

BEND PADDLE TRAIL



Bend Paddle Trail Alliance Whitewater Park Surf Wave Recommendation May 30th, 2022

**To: Don Horton and Staff
Bend Parks and Recreation District
Bend, OR Community**

It is our recommendation that in order to re-open the surf wave to the Bend Community a few physical and behavioral changes must be made. These recommendations are based on our Boards' collective experience, industry standard protocol for recreational users within whitewater corridors, and collaboration between First Responders, Whitewater Kayakers, Swiftwater Rescue Professionals, River Surfers, and River Industry Outfitter/Business Owners.

We also feel very strongly that the community, Bend Parks and Recreation District, specific recreational user groups, and First Responders understand that the Whitewater Park will always have inherent risks associated with recreational use that can't be eliminated by physical or behavioral changes.

It is our hope that the recommended changes below will help mitigate the risks associated with whitewater park use to the greatest extent possible. Pairing these changes with additional education outreach would be a pro-active and responsible approach by the Bend community to continue enjoying this amazing amenity.

Physical Changes:

It is our understanding that based on the in-water work conducted by Bmprd May 25th, 2022 the gaps associated with the earlier entrapment have been covered with a manufactured shim. At this point, BPTA does not recommend additional physical changes.

Behavioral Changes:

- 1. No Leash:** While it is not definitive that a leash was instrumental in the incident, we believe that it is likely that a river leash worn around the calf contributed to the physical entrapment. No leashes (including releasable leashes) should be allowed for use within the whitewater park.
- 2. Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs):** River safety and regulatory associations within the whitewater community including the American Canoe Association (ACA), Rescue 3 international, the International Rafting Federation (IRF), and the Oregon State Marine Board all recommend the use of PFDs in whitewater. The middle channel in the Bend Whitewater Park is considered to be class III whitewater. Additionally, as many users of the surf wave have little experience in whitewater/moving water within a river (due to some surfers primarily having ocean surf experience) we strongly recommend that PFDs should be used by recreational users within the middle channel.

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3. **Helmets:** The Whitewater Park utilizes concrete, hard metal surfaces, and rocks to create the recreational wave amenities. Helmets are standard for any recreational user within a whitewater corridor. We strongly recommend that helmets should be used by all recreational users within the middle channel.
4. **Incident Protocol:** BMPRD has a strong incident response protocol that worked extremely well during the entrapment incident. There has been discussion of an emergency “shut-off” on-site which BPTA strongly discourages because of the complexity of flow requirements within the three channels.
5. **Operations:** Without going into the details of operational jurisdiction and enforcement authority BPTA acknowledges that BMPRD has a unique position in controlling the surf wave. It is our recommendation that if leashes are utilized by recreational users then the wave should be “flattened.” This will inevitably change the culture at the surf wave and allow for community policing.
6. **Gear Loaner Station:** BPTA will work with BMPRD to provide the necessary PFDs and helmets as “loaners” for use in the whitewater channel. We have partnerships with outdoor manufacturers/river outfitters that will provide this gear at wholesale or lower pricing. Prior to “opening” the surf wave we highly recommend that we have a “loaner” station onsite. It is extremely important that we do not limit any community access because they lack the financial resources to purchase the necessary equipment to enjoy this community asset. BPTA will monitor this gear in conjunction with BMPRD, Tumalo Creek, Cubicle, and Bend Surf.

Educational Outreach:

1. **Signage:** BMPRD should work with BPTA, Tumalo Creek, Cubicle and Bend Surf to develop more specific signage on hazards and necessary gear for recreational use within the Whitewater Park. Additionally, we need to have emergency contact numbers on the surfer island to expedite emergency and first responder response if necessary.
2. **Community Whitewater Park Awareness Classes:** BPTA will work with BMPRD to coordinate and lead classes designed for education awareness of the hazards associated with moving whitewater. It is our recommendation that we provide classes throughout the season for the community at-large. An informational class focusing on whitewater safety specific to our park would be provided free of charge to the public. We anticipate this cost to be shared by both BPTA and BMPRD (if there is any cost.)
3. **Visual Assets:** We would encourage visual assets, such as a series of educational videos specific to the Whitewater Park that could be shown on social media, websites, tube rental locations, and other community venues. Additionally, an online course specific to whitewater safety in our local community would be a phenomenal asset for our youth.
4. **Advanced Ambassador River Awareness Training:** To create culture shift at the Bend Whitewater Park it is crucial to educate and empower the “power” users within the community. These people are either known in the community, use the park on a regular basis, or are industry professionals. It is our recommendation to subsidize advanced training for these users to allow

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for a more “top-down” education outreach approach within the park. BPTA will administer and execute an advanced course (with BMRPD collaboration) utilizing a professional certified Swiftwater Rescue Instructor once or twice a year. A rough estimate of cost would be approximately \$400/person and would be by invite only or application process. Our recommendation is to train approximately 20 people annually at a rough cost of \$8k-10k.



Justin Rae
President
Bend Paddle Trail Alliance