

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 Willamette River Corridor



Location:

The Willamette River offers diverse water tourism opportunities in Clackamas County and consequently the greatest potential for total visitation. The Willamette River flows from the Boones Ferry Boat Launch in the southern end of the county to the Milwaukie/Portland line on the north. These 22 river miles afford the recreationist the greatest diversity of water-based entertainment in the county. From motor boating and water skiing, to fishing and primitive camping on secluded islands the river provides abundant natural and cultural history. The location provides a unique opportunity to connect the river experience with the amenities like restaurant, lodging, and public transport.

Recommendations:

1. Improvements in Infrastructure
 - a. Wilsonville Memorial Park: Improve Day Use Area & Access - River access, picnic areas, and a range of public facilities should be considered here to increase river-based tourism.
 - b. Improvements at Meridian Landing – Access is difficult and site is underutilized.
2. Coordination of Community
 - a. Foster and promote the connection between the city of Wilsonville and the Willamette River through infrastructure, policy, programs, and events.
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. Develop a Primitive Camping Paddling Trail on Willamette River from Wilsonville to Milwaukie - This 20 river mile stretch has 13 potential locations that could offer excellent camping opportunities accessible only by boat.



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.