



HENNINGSEN LOTUS PARK CONCEPT PLAN

Advisory Group Meeting
Henningsen Lotus Park
May 16, 2013 5:30 – 7:00 PM

SUMMARY

Project Overview

Henningsen Lotus Park (HLP) is one of western El Dorado County's most popular recreation facilities. Park visitors enjoy the unique combination of access to the South Fork of the American River, play structures, sports fields, improved walking paths, picnic areas, a pavilion, rest rooms, and parking. In 2011 additional uses and facilities were suggested for this 51-acre park as part of the community input to the El Dorado County Parks and Trails Master Plan. The purpose of the HLP Concept Plan project is to reexamine these suggestions, solicit additional community input, and identify conceptual improvements to HLP for future implementation as funding becomes available. The planning process will also include an analysis of the potential economic impacts associated with improvements.

The HLP Concept Plan project includes several public input opportunities. A Concept Plan Advisory Group (CPAG) will be established with 19 members representing a broad range of stakeholder interests. These include:

- Community Groups
- Property Owners
- Youth Sports Leagues
- Environment and River Conservation
- Other Regional Recreation Providers
- Local Businesses
- Individual Rafters/Kayakers
- Commercial Outfitters
- Special Event Organizations
- Campground Operators
- Dining
- Lodging

The CPAG will participate in an initial kick-off meeting, help engage the broader community in the planning process, and provide feedback on the Draft Concept Plan. There will also be two community-wide workshops. The first workshop will be held in the Coloma-Lotus area and will focus on existing and future potential improvements at HLP. The second will include a presentation of the Draft Concept plan for public review and comment.

Meeting Attendees

The project kick-off meeting was attended by 13 of the 19 CPAG members. Attendees included two private property owners, and representatives from:

- Gold Trail Grange #452
- El Dorado Chamber of Commerce
- Gold Nugget Soccer
- Placerville Girls Softball
- American River Conservancy
- Coloma-Lotus Chamber of Commerce
- Mother Lode Church Soccer Camp
- American River Music Festival
- American River Resort
- Camp Lotus
- Sierra Nevada House

Also in attendance were: Vickie Sanders (Acting Parks Manager) and Donna Mullens (Department Analyst) from the El Dorado County Chief Administrative Office, Economic Development/Parks and Trails Division; Kate Kirsh (Sr. Landscape Architect) and Ed Armstrong (Sr. Landscape Architect) with Foothill Associates; and Chuck Nozicka (Tourism and Recreation Planner) with Nozicka Consulting.

Introductions and Project Overview

The meeting opened with each a self-introduction by each attendee and an explanation of stakeholder groups' interests and history with HLP. Kate Kirsh provided an overview of the scope of the HLP Concept Plan project and schedule. Key project tasks include an Existing Conditions Summary, Public Input Workshop, Opportunities and Constraints Assessment, Economic Opportunities Study, Draft Conceptual Master Plan, Public Review Workshop, and Final Conceptual Master Plan. The Public Input Workshop is tentatively planned for August, 2013 with the Public Review Workshop occurring sometime in late November or early December. The project is expected to be completed by February, 2014.

Concept Plan Advisory Group (CPAG) Roles and Responsibilities

Kate Kirsh briefed CPAG attendees on their roles and responsibilities for the project, as follows:

- Participate in today's on-site meeting to share knowledge about how HLP is currently utilized; identify opportunities and constraints for future improvements and operations; and discuss stakeholders' future vision for HLP.
- Provide input about economic opportunities associated with HLP use and future improvements.
- Review and provide input on draft concepts for HLP improvements.
- Communicate with others in the community to help publicize and encourage participation in workshops and concept plan review.
- Work in collaboration with other CPAG members to craft a balanced vision for HLP as a sustainable, high-value recreation resource for residents and visitors of El Dorado County.

HLP Walking/Talking Tour

The attendees, County staff, and consultants then went on a walking tour of HLP and identified issues and opportunities for various locations in the park. The following is a summary of input collected during this exercise.

Parking

Parking capacity appears to be sufficient, except for very large events such as the American River Music Festival, busy summer weekends, or opening day for soccer.

Overflow parking uses neighboring properties with owners' approval and shuttles bring people to the park.

Other overflow parking sites could include the Marshall Gold Discovery SHP, private campgrounds, Mother Lode Church, etc.

Lotus Road needs "no parking" signs so people trying to avoid fees or overflow vehicles don't park there. It creates a hazard.

Who is responsible for ticketing people who park where they are not supposed to?

Sports leagues who use HLP regularly could issue pre-paid parking stickers to their members.

How are parking revenues used? Vickie explained they are put back into the HLP Fund.

River Access Area

More shade is needed.

Designated trailer parking is needed (rafting trailers up to 16-feet long).

Circulation for cars and people around river access area works well.

Upgrade interpretive signage is needed.

Maybe there should be a separate area for fishing, away from the swimming beach.

Off-leash dogs are a problem. Better signage and enforcement needed.

Maybe a separate, fenced dog area is needed.

Need dog waste collection stations (with collection bags).

There are too few trash cans in this area and throughout the park.

Relationship of beach to river is good here, but not so good elsewhere in the park for swimmers.

Covered Group Picnic Area

Available on a first come-first served basis so visitors can't be sure it's available.

This is a super popular feature in the park.

More shade shelters are needed.

Are there other ways to create shaded picnic areas without constructing a structure? Trees would be nice but they take a while to provide shade.

Any additional structures need to be designed with flood flows in mind.

Pavilion

Pavilion is supposed to be open during park hours unless it is reserved for an event.

Pavilion rental fee is too expensive for some groups.

Currently the pavilion is used to store tables and chairs for events. Maybe a separate storage shed could be built so the pavilion could be left open.

Fees

Annual pass a good value, but should include boat launching.

Daily parking fee of \$5 is okay if person stays all day. Otherwise it seems expensive for a short visit.

When park staff isn't here to collect fees, people don't pay and revenue is lost. Is there some way to enforce the fees without the cost of staffing?

Revenues are lost from September to May when no one collects parking fees.

Perhaps an automatic gate with pay station would work.

How do HLP fees compare to other County parks? Vickie explained that facilities at other County parks are also reserved on a comparable fee basis. HLP is the only County park with a parking fee, however.

Fees collected at HLP are meant to be used for improvements to this park per agreement with residents when park was built.

There are separate parking fees for buses, vans, and private vehicles. Commercial buses and vans should have to pay more than private buses and vans.

Sports Fields (North of Lotus Road)

Open fields and perimeter trail work well together and provide flexible activity space.

Drainage could be improved.

Soccer teams would like to see secure storage for soccer goals. Soccer community may be willing to share cost to store goals, nets, and equipment.

Amenities South of Lotus Road

Softball fields used from April to June.

Field needs drainage improvements. Parking could also be improved.

Fields are great!

Need a better street crossing on Lotus Road especially if people park on north side and want to use play area.

Consider multi-purpose sports field surfacing other than turf that can be used for multiple sports.

Park users are unclear about boundaries. Better maps and signage needed.

There is not a lot of undeveloped flat land, but there is more room for nature trails, etc.

Upriver Access Point

Area needs bank stabilization/restoration with steps for safe water access and to prevent further erosion.

Planting can be used to encourage aggradation vs. degradation of the river bank.

Additional Facilities

Other desired facilities include disc golf, tennis courts, bocce ball, basketball courts, and horseshoes.

River Use

There is some concern over noise on river if whitewater enhancements are built.

This segment is quiet zone of the river. Any future improvements or uses need to be compatible with this designation.

Attendees offered a variety of impressions of what a whitewater park is, indicating that there is not a consistent vision about this type of facility. Concepts ranged from the whitewater park in urban Reno to a few naturalistic features placed in the river to enhance the rafters' and kayaker's experience.

A whitewater park could encourage higher fees, draw more tourism.

Classes on rafting and kayaking could be offered at the park if more whitewater features were added.

Adding whitewater features and activities could negatively impact other uses of the park due to parking limitations, overcrowding, event schedule conflicts, etc.

Vision and Values Exercise

After returning to the Pavilion, the attendees participated in a Vision and Values exercise. They were presented with three questions about the future of HLP written on large wall posters. They were then given adhesive pads to write their responses on and attach to the appropriate poster. The questions and comments received are listed below. When more than one person offered the same comment, the number of respondents is listed in parenthesis following the comments.

- 1) What do you want to preserve at HLP?
 - a. *Natural Surfaces*
 - b. *Trees*
 - c. *Playground*
 - d. *Local Usages*
 - e. *Shady River Access (3)*
 - f. *Open Spaces (i.e. – Field Space)*
 - g. *River Habitat / Community Events*
 - h. *Community Identity*
 - i. *Natural Vibe of the Park*
 - j. *Green Open Fields with Views of River and Hills*
 - k. *Quiet Zone of South Fork American River/ Rural Quality of Life of Local Residents*

- 2) What do you want to create at HLP?
 - a. *Safe Connector across Lotus Road*
 - b. *Whitewater Park (2)*
 - c. *Whitewater Features*
 - d. *Connector Trails between Henningsen Lotus Park and Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park*
 - e. *Snack Hut*
 - f. *Trail to Highway 49*
 - g. *Disc Golf Park (2)*
 - h. *Create Multi-Use Sports Fields (i.e. – Tennis Courts, Horse Shoes, Bocce Ball) (2)*
 - i. *More Natural History Interpretation*
 - j. *More Trash & Recycle Bins (2)*
 - k. *More Family Friendly Shady Picnic Areas*
 - l. *Tie Lotus/Coloma with Pedestrian Link across the River*
 - m. *Stage*
 - n. *Local Usage*
 - o. *Better Nature Trail Up River*
 - p. *In Stream River Elements (i.e. – Kayaking, Inner Tubes, Pool Floats)*
 - q. *Dog Park without Leash*
 - r. *Potable Water*
 - s. *Method of Tracking Parking Fees, Usage Fees and Code/Law Enforcement*

- 3) What do you want to change / eliminate at HLP?
- a. *Loose Dogs Confined*
 - b. *Fee for Commercial Usage*
 - c. *Eliminate Lotus Road Parking*
 - d. *Electrical Lines Buried Underground and Under the River*
 - e. *Restrict Unmonitored Amplified Noise/Events*
 - f. *Reduce Traffic Impacts / Quiet Traffic*
 - g. *Dogs Not on a Leash*
 - h. *Develop More Parking and Facilities (Bathrooms) in Upper Parking Lot*

Next Steps/Wrap Up

The meeting concluded with a brief review of next steps. The project team will be evaluating existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints over the next several months. Chuck Nozicka also explained his process for initiating the economic impact study and told attendees that he would be contacting them for individual interviews during the same time. The first public input workshop is tentatively scheduled for August.

Contact Information

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