

Shevlin South?

Bend has an historic and unique opportunity to protect an area on the Deschutes River, like a Shevlin Park or Riley Ranch in the Southern part of town. Now it is Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) land west of Brookwood Blvd and east of Mt. Bachelor Village.

This land is a needed refuge for people from all over town to hike, walk their dogs, enjoy big trees and the river, bike, run, bird watch or just sit and think. The land has large rock outcrops, interesting topography, mature Ponderosas and Douglas firs, wildflowers, important habitat for nesting birds and various mammals. This property also functions as a local transportation corridor with bike and pedestrian trails linking southern Bend to the Mill District, Downtown and the Larkspur Trail. All this in the middle of Bend.

The Bulletin editorial of Feb.18, and columns by Allan Bruckner and Cylvia Hayes, observed that Bend will need more parks and open space as it continues to grow and densify. Many Bend residents are upset with clear cutting of large Ponderosas to make way for new housing developments. If no action is taken, this special land will be a victim, like many others recently, to complete tree and shrub removal and land leveling, thereby destroying its wildlife and scenic values. The big difference this time is that this property is the LAST remaining large natural parcel on the river.

This property is slated to become a large subdivision. For the Bend community is this the best use of this unique land? I don't think it is. I propose that this property be saved as permanent open space while providing COID with reasonable compensation. In its present state, lots of trees provide shade and a cooling effect in summer and a more healthful and better environment for Bend's citizens throughout the year. The property is home to numerous plants and animals, with many depending on the nearby river. It provides respite to people seeking solace in a natural area conveniently located inside the city. It is beloved by many residents as evidenced by the number of people using its many trails. With Bend's current densification plans, citizens will increasingly need natural open spaces. This property is the last opportunity for saving, for public use, such a significant tract of unique undeveloped land anywhere near the river. It should not become yet another housing development when it is so special and treasured. The Deschutes River, Ponderosas, and rock outcrops are exactly the features that define the natural setting that is Bend.

We can all agree that we are fortunate that we do have some great large parks: Shevlin Park on the west side, Riley Ranch in the northwest, Pine Nursery in the northeast, but nothing in the southwest. This is our opportunity to establish a new, large natural park in the southern part of Bend. Compared to the existing large parks, its central location will provide good access from all directions and new opportunities for enjoyment by all of Bend residents.

In the 1920's a visionary civic organization, the Women's Civic Improvement League, saved Drake Park for posterity. Why can't we do the same thing for future Bend? With a community-wide fundraising effort that includes Bend Parks and Rec, this property can be

preserved as a large natural park. With this vision, let's aspire to creating a significant new park along the river, a place where nature can continue to flourish, to be enjoyed by all of Bend's residents.

This new park would be a big anniversary present for the people of Bend--what a wonderful way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Drake and Shevlin Parks.

Judy Clinton

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