

**Waterfront Recreation Committee  
Minutes  
April 2, 2007**

Attending: Members Steve Gates, Lori Stirn, Michael Schock, Laney Gale, Doug Archbald, Richard Sassara, Ann Frodel; Commissioners Sherry Bohn and Hoby Streich; Staff Members: Linda Hull, Mike Doke, Laurie Borton; Others: Andrew Jansky (Flowing Solutions), Hood River County Sheriff Marine Deputy Mike Anderson; Media: Matt Preusch, Oregonian

Absent: Michael McElwee, Executive Director

1. **Introductions:** Sherry Bohn opened the meeting at 3:30 p.m. and welcomed the audience of approximately 20 people. Bohn said the purpose of the meeting was to provide the committee an update of the action steps taken thus far regarding the recreational issues of the Delta, to discuss any proposed solutions to the congestion and user conflicts, and to discuss other recreational issues for the Port Commission to consider for policy and planning. Invited guest, Stephen Purchase, Department of State Lands (DSL) Assistant Director, was unable to attend.
2. **Delta Update/Actions to Date:** Many serious issues were identified at the February 13<sup>th</sup> Waterfront Recreation Committee meeting that the Port of Hood River is working to resolve collaboratively with several agencies, local groups, and professionals. The areas identified are outlined below and include immediate and long-term actions that have taken place or are currently planned.

**Facts Established:** The November 2006 landslide debris flow containing logs, debris, dirt, sand, rocks and boulders, created 26 acres of new land projecting east and west from the sandbar at the confluence of the Columbia and Hood River, according to Andrew Jansky, Flowing Solutions. This area contains approximately 750,000 cubic yards of additional dirt/sand with at least that same amount on top of the pre-existing sandbar area. After studying and comparing the pre-Bonneville Dam historical data, Jansky concluded the Delta is recreating itself in the same form as before Bonneville in 1935 as it seeks equilibrium and balance of the forces of the two rivers.

Although the existing channel into the Nichols basin is authorized by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, they do not have the funding to dredge it, and probably will not anytime in the future. Private dredging would cost \$3-\$10/per cubic yard depending upon method used. The dredging period is permitted during specific in-water dates (November – February) and must be permitted by the Corps, Oregon Fish & Wildlife, and Department of State Lands (DSL). The Corps may, however, consider a feasibility study for funding in 2008 to determine the long-term impacts of the debris flow event on the Hood River and the Delta. This study would evaluate the costs, benefits and options for removing the Delta and evaluate alternate community navigation access points on the Columbia River; the blockage of the Nichols basin has essentially eliminated industrial access to the Columbia River. The Queen of the West, tour boat, is also prohibited from stopping in Hood River; however, most of the smaller cruise vessels (Spirit of Discovery, Island Spirit, Safari Quest) can access the Port's Marina basin dock.

The Corps Reservoir Control Center manages the water level of the Columbia River and it has fish and power agreements to consider as priorities. Jansky's depiction of the water elevations (76'-79') over the sandbar demonstrates the caution that must be used by recreationalists on the sandbar. The water levels may fluctuate several feet during one day and the debris may be submerged at any time. Jansky's information is posted on the Port's website at [www.portofhoodriver.com](http://www.portofhoodriver.com).

**Ownership Issue:** The Port hired Eric Carlstrom, Terra Surveying, to review deeds and easements associated with the waterfront boundaries, which are currently being reviewed by DSL's legal department. The Port is in discussions with Stephen Purchase regarding an interagency management agreement for managing this site, including control of access and uses of the land, similar to other governmental agreements used by DSL. However, DSL is very supportive of a local option for managing the land and for resolving conflicts without the use of a management

agreement. They do have the authority to close down an area to all public use if conflicts, misbehavior and damages are not controlled.

Andrew Jansky and James Glaeser, NW Hydro, worked together using Terra's survey markers to study the water levels and topography. The result will be a composite contour survey map indicating detailed survey information, which aids in the ownership determination as well as other long-term informational studies of the ever-changing land. This information will serve to establish the baseline for future erosion or accretion rates at the Delta site.

**Congestion/Public Safety/Enforcement:** Recognizing that the Event Site area will have increased congestion by various users of the site because of the sandbar's encroachment on its eastside, the Port immediately began working with the Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association (CGWA) and the Columbia Gorge Kiteboarding Association (CGKA) to determine mutually acceptable safe zones which will demarcate windsurfing and kiteboarding zones. The groups worked on a graphic that can be posted as signage at all waterfront sites showing the "safety no-wake zone" north of the Event Site, demarcation zones for each sport, and all agreed-upon launch sites. The signage would also depict danger-caution areas of debris, shallow water, steep drop-offs and swift currents. The groups believe they can educate and self-enforce their respective users accessing the water from the Event Site and the Spit. The Port, CGWA and CGKA will be proactive in collaborative press releases, informational flyers, and will provide people to communicate the seriousness of separation of the activities in a small area. The guidelines would apply year-around and for both high and low water levels.

Hood River County Marine Deputy, Mike Anderson, began immediately to plan for placement of Oregon State Marine Board approved hazard buoys at key cautionary submerged debris areas and along the perimeter of the outer edges of the land mass where steep drop-offs are located. Anderson also requested the Event Site curb be marked "Fire Lane - Tow-Away Zone" so that emergency responders can have access at all times to the waterfront. Anderson will also work the Port, CGWA, and CGKA to correctly mark the caution areas that presently exist.

**Debris removal, volunteer work parties:** The Port contacted the Corps to see if it could hold water back, lower the Bonneville Pool and "flush" the debris off with high water. The answer was "no" as there is not enough flow force to do this. They will be conducting normal spring dam operations, which cause high flows and pool elevations that may create some additional changes on the Delta, however.

Discussions with the Corps, DSL and local agencies showed support for volunteer work parties to assist in debris cleanup. The Port was told we could pile up wood debris and burn it or float off small pieces, as long as no excavation by heavy equipment was done below the Ordinary High Water mark and embedded debris was left undisturbed. We will need to coordinate the work parties under DSL's volunteer program requirements.

**Nichols Basin Water Quality:** The Port contacted Mike Matthews, Hood River County Health Department, to set up water testing for bacteria to ensure the low water levels will not impact recreational users. The basin does receive some percolation of fresh water through the dike and from the channel during higher water. Also, the Department of Environmental Quality Project Manager of the site, David Anderson, assures the Port there is no human health danger from chemicals in the basin.

- 3. Andrew Jansky, Flowing Solutions:** Andrew Jansky provided an update to the committee on the Hood River Delta. He clarified that the original sandbar in 2005 consisted of approximately 60 acres, including the shallow areas. Therefore, the 2006 debris flow expanded this area another 26 acres (750,000 cubic yards). The additional sand deposited on top of the existing sandbar, calculated at eight-foot average height, added an additional 750,000 cubic yards of volume. Jansky reminded the committee that in-water removal or dredging can only take place from November to February. He also stated the high spring flows have already created changes in the landscape from his prior visits to the site.

Jansky stated he understands the user groups are coordinating a united effort to address safety issues that may affect their recreation. Jansky identified several measures that may be viable now: clear hazardous wood/debris, mark hazard areas/buoys, upland signage with graphics depicting hazard areas and preferred sail/kite zones, post swimming warnings, and determine policy on vehicles and camping.

Jansky demonstrated how the pool elevation impacts the size of the sandbar and that even a small change in elevation or flowage can result in a big impact. The pool elevation changes hourly and daily predictions are difficult to make. For example, this year on March 30, the flow was 266 cubic feet per second (cfs); on March 31, it was 300 cfs – the elevation of the water fluctuated seven feet. Based on historic data at the Corps, the least amount of elevation in the pool occurs annually in August. He suggested the Port place some kind of gauge on a webcam that could indicate the current real-time elevation to users in Hood River.

The effects of the Delta on commerce are several: the boat basin is now blocked for industrial and cruiseship access and the Event Site's windsurfing launch site is partially constricted. One option identified by Jansky would be to dredge 150,000 to 250,000 cy out of the channel and re-deposit onto the beach. However, the cost is prohibitive and it could fill in with the next debris flow. The Port will be discussing the options with the Corps in the immediate future.

Short- and long-term planning is now taking place so that permitting needs and funding resources can be identified. If any dredging or sculpturing of the area is proposed, the permitting process needs to start soon for the in-water work period.

Richard Sassara asked if a permit was for one-year only? Jansky said they can range from 2-to 7-year timeframes depending upon type and agency. Ann Frodel asked if the Spit dyke could be cut so that the Hood River could naturally flow into the Nichols basin. Jansky stated it could be part of the long-term options studied by the Port; there would also be impacts to habitat and fish that would have to be addressed environmentally. A question was asked about why we even need a boat basin there at this time if there is no Nichols Boatworks business. Jansky said this is a long-term planning issue for the Port to consider.

4. **Safety Launch/Demarcation Zones—CGWA, CGKA:** Bruce Peterson, CGWA (Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association) member, told the committee that CGWA and CGKA (Columbia Gorge Kiteboarding Association) members met together to discuss the creation of a new "safety zone" for the sports. Peterson explained that in years past, multiple lanes provided separation of the two sports. The Delta encroached into the Event Site launch area so that the congestion of the two sports is magnified in that area. The two organizations agree that safety should be a priority with the change in the Delta and worked together on the area that should be a 600' square space for low speed, no jibing, no kiting area directly in front of the Event Site. This zone would be effective for both high and low water conditions and year around. Sherry Bohn reminded everyone that the current Port policy is signed at all sites: there is no kite launching allowed at the Event Site or Marina. The groups agreed that no kite pumping or gear should be allowed on the Event Site beach; if parking at the Event Site kiteboarders will need to carry gear to the sandbar before inflating and arranging kite lines. Peterson stated the rules are agreed upon and understood and now the work will be to communicate it to all users, both local and visitors.

Deputy Anderson added that two weeks ago with approximately 50 people in the water mixing the two sports, there were many near misses; he had extreme difficulty in rescuing a windsurfer near the Event Site. He asked that his boat be given a 500' clearance when he is in the area and that specific message should be indicated somewhere on the materials for communication.

A question about swim areas was asked. Anderson stated there are no safe swimming areas; it is 'swim at your own risk' on the waterfront with ever-changing water levels, swift currents, and steep drop-offs. He would not support any buoy line marking off a swim area.

Frodel and Doug Archbald both felt the kiteboarders should not park at the Event Site. Others in the audience believed they might only use the Event Site parking on low water days and during high water would prefer the Spit parking area, which also costs less.

The status of Lot 6 was discussed. Frodel said the City has not received any plan from anyone to use it, but if CGWA had a proposal for its use they should meet with the City administration.

Anderson was asked why the buoys will be hazard buoys and not regulatory. He stated that the regulatory buoys have to be state authorized and written into the state marine laws. Hazard buoys can be placed as marker buoys for cautionary areas. When asked if he could cite people who violate the rules of the safety zone, he replied that the safety zone has to be self-regulated by participants. However, the Port could request repeat violators be banned from using the area and he can then cite them for trespass if they return. Anderson also said no metal stakes or buoys of any kind can be placed as warning markers. Everything placed in the submersible water area has to be navigable. Anderson stated he is in support of the safety zone and is encouraged the groups have come together to address the issue. He and Peterson will meet to discuss the ways the area can be marked for the safety zone in a way that is approved by the regulatory agencies.

Anderson said he plans to place three other perimeter hazard buoys in the area. One will mark the drop off area on the north side of the sandbar and two will mark the channel entry into the marina boat basin.

#### 5. 2007 Issues & Information/Recommendations:

- ❑ Launch/Safety Zones: A motion was made by Ann Frodel to recommend to the Port Commission to approve the safety zone signage as proposed by CGWA and CGKA. Port staff would then work with the groups to finalize, fabricate and distribute. It was suggested that color posters be placed in the shops and motels for tourists to be aware of the river dynamics and launching areas.
- ❑ Kicker/Slider: It was reported there is a group of kiteboarders constructing a jumping apparatus. Deputy Anderson said it is considered a Special Use Device and must be permitted by the Oregon State Marine Board. He would not allow it in or near the safety zone and there may be other requirements associated with its placement. He will remove any illegal buoys or markers.
- ❑ Enforcement: Anderson stated his main concerns focus on rescue requirements. He asked for an Event Site "No Parking – Tow Away" zone for emergency vehicle access. He also said his marine boat is not maneuverable at low speeds and during rescues windsurfers and kiteboarders need to give him at least 500' clearance. Emergency vehicles will also access the sandbar via the Spit road and they have a special gurney to traverse the sandbar terrain. He noted that the Nichols basin is not going to be a good launch area for personal watercraft (jet skis) due to the lower depths and increased congestion. He will be closely monitoring that area this season.
- ❑ Fees/Variable Passes: Discussion followed regarding fees. The recreational access sites continue to be revenue negative and costs continue to increase. Lori Stirn made a motion to recommend to the Port Commission that the Event Site daily parking fee be increased to \$5, weekly passes be instituted at the Event Site and Spit (\$20/\$10) and annual passes for additional family vehicles (\$20), annual passes remain the same (\$50 Event Site; \$25 Spit; \$100 Overlength), and \$2 daily Spit.
- ❑ Marina Issues: The waiting list continues to increase for slip moorage. Giving preference to Gorge residents was discussed. Laney Gale asked Laurie Borton if she could break out the current tenant list to over and under 30' for demographics. She doesn't think raising the moorage fees will create any more movement from tenants using the slips for storage. Jansky said his data indicates the average boat owner uses the boat 6 times per year. The committee discussed the loophole to get around the waiting list and that is to purchase a boat of a current tenant and pretend to be co-owners. Staff was asked if they could survey other marinas on subletting policies and see if the Commission would consider changing its policy on no subletting. Jansky said he is working with the Port on a Marina Plan for future

budgeting that may increase the available slips. It was also asked if a dry storage area and/or hoist could be constructed for tenants.

- ❑ Prior Issues Update:
  - Signage: 3 bilingual signs for Marina Beach to be installed shortly. Thanks to the Lions Club, Rodger Schock and SignMedia; Lions may provide life rings later.
  - Signage regarding Waterfront Access proposed by CGWA/CGKA will be presented for committee review on April 2.
  - Volunteer Camp Host: Memorial Day weekend until Labor Day; Duties will be night security, closing & opening Event Site daily; lost & found – Will advertise position locally and through CGWA.
  - Event Site/Spit booth may remain open until 8:00 P.M.
  - Event Site/Hook: additional directional signage added (exits, to Hook, etc.); more picnic tables; staff will assist CGWA in cleanup projects.
  - Event Site/Spit drop gates: postponed for now: “All Vehicles Must Stop” signs will be added at booths.
  - Vending machines at Event Site: Coke will place machine May-September. If not enough volume they will remove, but willing to try one season.
  - Enforcement all sites: Port may hire additional adult to monitor parking, loading zones, 20-minute zone, dogs, garbage, etc.
  - Marine Deputy Mike Anderson requests Event Site No Parking Red Zone for emergency vehicles be enforced and marked as a tow-away zone (west of restroom).
  - Concessions: Windsurfing rental area to be located at east end of Event Site by cruiseship dock, not in main parking lot; water & power available.
  - CGWA will place a changing room at the Hook with Port assistance; additional portable toilet will be added on road to Hook, other areas where needed.
  - Marina: Planning has begun for additional moorage and reconfiguration; 63 (under 30') and 30 (over 30') on slip waiting lists; people are “sharing” boats now – Commission spring planning can consider differentiated fee schedule.
  - Website adding links or cams for bridge, weather, wind, water levels, surveys for public input (i.e., should dogs be banned at the Event Site? ☺), Plus credit card transaction capability.
  - Lot 6 water access: Contacted Bob Francis and he said he has not received a plan or request to date from any user associations.
- ❑ Next Steps:
  - Signage finalized and posted all sites: safety zone, hazard areas, launch sites, swim at own risk, sandbar is no vehicles, no camping.
  - Event Site signage: No kite launch or pumping/gear.
  - Establish work party guidelines for CGWA/CGKA volunteer participation.
  - Staff/CGWA/CGKA work together on Waterfront Safety/Guidelines flyer.
  - Deputy Anderson will meet with CGWA/CGKA on hazard marker placement.
  - Follow-up with DSL on management issues and management agreement.
  - Staff, Deputy Anderson to meet with schools in May regarding personal watercraft, rules and school issues.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Date to be determined.

Prepared by Linda Hull