

Clackamas County Water Tourism Study

Purpose:

In spring of 2017 Clackamas County Tourism initiated a comprehensive study to determine if its water recreation assets are being used to their greatest economic potential.

Method:

The study included over 3 months of site visits to the County's water bodies and surveyed 1700 statewide respondents. The results represent the interests of 1.6 million water recreation enthusiasts and a detailed inventory of the County's recreational assets.

Overall Key Findings:

- Oregon's recreational waters are visited 80 million times annually by people looking to recreate.
- Clackamas County's recreational waters attract 1.5 million visitors annually, which result in 240,000 overnight stays.
- Clackamas County's water bodies are equally good or better than the State average for recreational value.
- The public's concern for water quality, habitat quality, public access, information, safety, user conflicts, and crowds are not significantly different in the County than the rest of the state.
- Water-based recreation generated about 12 million dollars in lodging reservations in Oregon in 2016, but Clackamas County captured only about 2% of this amount. Despite above average water assets, the County is attracting below average visitation to these waters due to a combination of physical access, water-recreation management, lack of awareness, and niche product development.

Upper Clackamas River



Middle Clackamas River



Lower Clackamas River



Location:

Clackamas County is home to 56 miles of the Clackamas River, with over half the river designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This study divides the Clackamas River into three sections, each with a unique water tourism offering and recommendations. The Upper Clackamas is the most remote section of the river with excellent fishing, technical whitewater and camping and is home to the annual Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival. The Middle Clackamas is home to Milo McIver State Park and the City of Estacada. The Lower Clackamas is the most used section with a wide range of water recreation opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. Improvements in Infrastructure

a. Expand Camping Opportunities

- i. Additional campsites at existing campgrounds and additional campgrounds are needed to meet current demand.
- ii. Potential new locations for additional sites between Timothy Lake and Memaloose at RM 33 should be studied and built.
- iii. A new reservation policy may help open sites.

b. Parking and Facility Improvements at Put-Ins - Improvements with parking, pedestrian and boat access, bathrooms, trash removal, signage and interpretation are needed.

c. Pedestrian Bridge Connecting Milo McIver State Park to Estacada - A pedestrian bridge would increase foot traffic to local merchants and restaurants.

d. Improve Feldhiemer Boat Launch - Improvements on these facilities would increase the usage here and help relieve the traffic congestion at Milo McIver State Park (the next launch upstream).

2. Coordination of Community

a. Improve the “urban-river interface” by fostering and promoting the connection between Estacada and the Clackamas River through infrastructure, policy, programs, and events.

b. Support increased commercial whitewater use of upper Clackamas River. The river see much less visitation than comparable rivers.

c. Manage use to reduce user conflict on lower Clackamas River.

3. Improve the Experience

a. Expand Tour Products - Offer packages including a variety of price points and abilities increasing the accessibility of water-based recreation. Examples include fishing gear rental, family friendly tours, and increased soft adventure offerings.

b. Focus on the Experience - Promote time spent bonding and creating memories while engaging in water recreation.

c. Promote Mass Transit Use with Bus Stops at Barton and Carver Parks – Bus stops should be provided for existing transit lines in the parking lots of these parks.

d. Create Water Trail and Map for Clackamas River – Other existing Water Trail should be used as a model to provide consistent information.



Next Steps:

View the full 156-page report from Crane and Associates

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/122hp73833fpsog/Clackamas%20County%20Water%20Tourism%20Report%20F.pdf?dl=0>

To discuss the Water Tourism Strategic Plan, Development Grants, or relevant projects contact Samara Phelps 503-742-5910 or email samara@mthoodterritory.com.