks needs to meet future visitor expectations. The current capacity for day-use in the management unit is at the right level given space and natural resource restrictions. There is no viable opportunity to increase parking capacity, therefore, there is the potential for the parks to be “at-capacity” more often than it is currently and those that experience crowding may increase.

- Explore the feasibility of options for monitoring access/tracking (e.g., a “trail log” book or check-in station for large groups). Consider whether crowding is occurring and needs to be managed.
- Provide information to visitors about other coastal parks and accesses that offer similar or complementary experiences.
- Coordinate with school groups to help minimize crowding and improve their educational experience at the parks. Determine the appropriate maximum number of busses and look at providing designated parking. Look at opportunities to work with the school districts to coordinate scheduling of school visits.

- Explore options for improving services to visitors with disabilities.
- Investigate ways to improve facilities and services to accommodate Oregon’s youth. Work to develop partnerships with recreation providers that encourage youth outdoor exploration and interpretation.

The anticipated increase in future demand for recreational activities includes activities such as walking, hiking, tidepooling and generally ocean beach activities.

- Continue to provide and maintain opportunities for these key recreational activities. As new trends emerge, consider the feasibility of providing for those at the parks.

**Goal 2: Protect, manage and enhance as appropriate, outstanding natural, cultural and scenic resources.**

Enjoyment and appreciation of resources will be enhanced while protecting those resources from effects of overuse.

*Scenic resources:*

One important aspect of visiting the parks is the views of some of the major features at Gregory Point, Simpson Reef and the other offshore features in the area. These views focus on the ocean and more specifically, at the overlook, of the geologic features of the unique coastline of the Cape Arago area.

- Retain the scenic attraction of key natural features. Unforeseen future actions may impair views and efforts will be made to minimize the possibility for negative impacts on key viewsheds and features within the parks and adjacent ocean shore.
- Retain or restore existing vegetation when vital to scenic values.
- Avoid or minimize obstruction of existing views of the ocean and beaches.
- Blend new additions to the landscape with the existing shoreline scenery (e.g., type of construction, color).

*Cultural resources:*

The park land is an important traditional-use area of several tribes and their cultural heritage within the area is of considerable antiquity. In addition to pre-contact and historic archaeological sites, Oregon Tribes who are affiliated with the area view cultural resources as those resources that continue to be used by Native peoples, such as foods, medicines and basketry materials.

- Preserve and protect the cultural heritage of the parks in consultation with the Tribes.
- Consult, as appropriate, with the various tribes to identify potential interpretive themes/stories to highlight at the parks.

*Natural resources:*

It will likely be necessary for OPRD to consult with other agencies and stakeholders to determine whether there are changes desired in ecosystem types or conditions over time and as new information becomes available. As resources become available, additional inventories and research will be completed and evaluated for the presence of threats and opportunities.

- Develop long-term monitoring of the high use intertidal areas (and complementary control areas) to track potential impacts of visitor use (this may be part of a coast-wide strategy).
- Determine if there are times when visitation has less/more of an impact and use that information to inform visitors about best times to visit.
- Study the recreational carrying capacity for the rocky shores within this area.
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the seasonal trail closure at North Cove and continue the closure to protect marine mammal pups.
- Work with partners to explore opportunities for monitoring impacts to wildlife.

The resources will be managed to minimize any unacceptable threats or to attain desired ecosystem conditions and types.

- Use scientific information to adaptively manage as new information becomes available.
- Continue to enforce current rules, including coordinating with partners on cross-jurisdictional issues. Explore partnership opportunities.
- Prohibit the harvest of seaweed without a research permit within the boundaries of the research reserve.
- On-site staff and/or volunteers will discourage illegal collection and efforts will be made to improve signage and increase voluntary compliance.
- As deemed appropriate based on monitoring and scientific research, and in coordination with appropriate agencies and stakeholders, implement temporary rotational area closures as necessary to allow recovery of intertidal areas receiving greatest use.
- Identify potential habitats for “species of interest”

found within the park boundaries and adjacent ocean shore. Update the list and develop a monitoring plan, as appropriate.

- Work with Federal, State and Local agencies and other interested groups to protect at-risk species, their habitats, and identify opportunities to improve key habitats and minimize negative interactions with visitors to assist with species survival and recovery.
- Work with partners to develop a site response plan for introduced aquatic/marine invasive species (likely as part of a larger coastal or regional plan).
- Develop a site specific management procedure for strandings (e.g., marine mammals) and emergency response (e.g., beach safety, hazardous materials) on the beach and rocky shore.
- Work with partner agencies who are attempting to resolve environmental and safety risks associated with pollution that have the potential to effect park or ocean shore resources and/or present safety risks to park visitors.

**Goal 3: Provide for adequate management, maintenance, rehabilitation, and park operations including safe, efficient, identifiable and pleasant access and circulation.**

To the extent that resources are available, recreational activities and facilities will be managed, maintained, rehabilitated and operated as needed for the safety, satisfaction and enjoyment of visitors and local citizens. In allocating state park operational and facility investment funds, strive to provide adequate support for the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing facilities, and an adequate level of oversight and enforcement in the parks and adjacent ocean shore.

- Continue routine maintenance of the South Cove access trail.
- Routine maintenance of the parking lots (including striping) may be able to help with appropriate parking of larger vehicles.
- As necessary and practicable, develop a site assessment and beach recreation safety plan (this could be part of a larger coastal or regional plan).
- Consider long-term solutions as the North Cove trail continues to degrade.
- Temporarily close the North Cove trail should access be deemed hazardous for visitors and while solutions

- (temporary and long-term) are being sought.
- Continue to treat the access at Middle Cove as “unofficial” and un-maintained.
- Maintain and install directional and informational signage to direct vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Look at long-term solutions to parking issues as they develop, such as signage.
- Plant, remove and prune designed landscape areas where needed to beautify roads and parking areas, retain scenic views, and provide visual buffers within the parks.

**Goal 4: Promote public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the recreation settings through resource interpretation.**

OPRD will strive to share and interpret park and local history along with geologic and natural resources with a wider audience. The interesting local history, unique geology and ocean shore and marine resources make the Sunset Bay/Cape Arago area an outstanding location for interpretation. There is a great opportunity to educate visitors, especially since the majority of them have been to these sites before and plan to return in the future. Even those that are visiting for the first time believe that they are highly likely to return in the future.

OPRD has a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with visitors, particularly those to South Cove and the Sunset Bay Campground. The primary way visitors found out about South Cove is from either a state park flyer or staff. These points of contact needs to be capitalized upon as it would be possible to provide visitors with targeted information to improve their visit and reduce impacts to the rocky shore.

The vast majority of visitors to both sites (Sunset Bay and South Cove) surveyed indicated they are interested in learning more about rocky shores/tidepools on a future visit. The preferred method of receiving this information was through on-site staff (either by guided tour or roving ranger).

- Building upon the existing Coos I Interpretive Plan, develop a site specific rocky shore interpretive plan that includes themes, signage guidance, recommended programs and materials. In the meantime, use the existing plan as guidance for interpretive services.

- Work with partners to improve on-site interpretive services.
- Organize OPRD led groups so that they avoid peak visitation periods.
- Encourage groups, especially those with small children, to visit during days that do not necessarily have the lowest tides of the year.
- Improve visitor awareness and understanding of the special protected status of the marine protected area and research reserve.
- Deliver consistent messages about tidepool etiquette, including encouraging rocky shore recreation (including OPRD facilitated trips) to occur at the sand/rock interface.
- Determine the best method of reaching out to schools. Provide interpretive services to school groups to improve their educational experience at the parks.
- Coordinate with the Tribes on any interpretive stories that relate to cultural resources.
- Provide information to harness the increasing availability and interest of aging Oregonians in volunteering in their communities.
- Communicate information about park resources and services on the OPRD website. Use social networking sites to provide up-to-date informations, particularly interpretive events.
- Provide information on OPRD produced tide-charts (e.g., a link to access the tide-chart online, information on rocky shores etiquette and ecology).

**Goal 5: Form partnership and agreements to aid in achieving goals**

Many of the issues identified in the scoping for these parks identified partners as part of the solution.

- Identify and follow-through with viable potential partnerships, as practicable, to work through the above listed activities, and new ones that emerge in the future.
- Promote the use of the above goals and strategies when working with others as partners in joint activities.