CRANE LAKE TRAILS NETWORK AND SPACES

AREA TRAILS
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THE GATE
AREA TRAILS

Trails are a major resource for the town of Crane Lake and the surrounding region. Existing trails, public water access points, camping areas, and various resort businesses provide access, food and lodging to many of these areas. Although many amenities do exist, the community is interested in developing plans that will enhance the trails and the connections between them by incorporating more access points and additional recreational resources into a successful network.

The plan to the right addresses the area from the Town of Crane Lake to Buyck. The design provides:

- A new trail network incorporating paved, rustic and water trails for both summer and winter use;
- A roadside paved trail from the Town of Crane Lake to Buyck along County Road 24;
- The re-working of the existing “Gorge Trail Head” into a new “Lake Park Trailhead”;
- New trailheads at “The Gate” and on the land exchange property in the new “Crane Lake Town Hall Center” as the major new trail network access points;
- New camping and access points for the Vermilion River Trail;
- Expanded rustic trails that make loop trails from the Town of Crane Lake to the existing Vermilion Falls Trail, Gorge Trail and Herriman Lake Trails;
- A trail connection to the Echo Lake Trails; and
- Roadside trails that complete the trail network throughout the town proper, connecting various areas of the community and their business resources.

Additionally, this design proposes rustic hiking trails and roadside trails be groomed for cross-country skiing trails.
The Community Trails Plan provides a closer look at the overall trail network plan. Traditionally, the lake has been the well-developed, valued town amenity. The design centers on creating better visual and physical connections for the community as well as providing loop trail options to encourage walking and observing the rich flora and fauna of the area. The new network focuses on developing the potential for land and river trails to enhance quality of life for local residents while providing a wider variety of recreational opportunities for visitors to the area. The design accomplishes this by:

- Creating major trailhead areas at the “Lake Park” and “Town Hall Center” locations;
- Creating a rustic hiking trail/cross-country ski trail loop by expanding trails from the existing Gorge and Vermilion Fall Trails;
- Providing a new river crossing via a rope suspension bridge. If desired the bridge could be sited upstream from the gorge to avoid placing the bridge within the gorge;
- Establishing a new trail connection from the Town Hall Center to the Herriman Lake Trailhead and Vermilion Trails (trail easements may need to be acquired for this connection);
- Creating a new spur trail from the Town Hall Center to a major overlook point;
- Providing a snowmobile access into the Town Hall Center;
- Creating roadside trails along Gold Coast Road, County Road 24, Handberg Road, and Nelson Road for a fully connected town trails network; and
- Paving a roadside trail along side County Road 24 to Buyck that connects the various community roads, local businesses, new trail network access points, Voyageurs statue and interpretive area, and the Echo Trail. This new paved trail would act as the spine for the trail network and should be considered with future road improvements.
GOLD COAST TRAIL

The largest concentration of commercial and retail activity in the town is along Gold Coast Road. The road provides access to the mix of residential, public and commercial properties located on the shoreline of Crane Lake. Comprised of multiple businesses, resorts, the post office, an international customs port, a seaplane base, and a boat launch, it serves as the major civic armature of the community and acts as the Crane Lake’s “Main Street.” Because the existing road serves as a trail connection for walking and bicycling, and has no separation from automobile traffic, this is an unsafe environment. The abundance of state and federal land has left Crane Lake with no room for private development and very little defined local public space.

The Gold Coast Trail plan would:

- Provide a safe trail circulation for both walking and cycling;
- Connect the multiple amenities of the strip;
- Increase visibility and access;
- Encourage pedestrian circulation while maintaining automobile access; and
- Establish new public spaces as major amenities for the town.
Option One

This area is one of the few locations that could be designed to create a much-needed public gathering space. The area marks the figurative end of the road; the sign states “Welcome to the End of the Road.” This design takes advantage of the land associated with the county boat launch and parking area, and the Voyagaire resort, restaurant and houseboat rental to make it a public space of concentrated activity. The design:

- Provides a public gathering space, an open air shelter, an information kiosk, and plantings of native vegetation;
- Creates new truck/trailer circulation for launching boats;
- Provides a new sign location;
- Provides parking for both cars and trucks with trailers;
- Creates a destination for the Gold Coast Trail;
- Uses white pine plantings to define the park space and frame views to the lake and Voyagaire;
- Uses native wildflowers in planting beds;
- Provides access to the dock;
- Creates a destination for the Gold Coast Trail; and
- Connects to the community trail network by creating a new trailhead for the Gorge Trail.
LAKE PARK

Option Two

Lake Park Option Two uses the same general area used for Option One, but suggests a different location for the park space. Similar to Option One, the design aims to identify the end of the road and enhance the trail experience while linking to Voyagaire and the boat launch area. The design:

- Creates a new public open space on the waterfront;
- Provides an open-air shelter, picnic tables, a kiosk, signs and open turf areas;
- Naturalizes the lakeshore with native plants to create a buffer that protects water quality while enhancing lake views;
- Creates both car and truck/trailer parking;
- Uses pine plantings to enhance the end of the road while framing views to the Voyagaire; and
- Becomes a major community amenity and a destination on the Gold Coast Trail.
The overflow trailhead parking design uses a key parcel of land to support the Crane Lake Trails Network Plan. As opportunities for public space development change over time, this area could become an integral piece of the Gorge Trailhead. In the event that other trailhead options are not possible, this design addresses the need for increased visibility and increased access to the Gorge Trail and larger trail network. The design:

- Provides parking for eleven cars;
- Provides a staging area for trail users that may also become a location for an open-air shelter;
- Places a trail information kiosk;
- Uses rain gardens to detain and infiltrate storm water runoff;
- Places a new sign in a highly visible location on top of the knoll;
- Removes the conflicts of circulation and use that exist with the Voyagaire boat yard; and
- Provides parking for the road area and lake.
The Gate is the major arrival space for the Town of Crane Lake. As the visitor arrives from the south, this location marks the arrival at the lake with breathtaking views of the entire lake environment and up a long narrow bay. The curving road that reveals the lake at road's end enhances the experience. A bridge at the beginning of Gold Coast Road, plantings, and various developments define the community core. The design:

- Capitalizes on the space created by the recently removed Borderland Lodge and Outfitters;
- Incorporates the Gold Coast Trail;
- Creates a public space for resting and viewing the lake;
- Locates a new town sign;
- Makes a gateway by using native plants to frame lake views and enhance the arrival experience;
- Locates a new market/cafe with outdoor seating;
- Creates a new dock for both public access to the restaurant and private use for the adjacent property owners;
- Maintains a public/private edge through plantings, walls, and signage;
- Creates a memorial space to link the bridge and public space; and
- Provides for pedestrian circulation on both sides of the bridge to enhance safety and provide views to the Camp 40 Creek.