

Chapter 5

Public Involvement

The Thurston County ORV Sports Park had a long history of public involvement. The park was developed as a direct response to the public's desire for an ORV facility. The ongoing maintenance and operation of the park were supported by public participation through committee involvement and governance, and volunteer labor and materials.

Likewise, Grays Harbor County has agreed to re-open and manage the park as a direct response to public demand. Since the park's closure, ORV user groups have met several times and petitioned the County to address re-opening the park. ORV park users have donated labor and materials to perform clean-up and maintenance on the park.

During the development of this plan, two ORV user group meetings were held to discuss the operational need and feasibility of the park. An ORV Advisory Board is in the early stages of formation. The Advisory Board will consist of user group representatives of varying age groups, promoters, dealers, a representative from the Board of County Commissioners, and members of the community at large.

Two informational meetings were held with the Grays Harbor Board of County Commissioners. The draft plan was posted on the County's web site to encourage public discussion and input, along with the notice for the public hearing. Hard copies of the plan were also made available.

Public notice advertising the public hearing for plan adoption was placed ten days before the hearing date. [Please refer to Appendix D Public Hearing Notice] The public hearing for the adoption of the Grays Harbor County, Straddleline ORV Park Plan was held by the Grays Harbor Board of County Commissioners on February 6, 2006. [Please refer to Appendix E Public Hearing] Public comment was accepted during the hearing. Comments and suggestions for operations and user group participation were offered. However, none of the comments impacted the draft plan so as to require revisions before completion of the final plan.

The draft plan was also made available to the staff and board of the IAC and to the Non-Highway Off Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) advisory committee and program list for comment. Comments and questions were accepted and responses issued before the plan was accepted at the IAC's meeting on February 3, 2006.

The following reflects both written and verbal comments and suggestions received from the Straddleline ORV Park public hearing and the IAC and NOVA group review:

- Recommendations for considering the sale of seasonal passes for families and individuals.

- Offer a testing course, safety training, and training for new user and those needing course certifications.
- Consider leasing space to an on-site ORV sales/rental/service facility. The vendor would be responsible for providing their own structure, stick built or modular.
- “As a promoter of motocross racing, I would like to pass on to you the excitement I have heard from the riders regarding the ORV park re-opening. Attached is our preliminary 2006 season flyer which we have not yet mailed out. As you can see, we have planned one race at Straddleline in each series. We have this schedule posted on our series website as "tentative". I have received MANY phone calls and e-mails from riders who are very excited at the prospect of being able to ride there again.”

“I have reviewed the business plan that has been proposed and am quite impressed with it. It looks to be well thought out and realistic. I also like that it has provisions in it to work with the users and adjust to what they want the park to be. This park can be financially successful, and I think the proposed business plan backs that up.”

“Straddleline is an important riding area, as you well know - it's the only ORV park available to us in western Washington. It's important to me, not only as a promoter, but more importantly as a parent. My children need a place like this to ride.” *Karen - Everett, WA*

- “I and many of our friends have used this area with our children for many years until it was closed by the county. We have added to the current riding members with the addition of the grand kids and hope that this once great family riding area will again be opened. As a Washington tax payer, and as a ORV owner I would request that the fees be released so this park can be re-opened. Thanks you.” *John*
- “It is time we recognize that the original environmentalists were hunters and outdoorsmen, not the greenies of today. Outdoorsmen reinvigorated the wildlife populations of this country with volunteer efforts, donations, and taxes on sporting goods. We need to remember these type of facts when the greenies try to stop people from enjoying the outdoors in a manner they do not like! I support this park, even though I do not like being limited as to where I can enjoy the outdoors. It is deserving of the small cut of my tax monies it will receive.” *Bob - Richland, WA*
- “I vote in support of the orv park and the funding that goes a long way for outdoor recreation. The ORV needs, deserves and pays for areas to enjoy there chosen activities. Please also take into consideration the tax monies that will be generated by people passing through and staying in the community. I hope that we can count on your support.” *Albert*

- “Yes I am interested in the reopening of the park. I was one of the volunteers who works at the park and spent the night down there prior to the special opening. I have an interest in seeing the park open for the family riding opportunities on the trail system and the camping.” *Dave*
- “I am in favor of the reopening of the Straddleline ORV Park (formerly Thurston County ORV Park). Although I do not use track facilities - I drive a Jeep, not a motorcycle or ATV - I think that this park will be very popular and will give young people (especially) a (legal) place to go to have good, clean, fun. I do plan on visiting the Capital Forest trails nearby and will likely check out Straddleline while I am there.” *Jay*
- In support of the ORV park. It provides recreational opportunities and income. Would rather see ORV users use a facility that is regulated and controlled. *Barb - Olympia*
- Question the amount of expenditure for the concession stand related to the amount of revenue it brings in. County should consider leasing out to a vendor rather than running it themselves. *Alfie*
- In favor of quality recreation. Recreation sites should be incorporated into land use plans just like wetlands, etc. ORV users participate in the Eyes on the Trail Program, watching out for and protecting public lands. They are responsible users of public trails. *Gary – Yelm*

Tom Oliva, Enterprise Coordinator for the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission provided the following recommendations:

- The plan must be significantly more pro-active on marketing. There must be a robust marketing plan and budget developed and ready to go in the first year, to expedite the revival of the facility.
- Operation Strategy. Considering that most (60%) of the use occurs during the summer, operation before and after the summer should perhaps be restricted to Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, to contain costs.
- Revenues should also anticipate an aggressive campaign for sponsorships, or third-party interests who will underwrite the cost of facility improvement or management in exchange for publicity. Manufacturers and dealers, for example, have a vested financial interest in the existence of parks like Straddleline for stimulating sales.