



Bend Park &  
Recreation  
DISTRICT

# DESCHUTES RIVER ACCESS & HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN OCTOBER 2021

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## THE BEND COMMUNITY

A special thanks to the dedicated residents of Bend who contributed their time, energy and ideas to this plan.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bend Park and Recreation District's (district) **Deschutes River Access and Habitat Restoration Plan** is the guiding document for river access and habitat restoration for an approximate ten-year implementation timeframe. This plan addresses residents' and visitors' desire to recreate in the river, as well as improve riparian habitat along the river's edge.

With 25 district-designated access points, and nearly 100 user-created access points, the plan sets out to address the complementary needs of improving access and habitat at 14 riverfront parks owned or managed by the district. Two additional riverfront parks have design and construction projects already underway and are not addressed in this plan. The projects identified in this document are based upon the needs, desires and ideas identified by the community over a two-year public engagement process. The district used a data-driven approach, incorporating a number of data sources into the analysis.



ABOVE: The South Canyon Reach  
of the Deschutes River Trail.

## THE PLAN GOALS INCLUDE:



**IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE PROJECTS THAT BALANCE HABITAT RESTORATION AND USER ACCESS**



**IMPROVE AND CONSOLIDATE EXISTING ACCESS POINTS**



**ENGAGE DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS TO INFORM THE PLAN**



**DEVELOP A FISCALLY SOUND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**



The district acknowledges the unequal access to parks, trails and programs that exists within the community, and has considered how to promote equity for all park users in this plan. While there is more work to be done, this plan has made strides towards addressing equitable access through outreach to historically marginalized populations and by prioritizing projects in part, based on the demographics of the surrounding communities.

The planning process included three distinct phases: data collection, project identification and analysis, and plan development. Community members provided input during each phase, culminating in over 4,700 touchpoints with residents including meetings, correspondence, and survey participation. Also critical to the planning process was the focus group - representing 14 community organizations, as well as district staff.

The plan recommends 28 access and habitat restoration projects. These projects include systemwide recommendations, as well as location specific projects at ten of the riverfront parks. Overall, the projects balance the need for enhanced access and habitat improvement, and will facilitate accomplishment of the plan's goals.

Projects are anticipated to be implemented over approximately the next decade. While projects will be funded through the district's operating budget, most projects will require support from outside sources such as grants or community partnerships. Projects in this plan are described at a conceptual level and the feasibility of individual projects will be studied further during project implementation. The project list is anticipated to be a living document that can be updated in response to changing community preferences or project feasibility. When appropriate, the district will seek additional input from the community as it designs and implements specific projects.

“The Deschutes River is such a treasure for Bend that how we collectively decide to manage river access is essential to protect the river, provide for recreation use and enhance living for each of us.”

Randy Welsh,  
Bend resident  
& focus group member





ABOVE: River beach-goers at McKay Park.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## PLAN BACKGROUND

The district owns or manages 16 parks within the Deschutes River corridor, which include eight miles of riverfront property, 17 miles of trails, 25 district-designated user access points, and at least 94 additional user-created access points. The considerable number of user-created access points illustrates the popularity of the river and the fact that the riverfront parks and trails are some of the most beloved and highly visited district amenities.

The high level of river use is also evident when looking at the annual number of individuals who float through the Bend Whitewater Park, which is adjacent to McKay Park and centrally located within the plan's project area. Specific data regarding the annual number of users who float this section of the river is provided below:

The popularity of the river and associated intensive use has resulted in impacts such as trampled vegetation and erosion along the riverbank. Population and tourism growth are expected to add more use in the future and exacerbate the challenges being faced along this stretch of river. In addition, the district's 2018 Comprehensive Plan identifies "areas to access the river" as a high community need. Together, these data indicate the importance of providing sufficient high-quality access points to both meet community needs while minimizing habitat impacts. The plan identifies access and habitat restoration projects that balance the community and habitat needs.

Year	Number of Floaters
2020*	205,360
2019	240,420
2018	251,485
2017	231,418

\*Changes in trail counter locations contributed to a lower number of river users counted in 2020.

## PLAN SCOPE

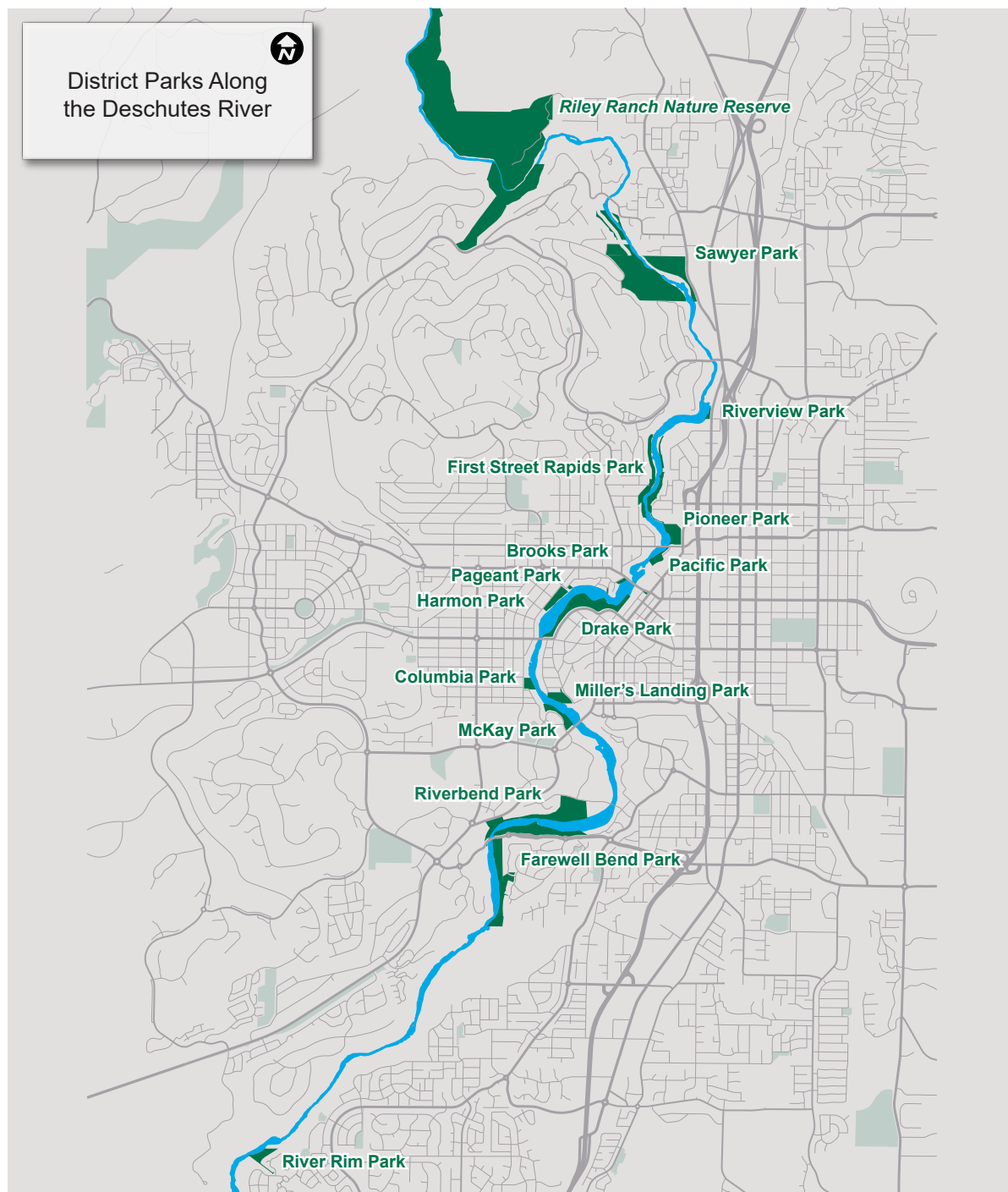
This plan focuses on 14 parks the district owns or manages within the Deschutes River corridor. The plan doesn't include analysis of projects at Drake and Pacific parks, as these parks are already the subject of an extensive capital project to address user access and habitat. Additionally, the district has easements over privately-owned land along some portions of the riverfront. These easement areas were not considered in the plan.



“As a participant in the River Planning Focus Group, I endeavored to be an advocate for people who experience disabilities; many of whom have encountered barriers which prevent them from accessing some of our community's most popular destinations. This Plan not only serves as a benefit to the environment and its ecosystems, but it serves to make the rivers more accessible for all.”

Brooke Eldrige,  
Central Oregon Coalition  
for Access

Right: Paddleboarders using the access point at Riverbend Park.



Map 1. District Parks Along the Deschutes River





Map 2. Designated and User-created Access Points at each River Park

## DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

This plan is based upon extensive outreach as discussed in Section 2, and relevant data. As a result, this plan is both reflective of community desires and data driven. Key data sources are summarized below:

- **Existing Conditions Assessments:** An assessment was developed for each river park discussed in this plan. They are summarized in Section 3, and a complete set of existing conditions assessments is included as Appendix 2.
- **Inventory of Recreational Use at Parks on the Deschutes River, February 2020:** This report is based on river use data collected at the 16 river parks over the 2019 summer. Data were collected from observation and surveys, inclusive of the number of visitors, types of use and trip characteristics. The full report is included as Appendix 3.
- **Deschutes River Habitat Inventory Summary Report, February 2020:** This report is based upon habitat inventories for ten reaches over eight miles of district owned property. It includes inventories for all areas covered by this plan. The full report is included as Appendix 4.
- **Community Surveys:** Two non-statistically-valid community surveys were completed for this plan. Collectively, 1,692 responses were received for these surveys, which are discussed in Section 2. A summary of the survey results is included as Appendix 5.
- **Demographic information:** Demographic information sourced from 2010 census data (as the 2020 census data was not available during plan development) helped inform project prioritization.

## PLAN GOALS

The following four goals guided plan development and will remain relevant throughout plan implementation.

- **Identify and prioritize projects that balance habitat restoration and user access:** Though habitat restoration and user access may seem to conflict, the plan sees them as synergistic in some cases. As opportunities are identified to consolidate and improve access, valuable land is made available to improve and protect habitat.
- **Improve and consolidate existing access points:** Currently at least 119 access points exist along an eight-mile stretch of the Deschutes River. Even with approximately 15 access points per mile, the community has expressed a desire for additional areas to access the river. To address this, the plan seeks to improve and consolidate access points to better serve the community.
- **Engage diverse stakeholders to inform the plan:** This plan is based upon input from diverse stakeholders and includes an implementation plan that seeks to best meet the needs of the community and visitors.
- **Develop a fiscally sound implementation plan:** The implementation of this plan will be funded by limited property tax monies, grants and partnerships. The identified projects are of a scope and quantity that enables the projects to be implemented over the plan's implementation horizon.



ABOVE: Participants in a Discover the Outdoors outreach event.

## INCORPORATING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Ensuring equitable access to amenities and services is of utmost importance to the district. The Deschutes River parks and trails are considered community-wide resources and the district strives to provide access and an equitable experience for all visitors. The following measures were taken during plan development to maximize input from a diverse range of constituents and to help ensure that the plan supports the district's equity goals.

- **Representation:** Both the focus group and the interested parties list were inclusive and representative of the community to the maximum extent feasible. As discussed in Section 2, the focus group included a broad cross section of groups interested in river access and habitat, including representatives for people with disabilities and the Latinx community. The interested parties list originally included approximately 100 groups and individuals representing different interests throughout the city, and the list grew over time to more than 300 as additional groups and individuals expressed interest in the plan.
- **Spanish Language Outreach:** Plan development included extensive efforts to reach a broad cross section of the community including Spanish outreach and virtual and in-person meetings. This outreach is further discussed in Section 2. In addition, the plan identifies projects to make riverfront parks and trails more welcoming to the community through multi-lingual signage, outreach and education.
- **Equity Mapping:** During the project evaluation process, the planning team considered racial or ethnic category, age, disability, poverty, homeownership, population density and accessibility in order to prioritize projects in proximity to potentially disadvantaged communities.
- **Accessibility:** Physical improvements are critical to make parks and trails accessible for everyone in the community. As part of the planning process, staff analyzed necessary accessibility improvements at parks and trails. Recommended improvements include additional pathways, changes to pathways, improved accessible water access, the addition of parking, and the distribution of access points.

The district recognizes that there is more to be done to ensure that the Deschutes River parks are inclusive spaces where all visitors feel welcome. The district will continue to seek input from a broad range of constituents on significant projects as they are implemented.

## 2. PLANNING PROCESS

The sections below briefly describe the three phases of this two-year planning effort. Throughout the planning process, staff involved members of the public by hosting ten public meetings, participating in 16 events or organized meetings, holding nine focus group meetings, responding to 171 emails, sending 30 project updates, receiving approximately 1,700 survey responses, and by participating in 13 media stories. In all, there were approximately 4,700 touchpoints with members of the public during the planning process.

### PHASE 1: DATA COLLECTION

The development of this plan was data driven. Extensive data collection and analysis was completed prior to commencement of public engagement. In addition to the key data sources discussed in Section 1, the planning team also gathered information from other agencies and applicable sources to help inform the plan.

Public input was a critical component of the first phase of the planning effort and included:

- **Focus Group:** Staff first engaged with over a dozen stakeholders to get their feedback on how best to approach plan development, and engage their groups. As a result of these meetings, staff created a diverse focus group to help guide plan development, inclusive of representatives of 14 organizations. This group includes representatives from natural resource agencies, business interests, higher education, environmental organizations, the City of Bend, universal access organizations and recreational organizations.
- **Community Survey 1:** Approximately 700 community members shared comments through an online non-statistically-valid survey available in both English and Spanish. The survey provided community members the opportunity to provide general feedback on their use of the river and desired improvements.
- **General Community Outreach:** Staff assembled an interested parties list of over 300 groups and individuals to keep updated as the plan progressed. In addition, the project website, press releases, and social media were used to keep the public updated and engaged.
- **Internal Team:** The planning team discussed the plan and draft project list with over 30 staff members including representatives from the Park Stewards, Natural Resources, Landscaping, Recreation, Communications, and Planning and Development departments. Staff provided insights on which projects may or may not be successful, and what additional projects should be added to the draft project list.
- **Board of Directors for the Bend Park and Recreation District (board):** During this phase, the planning team presented and sought feedback from board members at five board meetings. These meetings were open to the public and public comment was welcomed. In their role, board members communicate frequently with constituents to help inform their guidance and decision making for the plan.



ABOVE: The Deschutes River Trail through Pioneer Park.



## PHASE 2: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

Phase 2 focused on the identification and analysis of potential projects; key activities included:

- **Focus Group:** The focus group met eight times to identify a list of potential projects to address river access and habitat restoration.
- **Development of Evaluation Criteria:** Staff and the focus group developed evaluation criteria to help guide project priorities. These criteria are discussed in Section 4.
- **Community Survey 2:** Nearly 1,000 community members commented on the draft project list via an online non-statistically valid survey available in English and Spanish. This survey invited community members to provide feedback on each of the potential projects, to rank projects they felt were highest priority and to provide open-ended comments.
- **General Community Outreach:** The district hosted two online community meetings in English and one in Spanish to discuss the draft project list and project priorities. The district also offered to host meetings for any interested parties and hosted a virtual meeting for the River West Neighborhood residents and presented to the Central Oregon Coalition for Access (COCA) at their monthly meeting.
- **Internal Team:** District staff provided feedback on the feasibility of the draft project list.
- **Board:** During this phase, the planning team presented and sought feedback from board members at three board meetings to share the project status, draft project list, and community input.

## PHASE 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT

As a result of community input in phase 2, as well as additional staff analysis, the project list was modified and incorporated into the draft plan. The draft plan was made available for public, focus group, staff and district board review during an approximate one-month comment period. Outreach related to the draft plan included:

- **Focus Group:** The focus group met one time to review and provide feedback on the draft plan.
- **General Community Outreach:** The district sent emails to the stakeholder list to advertise the availability of the draft plan for review and feedback. A press release and social media were also utilized. In addition, the district hosted two community meetings – one virtual and one in-person, as well as a community outreach event to solicit community feedback. At both the in-person community meeting and outreach event a translator was available for those whose preferred language is Spanish. A total of 38 public comments were received.
- **Internal Team:** The planning team hosted a meeting with district staff, who provided eight comments on the plan. Collectively, district staff and the community provided 46 comments on the draft plan.
- **Board:** During this phase, staff presented to the board two times to gather feedback on the draft plan, summarize community feedback and discuss recommended plan changes

Based upon feedback from the community, focus group, board and staff, two changes were made to the project list, as well as other minor plan changes. These changes are reflected in this final plan.



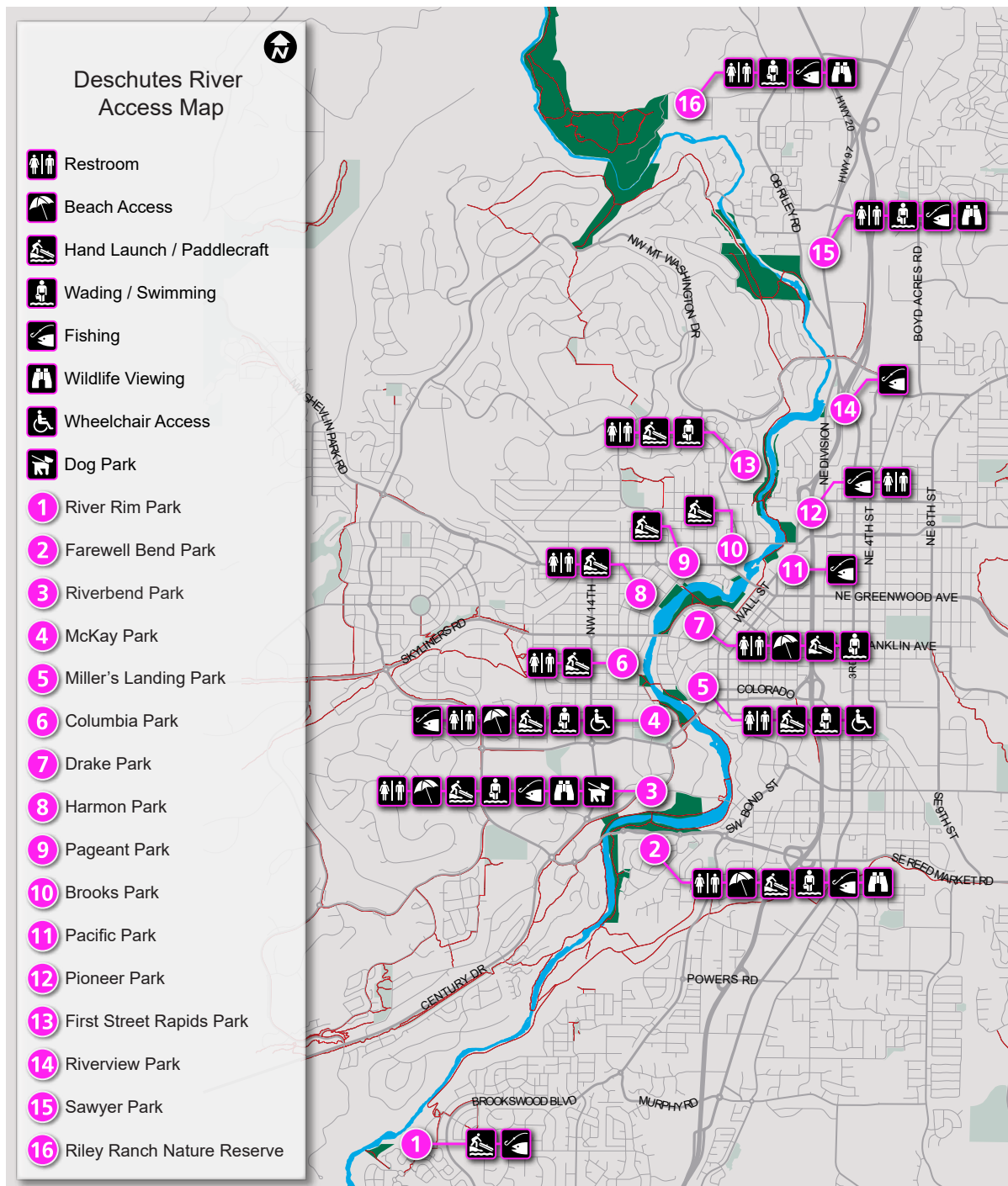
ABOVE: River frontage along the Old Mill District, between Riverbend Park and McKay Park.

## 3. EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

### SYSTEMWIDE

The river parks make up a system offering various experiences and geographic locations to enjoy river recreation. The planning team gathered information on the 16 riverfront parks owned or managed by the district to understand the existing offerings and for insights into the comparative potential locations for different project opportunities. In addition to the 16 Deschutes River parks, nearby river recreation opportunities also exist upriver in the Deschutes National Forest at the Rim Rock Trailhead area (which includes an extensive off-leash dog area with water access), downriver at Tumalo State Park, and along Tumalo Creek within Shevlin Park.

As depicted on the Deschutes River Access Map, nearly every river park provides river access and most access points are used for multiple types of river recreation; few are single-use access points. Types of river recreation shown on the map include: wheelchair access to the river, beach access, paddlecraft launch, wading/swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, and dog off-leash access. The icons indicate where each type of use frequently occurs, however, access points are not limited to these activities. Restroom locations are also identified on the map.



**Map 3.** Deschutes River Access Map

Please note that the map is to be used only for analysis purposes, and should not be considered a marketing map. For example, River Rim Park is a launch location for expert whitewater kayakers, as extreme whitewater conditions exist downriver.

## PARK SPECIFIC CONDITION SUMMARIES

In addition to looking at the riverfront parks as a whole, characteristics of each park were gathered, including physical characteristics, facilities and uses, site history, planned projects, systemwide context, site context, and opportunities. This information aided the planning team and focus group in identifying potential projects. The key conditions are summarized below and the full information is available in Appendix 2.

### River Rim Park

River Rim Park is a small natural area nestled in a residential neighborhood. This park is most frequently visited by people walking dogs, fishing or wading, and whitewater kayaking. The river in this section is fast moving with whitewater downriver. While the park sees lower numbers of visitors than most other river parks, increased use has still contributed to deterioration of the riparian habitat and there are opportunities to focus user access and improve riparian habitat.



ABOVE: Image of the Deschutes River Trail through Farewell Bend Park.

### Farewell Bend Park

As part of the planning process, Farewell Bend Park was categorized into two distinct sections, each with different characteristics. Upriver of the Bill Healy Bridge (south), the park has a more natural setting that feels removed from Bend's urban environment. In this section, the Deschutes River Trail is a natural surface single-track trail and there are many user-created access points to the river. This section includes the Cedarwood trailhead, which is used by hikers as well as those wishing to launch or remove paddlecraft. Opportunities include focusing use to a smaller number of improved access points and protecting and enhancing riparian habitat in other areas.

Downriver of the Bill Healy Bridge (north), the park is developed with a playground, picnic shelter, and restrooms, as well as a beach access and small canoe launch. A habitat restoration project was completed adjacent to the boardwalk in partnership with the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council (UDWC) in 2003. Opportunities in this section include addressing erosion and accessibility at the beach, addressing erosion at the canoe launch, and protecting and enhancing habitat areas.

### Riverbend Park

For the purposes of this plan, Riverbend Park was categorized into two distinct sections. Upriver of the footbridge, the UDWC and the

district are coordinating on the design and construction of a habitat restoration and access project. Downriver of the pedestrian bridge, habitat restoration was completed in select areas in 2006. In 2009 a large sloped area was developed into a beach and is a highly used access point, which was further improved in 2019 to address erosion. Currently, the Ride the River shuttle service provides alternative transportation to the park, and a concessioner offers tube and stand-up paddleboard rentals. The district also leases two additional parking lots close to Riverbend Park that provide additional parking for river users. There are opportunities to improve accessibility to the river.

### McKay Park

In 2015, McKay Park was redeveloped with the addition of the Bend Whitewater Park. The park's access points are heavily used for floating, paddling, surfing and wading/swimming. Due to its recent redevelopment, the park may have opportunities for smaller projects to improve visitor experience.





ABOVE: Park visitor on the Deschutes River Trail at Miller's Landing Park.

### **Miller's Landing Park**

Miller's Landing is surrounded by older neighborhoods and is directly across the river from McKay Park. It offers access to the river from a boardwalk and at an open spot in the fencing downriver from the boardwalk. There is potential to consolidate and enhance the existing access points, address erosion and improve habitat.

### **Columbia Park**

Columbia Park has one designated river access point that was developed in 2011 as a small paddlecraft hand launch. It may be accessed from a combination of paved and natural surface trails descending from the playground area, or from across the river via a pedestrian bridge. The access point has severely eroded and was temporarily closed starting in the summer of 2020. Additionally, a user-created access point immediately adjacent to the designated access point is also seeing erosion and vegetation trampling. Illegal bridge jumping occurs at the city-owned pedestrian bridge, with jumpers exiting the river at Columbia Park. The district is working with city staff on the feasibility of installing bridge jumping deterrents to discourage jumping. Opportunities exist to address the erosion and consolidate and enhance access.

### **Drake Park and Pacific Park**

The Drake Park Bank and Trail improvements project defines changes to be made at Pacific and Drake parks, including river access and habitat restoration elements. Since this project is underway, additional projects at these parks do not need to be considered in this plan.

### **Harmon Park**

Harmon Park's river access is a small, gated (but unlocked) dock located along a paver pathway. The remaining river frontage has a chain link fence providing a barrier between the river and playground and ballfields. There is an opportunity to make the dock more visible and welcoming to visitors.

### **Pageant Park**

Pageant Park's river access is a small dock located in a grassy lawn near the pedestrian bridge to Drake Park. The river access is in good condition. With limited parking availability, a small park footprint, and nearby improvements planned at Drake Park, the park is not in need of river access and habitat changes.



ABOVE: River access point at Riverbend Park..

### **Brooks Park**

Brooks Park has a memorial plaza and dock to access the river. The access point is the farthest downriver point on Mirror Pond. Because the river access is in good condition, projects to change access or habitat are unnecessary during the plan's implementation timeframe.

### **Pioneer Park**

The Deschutes River Trail runs through Pioneer Park separated from the river by a stone retaining wall and is surrounded by managed turf. While opportunities exist to improve riparian habitat at Pioneer Park, the park is between two dams and any projects should be linked with any future changes to the dams and water levels, which will most likely occur beyond the plan's implementation timeframe.

### **First Street Rapids Park**

First Street Rapids Park runs along river right and river left and is popular for river access and the Deschutes River Trail. The park also offers fishing, swimming, wildlife watching and a nature play area. Due to its popularity, the area has erosion and vegetation trampling. Opportunities exist to focus visitor use, add plantings and protect existing habitat.

### **Riverview Park**

Riverview Park is located on public right-of-way owned by the city, but the park is managed by the district. The park includes a fishing boardwalk and sees low use. Riverview Park was developed to provide views of the river and accessible fishing in partnership with Bend's Lions Club. The path to the boardwalk does not meet accessible grade and is in poor condition. Improving the path is not included in the plan and should be reconsidered in partnership with the City of Bend when the Core Area Plan is implemented, which will likely increase use of the park.

### **Sawyer Park**

Sawyer Park sees high use in the summer. River access includes a fishing and wildlife viewing trail upriver on river left; and several user-created access zones downriver of the footbridge on river left and river right. While some access points are naturally armored with rocks, others are seeing erosion and vegetation trampling. Opportunities exist to protect riparian habitat and focus and enhance access.

### **Riley Ranch Nature Reserve**

Riley Ranch was completed in 2017 and is the largest of the Deschutes River parks at 185 acres. The river may be accessed from the lower trail system that is more than a mile from the park entrance. Specific access points have been developed to the river to protect the banks and riparian zones. Because it is a nature reserve, dogs and bikes are prohibited, and groups are limited in size. Although the park was more recently developed, there are still opportunities to improve existing access points and possibly provide additional river access at highly desired locations.





ABOVE: NW Galveston Avenue bridge over the Deschutes River at the southern boundary of Drake Park.



ABOVE: Summer river recreation from the habitat channel of the Bend Whitewater Park.



ABOVE: A snow-covered Deschutes River Trail bridge crossing between Farewell Bend and Riverbend parks.

## 4. RECOMMENDED PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES

This plan recommends 28 projects within the Deschutes River Corridor. These projects include systemwide projects, as well as location-specific projects. This section discusses the process for the development of the project list, as well as the evaluation criteria used to determine project viability and priority.

### PROJECT LIST DEVELOPMENT

Public input was critical in the development of the project list. Development of the list spanned more than a year and was driven by feedback from the board, focus group, community and district staff. This section describes how the project list was developed and refined based on project feasibility, staffing and budget constraints, and viability for implementation within the plan's implementation timeframe.

- **Preliminary Project List:** The focus group developed the preliminary project list over the course of four meetings. At these meeting, the focus group reviewed the 14 river parks and generated a total of 78 project ideas. Through discussion and ranking, the focus group worked to achieve consensus on the project list.
- **District Staff and Community Input:** The preliminary project list was reviewed with more than 30 staff members who provided feedback on the suggested projects, and also generated 15 additional project ideas. In addition, the planning team received two suggested project ideas from the community. As a result of focus group, district staff and community input, a total of 95 project ideas were generated over the course of eight months. Some of these project ideas were combined, and at the end of this initial project list development process 86 project ideas remained.



ABOVE: Habitat Channel at the Bend Whitewater Park.





ABOVE: Kayakers on the Deschutes River along the Deschutes River Trail and Farewell Bend Park.

- **Planning Team Project List Analysis:** The planning team reviewed all suggested projects with a goal of focusing the project list to include the best and most feasible projects that could be implemented within the plan's implementation timeframe. Analysis of all 86 project ideas resulted in 53 projects being deemed considered but dismissed, with a total of 33 projects remaining. Reasons for project dismissal included a determination that they were outside of the plan's scope, were maintenance projects that would be completed outside of the plan's implementation, infeasible within the plan's implementation timeframe, added to another project on the list, or inconsistent with the goals of the plan. A full list of considered but dismissed projects is included as Appendix 6.
- **Public Review:** The refined project list of 33 projects was presented for public input to further inform the draft project list. This review included a non-statistically-valid community survey soliciting feedback on all project ideas, which received nearly 1,000 responses, as well as three virtual public meetings. The input received from the community was invaluable and after board support for project list changes resulting from public input, the project list was further refined resulting in a total of 28 projects, which were shared with the public in May 2021.
- **Plan Development:** During development of the draft plan, the projects were further refined and consolidated, resulting in a total of 27 projects in the draft plan. Based upon community feedback on the draft plan, one additional project was added for a total of 28 projects in the final plan.

The 28 projects were prioritized to help focus plan implementation.



ABOVE: Deschutes River Trail bridge in the South Canyon Segment.

## PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

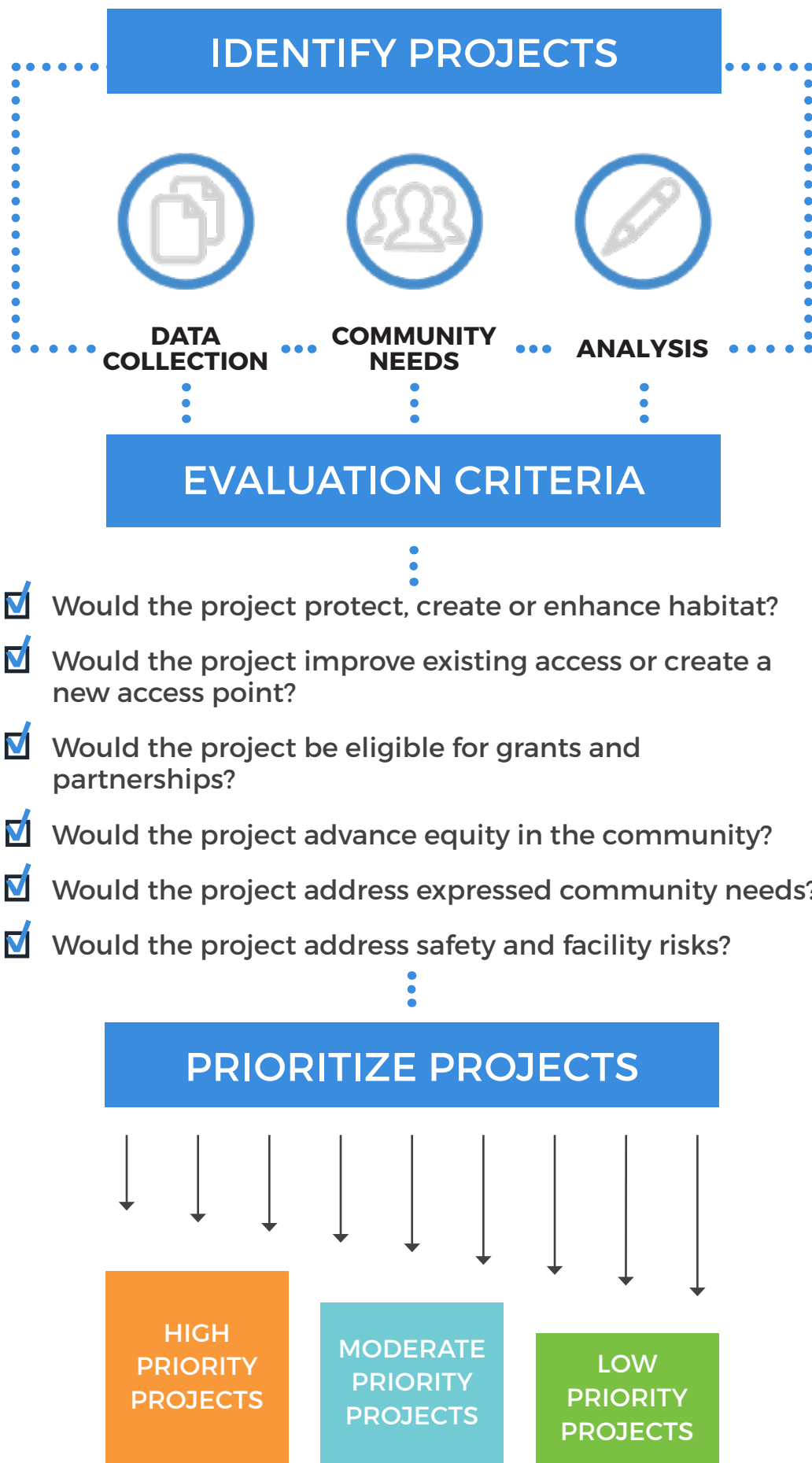
To prioritize projects, the district developed evaluation criteria based upon the plan's goals. The evaluation criteria included the following factors:

- Would the project protect, create or enhance habitat?
- Would the project improve existing access or create a new access point?
- Would the project be eligible for grants and partnerships?
- Would the project advance equity in the community?
- Would the project address expressed community needs?
- Would the project address safety and facility risks?

The evaluation of the projects included numeric rankings based upon how well the project addressed the above-mentioned criteria. Results of the evaluation established a threshold for high, medium and low priorities based upon the natural break in the scores. Of the 28 potential projects, 13 were ranked high priority, 11 were ranked medium priority and four were ranked low priority.

The results of the evaluation process are not intended to be a strict prescription of the order in which projects should be developed, but rather help inform when each project should be considered for funding in the district's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

The priorities are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate changes in the market and demographics, changes in the projects themselves, and to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Ultimately, the district's board has the final decision-making authority about when projects proceed.





ABOVE: Dog swimming in the dog off-leash area with river access near Riverbend Park.

## DOG OFF-LEASH RIVER ACCESS

Dog off-leash river access required additional analysis given the numerous factors that inform optimal locations for dog off-leash river access. This is a topic that many communities address, and a summary of research related to other jurisdictions and dog off-leash water access can be found in Appendix 7. This section discusses the analysis that was completed to help inform potentially appropriate locations for this type of use.

A total of 20 potential dog off-leash river access locations were analyzed during development of the project list. These 20 sites included nine identified by DogPAC (a local Bend non-profit organization that focuses on dog access and education), and eleven identified by the planning team or focus group (including seven permanent locations and four seasonal locations). More details on all of these sites are included in Appendix 7. The planning team and focus group developed 11 criteria to help evaluate the sites including:

1. **River current and dog safety:** slow, moderate, fast and any characteristics that impact dog safety
2. **Existing bank material:** soil, vegetation, riprap, seawall, etc.
3. **River Width:** narrow, moderate, wide
4. **Bank Slope:** gradual, moderate, steep
5. **Current streamside habitat condition:** none, poor, moderate, good (consider access point and immediate surroundings)
6. **Endangered Species Act (ESA) Critical Habitat:** yes, no
7. **Parking availability/ease of access:** low, medium, high
8. **Potential conflict with other visitors:** distance from parking to the dog off-leash river access, congestion, kids, etc.
9. **Existing level of dog use:** low, moderate, high
10. **Proximity to neighboring properties:** describe distance from the neighbors upriver, downriver and across the river
11. **Project complexity:** low, moderate, high





ABOVE: Dogs using the dog off-leash area with river access near Riverbend Park.

These criteria were used to evaluate the potential dog off-leash river access sites and helped to identify opportunities and constraints associated with each site. The expressed goal of DogPAC was to identify a total of at least three sites, one each in the northern, central and southern portions of the plan area. However, after extensive review and consultation with district staff and a number of outside agencies, the planning team was only able to identify one potential permanent dog off-leash river access at Riverbend Park (location to be confirmed), one seasonal dog off-leash river access at Riverbend Park beach, and one seasonal off-leash river access at Farewell Bend Park beach. These three locations were presented as potential options during the public outreach process to garner feedback on the draft project list. The seasonal dog off-leash river access locations were not well favored by the public or DogPAC and as such, these locations are not included in the draft plan.

Though the planning team hoped to identify more than one dog off-leash river access location, based upon the plan's goals and identified challenges, this was not feasible. Some of the key challenges include:

- **Potential impacts to Endangered Species Act (ESA) critical habitat, riparian habitat and water quality:** Both dogs and humans can impact habitat by creating bank erosion and damaging vegetation. In addition, dogs relieving themselves in inappropriate locations will have negative impacts to water quality.
- **Potential impacts to wildlife:** Research has documented that that people with dogs, on- or off-leash, are more detrimental to wildlife than people without dogs.<sup>1</sup>
- **Conflicts with other user groups:** The majority of the identified locations are already used by numerous different user groups. Introducing a new user group that requires a designated area focused on a single use type could result in reduced opportunities and conflicts for other users.
- **Conflicts with neighboring uses:** Many of the identified locations are proximate to private property and residential uses.
- **Space constraints:** Though the plan covers eight miles of riverfront parks, many of the parks are not of significant depth and create challenges for meeting the needs of multiple and sometimes conflicting user groups.

1. Metro Parks and Nature. "The impacts of wildlife and water quality: A literature review." April 2016.

## PROJECT LIST

The following pages discuss each of the 28 projects starting with systemwide projects, and then by park location, upriver to downriver. Project scope is high level at this time and may be adjusted based upon opportunities and/or challenges identified in the design and construction process. Further design and analysis may render some projects infeasible. The following information is provided for each project.

- **Project Title**
- **Project Number**
- **Park Name**
- **Description of the Project**
- **Priority:** based upon the evaluation criteria discussed above and shown as high, medium or low
- **Planning and Design Level of Effort:** based upon the amount of time, effort and complexity associated with planning and designing the project and shown as high, medium or low
- **Estimated Design and Construction Costs** and shown as:
  - \$ (< \$5,000)
  - \$\$ (\$6,000-\$50,000)
  - \$\$\$ (\$51,000-\$300,000)
  - \$\$\$\$ (>\$301,000)

These projects are in addition to projects identified in the district's comprehensive plan, the district's capital improvements plan, the city's transportation system plan, and other local plans. However, it is anticipated that these projects will be incorporated into the district's comprehensive plan and capital improvement plan in future years.

General project locations are identified on Map 4—Project Locations Map. More detailed maps and existing site images for all projects sites are included as Appendix 8.

“ Growing up here in the 1970s and 80s, I never could have imagined the massive growth in recreation along the Deschutes River as it flows through Bend. My hope is this river plan will help mitigate some of the negative effects of such heavy use, so that future generations can still enjoy the river as much as I have. ”

Aaron Henson,  
Bend resident & focus group member



ABOVE: River Access Signage at Riley Ranch Nature Reserve.



ABOVE: Visitors at the McKay Park beach and access point.

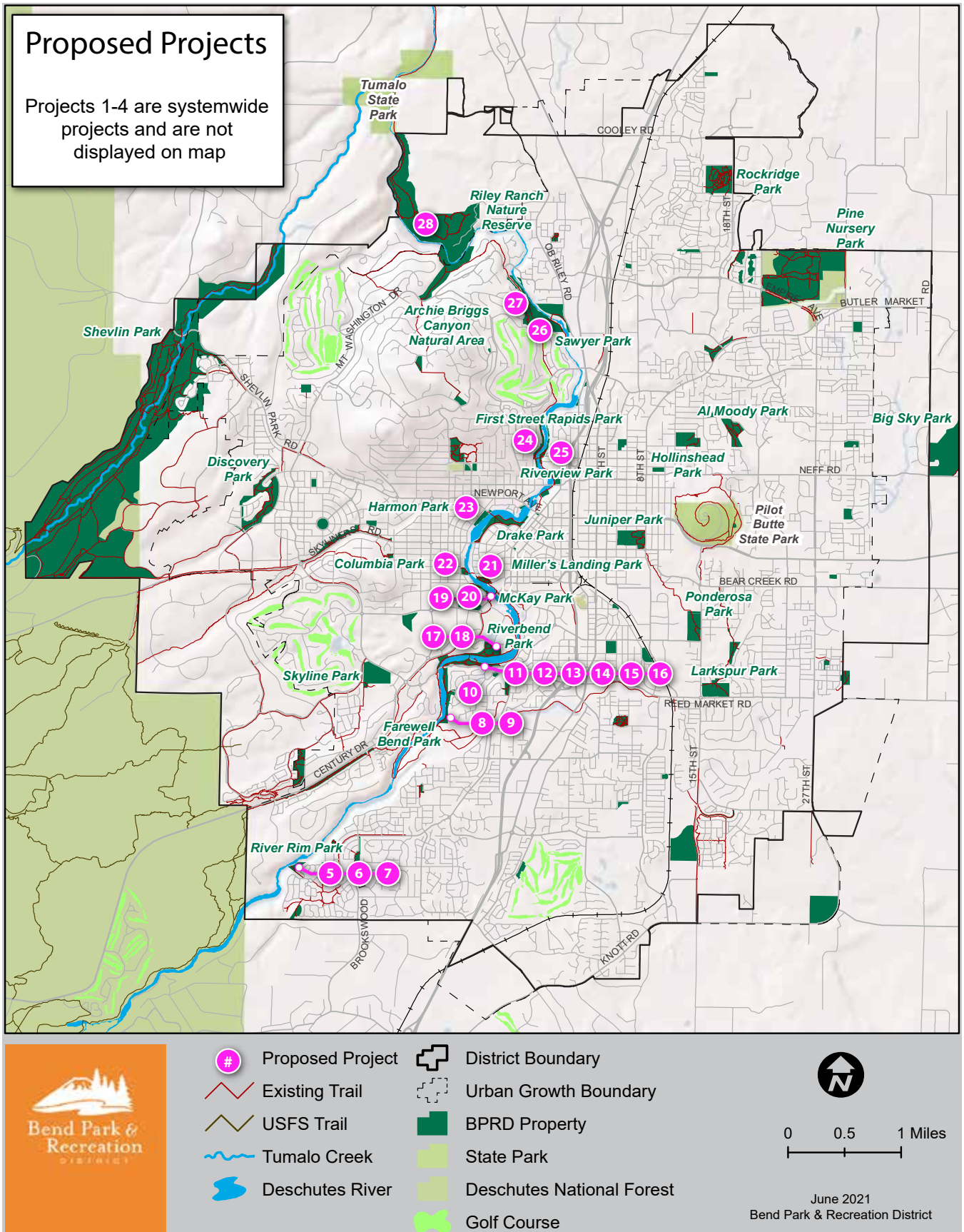


ABOVE: Trail runner on the Deschutes River Trail - South Canyon Segment.



PROJECT NUMBER	PARK NAME	PROJECT TITLE
1	Systemwide	Consistent Signage
2	Systemwide	Outreach and education
3	Systemwide	Volunteer ambassador program
4	Systemwide	Adopt-a-trail program
5	River Rim Park	Consolidate access/protect habitat
6	River Rim Park	Enhance experience
7	River Rim Park	Modify trail
8	Farewell Bend Park - South	Consolidate/Improve Access
9	Farewell Bend Park - South	Trail access
10	Farewell Bend Park - Cedarwood Trailhead	Trail access
11	Farewell Bend Park - North	Parking analysis
12	Farewell Bend Park - North	Parking improvements
13	Farewell Bend Park - North	Habitat restoration
14	Farewell Bend Park - North	Improve access
15	Farewell Bend Park - North	Beach enhancements
16	Farewell Bend Park - North	Evaluate restoration
17	Riverbend Park	Improve beach accessibility
18	Riverbend Park	Off-leash dog water access
19	McKay Park	Plant trees
20	McKay Park	Improve Accessible Access
21	Miller's Landing Park	Refine access
22	Columbia Park	Refine access
23	Harmon Park	Improve dock
24	First Street Rapids Park - River Left	Close access points
25	First Street Rapids Park - River Right	Consolidate/Improve Access
26	Sawyer Park - River Left	Consolidate/Improve Access
27	Sawyer Park - River Left	Trail refinement
28	Riley Ranch Nature Reserve	Create access





Map 4. Project Locations Map

1	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Systemwide Consistent Signage</b>	
High	PRIORITY:	High	Implement a consistent signage and educational approach for all district river access properties. This should include multi-lingual signage. Kiosks with information about river and riparian zone restoration and protection would be useful at some river parks.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$	
2	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Systemwide Outreach and education</b>	
High	PRIORITY:	High	Provide outreach and education with partners to make parks more welcoming to all. Riverbend and Harmon parks were identified as potential locations.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Medium	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$	
3	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Systemwide Volunteer ambassador program</b>	
High	PRIORITY:	High	Expand volunteer ambassador program to include high use river parks.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$	
4	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Systemwide Adopt-a-trail program</b>	
High	PRIORITY:	High	Expand the adopt-a-trail program to support the use of designated trails along the river.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$	
5	<b>Project:</b>	<b>River Rim Park Consolidate access/protect habitat</b>	
Medium	PRIORITY:	Medium	Consolidate access to 1 or 2 access points to protect and enhance remaining sensitive habitat, and armor those areas to reduce erosion. Improve safety and aesthetics of irrigation station.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Medium	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$\$	

6	<b>Project:</b>	<b>River Rim Park</b>	
		<b>Enhance experience</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Low	Designate a loop trail to direct visitors. Add seating as appropriate.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Medium	
Low	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$	
7	<b>Project:</b>	<b>River Rim Park</b>	
		<b>Modify trail</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Low	Modify steep trail to be more sustainable, make drainage improvements.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Low	
Low	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
8	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - South</b>	
		<b>Consolidate/Improve Access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Determine which of the existing 29 (including 6 at Cedarwood Trailhead) access points should be improved and which should be closed. Implement applicable projects.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	High	
High	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$\$\$	
9	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - South</b>	
		<b>Trail access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Medium	Improve access from the sidewalk on the southeastern side of the Bill Healy bridge to the Deschutes River Trail.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	High	
Medium	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
10	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - Cedarwood Trailhead</b>	
		<b>Trail access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Medium	Formalize the trail leading to the Deschutes River Trail and restore surrounding areas.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Low	
Medium	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	

11	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
Medium		<b>Parking analysis</b>	
	PRIORITY:	Medium	The district shall complete a parking analysis for parking proximate to Farewell Bend and Riverbend Parks to determine how best to adequately address parking needs for these parks.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Medium	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$	

12	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
Medium		<b>Parking improvements</b>	
	PRIORITY:	Medium	If supported by the parking analysis, the district should increase parking for park users by changing parallel parking to angled parking. In addition, a loading zone should be added.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	High	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$\$\$	

13	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
Medium		<b>Habitat restoration</b>	
	PRIORITY:	Medium	Close fence gaps at the picnic shelters to eliminate user-created access points and reestablish habitat.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$	

14	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
High		<b>Improve access</b>	
	PRIORITY:	High	Improve existing canoe launch to address erosion.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Medium	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$	

15	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
Medium		<b>Beach enhancements</b>	
	PRIORITY:	Medium	Address erosion at the beach, including exploring alternatives to sand, while also maintaining a portion of sandy beach area. Improve accessibility to the water at the beach.
	PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Medium	
	RELATIVE COST:	\$\$\$	



16	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Farewell Bend Park - North</b>	
Medium		<b>Evaluate restoration</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Medium	The district should evaluate additional restoration options to enhance the existing wetland restoration project adjacent to the boardwalk, to improve conditions for the Oregon Spotted Frog and other species. Implement, as applicable.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Medium	
	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
17	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Riverbend Park</b>	
High		<b>Improve beach accessibility</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Improve beach accessibility including addition of an accessible, non-motorized boat launch. Enlarge beach as necessary to allow for multiple uses.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	High	
	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$\$\$	
18	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Riverbend Park</b>	
High		<b>Off-leash dog water access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Provide permanent off-leash dog water access with the exact location to be determined.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	High	
	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$\$\$	
19	<b>Project:</b>	<b>McKay Park</b>	
Medium		<b>Plant trees</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Medium	Plant trees along the fish ladder section (floaters channel) within the fenced area to provide shade.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Low	
	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
20	<b>Project:</b>	<b>McKay Park</b>	
Medium		<b>Improve Accessible Access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Add natural looking transfer bench to allow wheelchair users a way in and out of the water with a boat. Improve concrete accessible walkway to address erosion and sand on the walkway.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Medium	
	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	

21	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Miller's Landing Park</b>	
		<b>Refine access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Close and revegetate existing downriver access, while redesigning the boardwalk for safety and improved access.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Medium	
High	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$\$	
22	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Columbia Park</b>	
		<b>Refine access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Improve existing designated access point to facilitate safe access and improve the bank stability and riparian environment. Close downriver user-created access point by replacing single-rail fence with more protective fence to eliminate user-created access and improve vegetation in flattened grass area.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	High	
High	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$\$\$	
23	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Harmon Park</b>	
		<b>Improve dock</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Low	Remove gate to make the existing water access more welcoming.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Low	
Low	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
24	<b>Project:</b>	<b>First Street Rapids Park - River Left</b>	
		<b>Consolidate/Improve Access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	High	Close user-created access points to protect vegetation and the trail. Scope will include addition of fencing and revegetation.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Medium	
Medium	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$\$	
25	<b>Project:</b>	<b>First Street Rapids Park - River Right</b>	
		<b>Consolidate/Improve Access</b>	
	<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Medium	Evaluate the consolidation and improvement of access points, and implement applicable projects.
	<b>PLANNING &amp; DESIGN EFFORT:</b>	Low	
Medium	<b>RELATIVE COST:</b>	\$	

26	<b>Project: Sawyer Park – River Left Consolidate/Improve Access</b>		
	Medium	PRIORITY:	Medium     Armor 1-2 access points and close other redundant access points along the Fisherman's Trail.
		PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low
		RELATIVE COST:	\$
27	<b>Project: Sawyer Park - River Left Trail refinement</b>		
	Medium	PRIORITY:	Medium     Define trail system, and eliminate duplicate and social trails on river left.
		PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low
		RELATIVE COST:	\$
28	<b>Project: Riley Ranch Nature Reserve Create access</b>		
	Low	PRIORITY:	Low     Designate 1-2 additional access points where high use is observed.
		PLANNING & DESIGN EFFORT:	Low
		RELATIVE COST:	\$

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

This section outlines timing, potential funding sources, permitting requirements, and future public engagement for projects identified in this plan.

### TIMING

Projects within the plan are intended to be implemented over approximately the next ten years. As with any long-range plan, certainty decreases over time, and opportunities and challenges may arise with implementation. On an annual basis, projects within this plan will be considered for addition to the district's capital improvement plan, asset management plan, and operation workplans. Staff will monitor plan accomplishments annually, and may make adjustments as necessary.

### FUNDING

These projects will be funded primarily by property taxes. Many of these projects will additionally require some element of partnership and/or grant funding. Due to this, plan implementation is contingent upon identifying successful partnerships and/or grants. Potential funding sources for these projects are discussed below:

- **General Fund:** The general fund is the district's general operating fund, and accounts for nearly all district operations. Principal sources of revenue are property taxes, user fees and charges, interest income, grants and contributions. Primary expenditures are personnel, materials and services necessary to provide quality services for the community. Property taxes are the largest source of revenue for the district and are allocated annually to the CIP to fund the improvement of existing facilities and maintenance. The CIP is a five-year plan that is reviewed annually with funding allocated as part of the district's annual budget. Funding for projects will be incorporated into the CIP based upon project priority, staffing availability, permitting timeframes and other capital project priorities.
- **Grant Funds:** Grants will be a critical element in facilitation of plan implementation. There are numerous grants that may be appropriate funding sources. Some potential grants include:
  - **Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB)** - Potential grants from OSMB include Waterway Access Grants and Small Grants. These grants could be used for facility improvements and new construction.
  - **Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)**: Potential grants from OPRD include Land and Water Conservation Funds and Local Government Grants. These types of grants could be used for acquisition and/or development or redevelopment of river parks.
  - **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)**: Potential grants from OWEB include technical assistance grants that support project design and restoration grants that can support project implementation. These types of grants would be for projects focused on restoration, or that include a restoration component.



- **Travel Oregon:** Competitive grant funds are available from Travel Oregon generally a few times per year that could be used for things like a boat launch, trail development, and parking strategies.
- **Visit Bend:** The Bend Sustainability Fund was created by Visit Bend in 2021 and will fund projects that protect, steward and create sustainable recreational resources and experiences. Projects must have substantial visitor use, a clear timeline, measurable outcomes in 12 months and grassroots community support.
- **Partnerships:** Partnerships with community organizations and individuals will be an important component of plan implementation. These partnerships may include in kind services and/or financial support. Some examples of past partnerships for river projects include:
  - **Upper Deschutes Watershed Council (UDWC):** The district partnered with UDWC in 2018 for the design and implementation of the Riverbend South Project. This in-progress project includes riverfront access and habitat restoration and is utilizing property taxes, grant funds and partnership to facilitate project implementation. UDWC brought expertise, in kind support, and grant monies that were critical to the success of this project.
  - **Bend Paddle Trail Alliance (BPTA):** The district partnered with BPTA in 2013 for the design and implementation of the Bend Whitewater Park at McKay Park. This project included the removal of an existing dam, creation of three distinct channels, creation of surf waves and habitat restoration, and used bond monies and partnership to facilitate project implementation. BPTA brought expertise, in kind support and funding that were critical to the success of the project.

## PROJECT PERMITTING

Dependent upon project scope, permitting requirements for projects along the Deschutes River can be extensive and time intensive. Appendix 9 discusses the regulatory framework governing projects along the Deschutes River and discusses potential permits that may be triggered by projects within the plan.



ABOVE: Children playing on the river beach at McKay Park.



ABOVE: River goers floating the Deschutes between Riverbend Park and McKay Park along the Old Mill District.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public involvement was critical to the success of this planning effort and will not stop with the completion of the plan. Dependent upon project scope, the district will continue to seek input from the community on the projects as they are designed and constructed.

“

Access to the Deschutes River provides opportunity for recreation and respite for many individuals. Assessing the accessibility to the river as it pertains to individuals with disabilities is critical to the conversation in removing barriers to these life-enhancing amenities that many take for granted in Central Oregon.

”

Pat Addabbo, (he/him)  
Executive Director, Oregon Adaptive Sports  
and focus group member