



Introduction

The City of Stevenson is updating its Shoreline Management Program to ensure compliance with statewide requirements. This effort is a full suite of planning activities, involving an analysis of existing conditions, future visioning, goal setting, regulatory program adoption, and facilitation of voluntary restoration projects. The City knows it cannot be successful in this endeavor if it does not understand what its partners, community members and broad stakeholder groups want, believe or have to offer, and we hope to have an open and honest discussion on this topic. To that end, please feel assured that while the names of individual participants and the content of all participants' responses will be reported in the summary, that document will aggregate the responses to each question without identifying individual respondents' names.

Interview Questions

Question 1: Looking at Stevenson's shorelines today, what do you value most? What are the top three strengths of Stevenson's shoreline areas?

Mature Riparian trees and vegetation along Rock Creek and Rock Cove provide avian nesting opportunities and other habitat opportunities for fish by contributing to temperature control, protection from predators and biological contributions from leaf litter and insects.

Commercial and recreational mix is good with businesses like the Columbia Gorge Riverside Lodge and water accesses in close proximity.

Unlike most others in the region, the Port's boat launch has no fees, and there are areas for many other types of water recreation, including swimming areas near boat launch, a kite launch that is OK, and Bob's Beach for windsurfing.

Stevenson's direct access to the Columbia is special and unusual for most Columbia River communities that are cut off from the river by railroads or highways. This gives Stevenson a real feeling as a "rivertown" because it can be seen from so many areas of town.

Windsurfing and wind sports from the boat launch to Bob's Beach contain several access points so there are fewer choke points than many other launch sites. Specifically, the separate launch sites for kites and windsurfers are a real strength that reduces conflicts.

The Fairgrounds area is a "vital use area" within the city and provides several good events that are boost the tourism economy.

Recreation- There are family picnic areas, a boat launch and other water-based recreation.

Many opportunities for recreational activities, including windsurfing and kiteboarding, and even though they are loud, many people come to the shorelines to enjoy their jet skis.

The Columbia shoreline has a great scenic appeal, with vistas of the water, the cruise boats, and the mountainsides. These views are great from looking from the land across the water and looking from the water across the land. Stevenson Landing provides an opportunity to see both types of views.

Rock Creek provides cold, clear water for migrating salmonids to rest over on their journey to spawning sites farther up the Columbia.

The waterfronts have a variety of access points, from wind sport launches to the boat launch to the pier for bigger boats.

Rock Cove provides a good site for stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking, and could be a great site for a cable park like the one that had been proposed in Hood River.

Public parks and water accesses aren't huge, but they are diverse and allow many different users to enjoy the waterfront without feeling like they are right on top of each other: a wedding can happen in the park without being bothered by the kites, windsurfers, and boaters.

Bob's Beach should be the model for all windsurfing sites. It includes bathrooms, changing rooms, close proximity to parking, a lawn for rigging, and user friendly steps to the water's edge. The WiFi is a good amenity, but a lot of windsurfers are single-focused when they get to the water.

The beauty of this area has been bringing people here for more than 100 years.

There is an opportunity for water-dependent industry at the Port site.

The beauty.

The sense of community on the waterfront, because of the friendly crowd of people enjoying their active lifestyle. People aged 15 to 70 are kiting together, sharing common interests, hosting potlucks & BBQs, the Bridge of the Gods Kiteboard Festival, and creating a family-friendly atmosphere. The educational/interpretive signs reinforce this for visitors by explaining Stevenson's pride and what makes it unique.

Green spaces along the shorelines create a different type of "habitat" that benefits the community as well as fish, birds, and wildlife.

There are many micro activity areas that different users can enjoy.

The area has such great natural beauty and aesthetic values.

Compared to Hood River, it is much closer to Portland. The only other sites closer are Rooster Rock and Jones Beach, but the west winds are not strong enough at those sites to draw much summer usage.

Ongoing development of the Port area has improved over the years by adding restaurants and ensuring good maintenance of park areas.

There are great opportunities for tourism and tourism-oriented shops and restaurants. The tourboats are a good example of bringing many people here to shop, eat, and visit the Interpretive Center.

Stevenson's location on the river is a strength. It is close to Portland, has a wide waterbody for sailors, consistent winds from both the east and the west, which extends the kiting/sailing season here compared to other areas to the east and west.

The kinetic "Galaxy" sculpture is underappreciated, but its ever-changing movement is beautiful and visually intriguing—to the point of mesmerizing.

Recreation in Stevenson is part of Tourism, our biggest economic sector, and the wind and water sport access sites form a type of water-dependent use that is different from other areas.

Various activities on the Columbia waterfront integrate well together and do not compete for space. Pebble Beach provides wading and swimming, the boat launch lets jet skis and fishermen on the water, East Point has a great grass area kite rigging, the Riverside Lodge and the restaurant get people enjoying the water, East Point and Bobs Beach is perfect for kites and windsurfers with their lawns, bathrooms, and changing rooms.

Question 2: What do you think are the top three challenges for Stevenson's shoreline areas?

Non-vegetated riprap along Columbia River and Rock Cove is a challenge for habitat purposes.

The town is not connected to the waterfront *at all*. It's there, the railroad makes it inaccessible, as does the lack of maintenance of the County-owned lands.

Riprap along Columbia is waste of space along the waterfront because it is too steep and makes water access hazardous or impossible, especially at Leavens & Russell streets.

Continued development pressure in shorelines areas will make it challenging for Stevenson to ensure that it gets the right amount of density it should have as an urbanized waterfront, but not overwhelm/be out of character with what Stevenson is.

East Point and Bob's Beach are one-in/one-out at a time. This probably isn't currently an issue, but bottlenecks could be expected as use grows.

The maintenance of parks along shoreline areas is unfriendly for walkers, hikers and tourists, especially around Rock Cove and the eroding portion of the Columbia waterfront trail.

The current appearance of the Cascade avenue area. Buildings and grounds are poorly maintained or dilapidated.

The direction established in the Comprehensive Plan and City's development standards are not flexible enough to allow property owners to decide how they want to use their property.

Erosion along the Port's shoreline property is creating physical and mental barriers for visitors walking along the shoreline.

Runoff from roads and industries is not being treated and impacts habitat values.

The potential benefits of the creeks going into the Columbia are not being taken advantage of. There are no trails, no power generation, no kayaking at waterfalls, no views at waterfalls.

Parking is very crowded at Bob's Beach, but the boat launch and kite launch have enough.

Increased usage of the railroad could cutoff Stevenson's connection to the riverfront as coal and oil trains change the way access and road closures occur at the Russell Street crossing.

Parking is tight at Bob's Beach, especially compared to the kite launch.

A mindset against tourism still exists even though it is our *biggest economic sector*. The community needs to get over the "we don't want any more people here" mindset that is being passed down generationally.

Sedimentation of the Cove, the lack of freshwater flushing it out, and wave action are issues that reduce its appeal.

The Port ownership of the waterfront has been a problem because they are always going back and forth over whether they should focus on industry or retail/recreation. They need to pick one and live with the results.

Commercial/retail opportunities on the waterfront are underutilized because of the dilapidated or inappropriate buildings that should be removed/repurposed/improved. Thunder Island Brewing in Cascade Locks used as an example of an effective repurposing.

Infrastructure at the mouth of Rock Creek constrains natural processes like stream mobility and increases the risk of loss.

Sedimentation of Rock Creek/Rock Cove is becoming more and more of an issue as fishermen, and even kayakers, are unable to get from the creek to the Columbia River. It also is causing scenic enjoyment issues for recreationalists and visitors.

The walking paths along the shorelines are not connected, and some of the great micro activity areas unknown to users of other micro areas as a result. Tourists at one area are not being guided to the next or into the town center from other activity centers.

The sedimentation challenge will continue to be an issue because it was a natural event and it will be hard to find the right balance.

The train crossing and train horns (even though it will get better at Russell) will be a barrier to improving shoreline areas.

Windsurfers and kiteboarders have taken over all the public beaches on the Columbia and families have nowhere to go to enjoy the river. Rock Cove has them, but it's not as mentally impressive as being on the river.

Businesses are struggling and we are too small and too few people are buying enough to contribute to the tax base necessary to sustain what we already have, let alone what we ideally want.

A section of Russell Avenue seems missing (and is for pedestrians) and separates the downtown from the waterfront.

We haven't taken advantage of commercial potential. Current industry on waterfront is non-water-dependent, no marina exists, and overnight boats are discouraged at the dock. Cascade Locks Marine Park is a better example of utilizing the advantages of river access with the Sternwheeler, camping, café, and a park getaway within the town.

Native American fishing practices are a challenge and it is hard to impossible to be inclusive in decision making and use because of historic tensions.

The development and routing of 1st Street is important for connecting downtown to the waterfront but needs to be done right. Changing 1st and 2nd streets to one-ways will make the problem worse, not better because it will divide the town into three sections instead of the two that is already a barrier.

Regulatory barriers like the setbacks inhibit development. Setbacks for recreation (including recreation/enjoyment on private lands) should be reduced.

Question 3: Now, looking into the future 20 years from now in the year 2035, describe your ideal vision for Stevenson's shoreline areas. What are they like? What are the top three most important attributes?

The shorelines have robust and expanded greenspaces with native plants and trees with more large conifers than cottonwoods (When conifers fall into water, the habitat structures they provide are more beneficial and longer lasting than conifers).

In an *ideal* future, the railroad is gone and the town expands over where the tracks are. The corridor would be replaced with a Gorge-wide bike/ped pathway.

Look at what other successful places offer: places to exercise/get outside, eat, drink, and look at the scenery. Hood River is an example of a well done waterfront.

Public access to Columbia is expanded while keeping/improving the current way that different areas and opportunities are available for different users.

The changing rooms and bathrooms are still available and there are expanded areas for outdoor showers and hoses to clean off boards, sails, and other gear before packing it back into the car. Shaded and wind-protected areas remain for windsurfers and parking is kept close to the launch site.

Boater or other water activities on Rock Cove are expanded as an inherent advertisement for drivers on the highway.

The positive effects of seasonal tourism continue and grow.

Rock cove is a better used activity center of its own. The water is circulating to clean the muck from the bottom and sedimentation from coming in from Rock Creek. The county-owned property on the west side is developed to give people an opportunity to enjoy the Cove.

A water park is developed on Rock Cove to give more people the chance to boat or float on the water. Any metal bands, shards, or scrap left over from the old mill is cleaned-up so no foot or boat hazards exist.

The shorelines reflect the vision of the Comprehensive Plan: the waterfront is part of the downtown and a place where people live, work, and play. Commercial, residential, open space, and recreational uses share the area.

Respectful accesses for human usage.

The shorelines have a balance of recreational and commercial enjoyment places including replacement of the county's underutilized properties on Rock Creek.

The Port's industrial uses move to their North Bonneville site and are placed by recreational and commercial uses on the waterfront.

Riprap slopes along the shoreline are improved with riparian vegetation, especially near the Port's Riverpoint Building.

Commercial and restaurant uses would be appreciated along the waterfront for tourists and weekend wind warriors who would spend their money in Stevenson. Hood River is seeing that right now with Pfriem and Solstice.

Less industry occurs along the shorelines and more recreational uses are added, including a marina or moorage facility for larger yachts, day or weekend users. Taxis or shuttles are available to take visitors arriving at these facilities to other locations in town to generate revenue in the community. Astoria is a good example with the Trolley and the trolley drivers interpreting history and pointing out interesting sites or good restaurants along the way.

Rock Creek is brought back to its pre-slide level by dredging. Rock Creek Falls remains a locals' only asset because of the parking, access, and safety concerns of the area.

The waterfront is developed but not so filled up with buildings that it takes away views of the water from the rest of town or travelers.

The small town character is retained and is welcoming to visitors. Social aspects of this character are kept, and physical aspects are considered. New buildings should be smaller in scale and fit with the historic aspects of the area. New uses are added including gift shops at Stevenson Landing, additional interpretive signs, waterfront bars and lodging, short term rentals and long term residential uses, outdoor gear shops and other unique amenities like the "Galaxy" sculpture or a local artisan's market.

There is a strong community of active citizen stewards of shoreline areas doing education, restoration, and outreach work.

Setback regulations along shorelines are reduced in urban areas, and rundown houses and buildings on Port waterfront are replaced or improved and the area has developed a sailing regatta that is made possible by our great winds.

The micro activity areas along the shorelines are connected to each other by pathways so users know they are there and can migrate between them on a daily/seasonal basis or as their needs and interests change over time. The Lodge, a loop all the way around Rock Cove (grade separated from the highway), the downtown waterfront, and other activity centers. Implement the pedestrian portion of the Wayfinding Master Plan to guide visitors to all the sites. "Connectivity is the key!"

The railroad continues to not impede traffic to the water, and new crossings are added or improved to improve access.

There is a stronger use of the river and a much greater visitor presence in shoreline areas. The Mosier Creek development is a good example of attractive, respectable development on the waterfront, including longer term condos or shorter term tourism stays on waterfronts.

The Port converts to a water-dependent form of industry and other industrial sites are developed such as a barge terminal to ship materials like gravel and rock from local sources. Current recreation sites are improved/increased, and not just for wind sports, but for boaters and other interests for residents that have been in the area prior to the growth of wind sports.

Keep Rock Creek waterfalls as a locals'-only asset, not a tourism draw. Maybe provide an access from the County ownership on the north side and develop a nice park in that area after city annexation.

The railroad along Cascade Avenue is beautified and hidden from the businesses on the other side of the street, and access over the railroad is improved on Russell Street and a new pedestrian or automotive access is developed on going west after the Kanaka Creek Underpass.

The trees added by the Underwood Conservation District's "75 Years, 75 Trees Program" have matured and left a lasting legacy.

The area is a better place to live, work, and play.

Shorelines are better utilized and public acquisition of additional shoreline areas occurs to facilitate reuse of mill sites and dilapidated housing.

Environmental mitigation efforts are done in a way that works, instead of a way that is counterproductive to both the habitat and the human use it was created for.

Market forces (including the relaxed, but consistent application of regulations, public investments, and increased compatibility of uses, community pride, property maintenance) provide investors' confidence and facilitate the redevelopment and repurposing of dilapidated housing and other buildings in shoreline areas.

Question 4: [Summarize the conversation, then...] What do we need to do to realize this ideal vision? Are there specific uses, projects, or activities the City could facilitate to make this happen? Are there specific uses, projects, or activities your group or another stakeholder group could facilitate to make this happen?

Margaret Newman of the Mid-Columbia Fish Enhancement Board has developed best practice recommendations for restoring riprap embankments to add dirt, plants (trees, shrubs, understory), and habitat amenities. Shrubs would probably be more appropriate for highway and railroad embankments to minimize the risk of tree throw.

Consider new zoning or development regulations around Rock Cove that will allow commercialization of the area as a boutique hotel, retail shops, a brewpub, etc.

Use existing infrastructure and development tools like the Community Action Team list to encourage and facilitate development of underutilized areas.

Complete some small proactive things right now, work with stakeholders like the Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association to monitor and communicate issues as they come up. Engage these stakeholders and users about potential changes to get input before they happen.

Ensure open communications about activities in shorelines so stakeholders can respond to questions or complaints from their members or constituents.

Continue to market the tourism appeal of Stevenson's shoreline areas to allow shoreline businesses and amenities like the Interpretive Center to thrive and improve. Encourage cross promotion of businesses within the tourism economy. Undertake other positive media endeavors about the community as well.

Make cleanup permitting easier for property owners. Create fewer permit hoops to jump through to remove abandoned cars, scrap metal, invasive and nuisance plants and trees so the owner doing the work doesn't feel punished for a good thing.

Because the City's funding constraints will prevent realizing some of the vision, it needs to develop added funding streams. This can be done by reducing restrictions on development to bring more people to the area (Facilitating boat/watercraft rental operations on Rock Cove would be one example), by annexing some territory, by continuing the economic development/business training programs to mentor visitors-turned-residents who need to figure out how to make money to stay here, and ensuring the in-process subdivisions get completed to provide an inventory of lots.

Involve all stakeholders in the plan to make sure they buy into it and actually work to achieve it. Waterfront and downtown business and land owners, the Port, and the City need to agree to the plan for it to be effective.

Adopt low impact development standards in shoreline areas.

Perform better maintenance on Port and County parks and trails and move their maintenance sheds along the Columbia and Rock Creek to ensure best utilization of shorelines in Urban Area.

Install additional parking near Rock Cove for users to easily get kayaks and standup paddleboards onto the water.

Evaluate the need for all the industrial parking along the river to remove some and connect the park areas with better greenways or stormwater treatment areas and shade for habitat corridors, while naturalizing shorelines.

Place a stronger focus on light industry, but not necessarily along the riverfront. Save that space for water-oriented businesses and let non-water oriented businesses fill up the empty commercial storefronts and rental space in downtown.

Improve infrastructure to downtown areas first to increase access/parking to stimulate the development that will pay for the beautification and park areas later.

DON'T WAIT. In twenty years, none of us will be around, but the things we've done will be. Improve on the small development and recreational amenities that are already great, and don't wait for a big developer to come save the day. The type of speculative investments we would see from them would leave many of the little details undone and would not be beneficial in the long run.

Consider contacting the Underwood Conservation District for help in stormwater project planning and funding/implementation. The UCD can also provide technical assistance for forestry resources and firewise practices, coordinate river clean-up efforts, work with private property owners on noxious weed treatment and replacement. Also consider city financial support for UCD, whose programmatic funding has an unclear future outlook and is not likely to run a property tax levy.

Improve trails along waterfalls, including a trail up Rock Creek to realize the value of Rock Creek waterfalls and allow trails in setback areas where the buildings can't go. This will improve the tourism components of our economic base.

Focus on creating ONE finished asset first instead of TEN semi-finished projects. Using the waterfront trail as an example, find a way to continue it from the pedestrian bridge, under the highway to the Melonas trailer park property and then along Railroad Street to Russell. The trailer park is a deterrent currently, but this presents a redevelopment opportunity where another access along this property and under the railroad bridge could be developed out to the sandbar of Rock Creek.

Keep up the public involvement on issues in shoreline area. The more people know, the fewer surprises there are, the better projects will turn out.

Look to Monterrey's Cannery Row as an example of how to repurpose both sides of Cascade Avenue's industrial areas for commercial purposes. Astoria also provides a good case study for this.

Find a way to complete the plans to put a pedestrian bridge from the Eagles to the Tichenor Building as a way to connect the waterfront and downtown.

Consistently implement the plan and provide stability in regulations to encourage investment.

Pursue development of a Marina. There is no place to get gas/fuel between Camas and Hood River, and the Port can contract with private concessionaires to run the operations, similar to what is happening with the Beacon Rock Golf Course. Some subsidy may be necessary, but it could pay dividends as a generator of economic activity.

Don't focus on a Marina. The amount of public money needed to make it work would be more than it's worth, and there are better uses for the limited funds.

Work with Columbia Riverkeepers and their volunteer water quality sampling/monitoring and river cleanup efforts.

Encourage/promote the family-friendly aspects of Stevenson and develop additional family activities like paddleboat rentals.

Work to dredge the Rock Creek channel as one way of keeping Rock Cove clean, deep, and usable. Also consider pumping Rock Creek water across fairgrounds to provide additional flushing of Rock Cove.

Develop the commercial, recreational, and vista potential of Cascade Avenue because commercial development employs more workers and a better economic return to the community. If industrial uses are going to stay there, they need to fit in with those uses. Grain elevators or other transshipment points are not likely to happen.

Find a way to make the "Metal Monstrosity" contribute to the positive vibes of the waterfront. Use the Pybus Market in Wenatchee as a case study for repurposing buildings like this for the community's benefit. Hood River is also finding ways to build great waterfront areas, and Stevenson can find better ways to build off its current water-oriented businesses (cruise line, wind sport beaches, restaurant) than that industrial building.

Find cooperative ways to deal with Native American fishing. The current nets are placed all over the waterfront, and they are being used as part of a million-dollar industry—not subsistence fishing.

Develop wider windsurf and kiteboard launch sites. Windsurfers typically require about 15 feet for access, so 30 foot wide launch areas would allow two-in/two-out at a time. Kiteboard launches are much wider, and would need closer to 100-120 feet for two-in/two-out, but separate sites are probably more comfortable and safe.

Interview Participants

- **Pat Albaugh**, Skamania County Economic Development Council
- **Tony Bolstad, Jim Hunt & John McSherry**, Port of Skamania County & kiteboard interests
- **Jeanette Burkhardt**, Yakama Nation Fisheries Project (Interview Respectfully Declined)
- **Frank Cox**, City of Stevenson Mayor
- **Doug McKenzie & Larry Douglass**, Skamania County
- **Rob Peterson**, Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center
- **Greg Stiegel**, Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association
- **Tova Tillinghast**, Underwood Conservation District
- **Brett VandenHeuval**, Columbia Riverkeeper
- **Bernard Versari**, Shoreline Property Owner