



**Appendix V: Public Engagement**  
**Subappendix A**  
**Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan**

*June 2023*

**Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan**  
**Appendix V: Public Engagement**  
**Subappendix A: Interviews and Focus Groups**  
June 2023



**Oregon Ridge Interview Notes**

**PUBLIC DRAFT**

**Summary of Staff and General Public Interviews and Focus Groups**

Interviews between February 17, 2022, through April 6, 2022

Updated with additional interviews held between April 13, 2022, and April 24, 2022

**Scope items related to interviews:**

1. 2.3.3.2. Conduct interviews with key user groups and stakeholders identified by DRP. *'identify focus group members, from various park users' groups*; 8 interview/focus sessions
2. 2.3.3.
3. 6. Capture input from applicable DRP and other identified County staff (e.g., Dept of Economic and Workforce Development, Dept of Public Works, Dept. of Environmental Protection and Sustainability, etc.); 8 interviews or focus groups – sampling provided in response:
  - Park Operations/Maintenance staff
  - Nature Center staff
  - User/Rec Program Staff
  - Sports reps (staff and league)
  - Natural Resource staff
  - Park Rangers or Policing staff
  - Baltimore DPW or DOT regarding utilities and roadway network
4. BID Alt 4 Activator Event – stakeholder interviews; 6 total (done later in project)

Staff Interviews summarized in this document

<b>Date</b>	<b>Interview</b>
2.17.22	Bob Smith, Deputy Director of Recreation
2.17.22	Pat McDougall, Park Planner
3.22.22	'Tucker' Christopher Langway, Maintenance
3.24.22	Jason Magin, Maintenance
3.24.22	Jessica Jeannetta, Nature Council and Annie Sanchez, The Lodge
4.1.22	Email from Lee Dove regarding MIAA
4.1.22	Jessica Jeannetta follow up discussion
4.1.22	Annie Sanchez follow up discussion
4.4.22	Annie Sanchez in park discussion
4.6.22	Jessica Jeannetta follow up discussion
4.15.22	Annie Sanchez follow up discussion
4.24.22	Budget Discussion: Lisa Mezzadra, Benjamin Porter, Robert Pringle, Justin Robey

General Public Interviews summarized in this document

<b>Date</b>	<b>Interview</b>
3.31.22	Nature Center Volunteers Martha Johnson, Charlie Davis, Alan Penczek, Tom Farrell
4.6.22	Oregon Ridge Nature Council – Ralph Brown, Ann Conoles, Karen Jackson, Elaine Kasmer, Debbie Bacharach, Jim Curtis, Gary Anderson, Polly Roberts, Pat Clagett (for a moment), Eszter Sapi
4.13.22	Keith Rosenstiel – Trails, Save Shawan

4.13.22	Jeremy Silver, Rouge Catering/Hot August Large Events
4.13.22	Rebecca Cain, BSO Large Events
4.13.22	Michele Mueller, Kennedy Krieger Large Events
4.13.22	Joanna Sales, Biking
4.14.22	Renee Hamidi, Valleys Planning Council
4.14.22	Carmita Vogel, Baltimore Bicycling Youth Cycling
4.20.22	Mike Madsen, Fields @ Cuba Road
4.21.22	Birders – Simon Best and Carol Schreter

### **General Setting of Park**

- Park's geographic location – set in an area that is very rural to the west and very urban to the east @ the I-83 corridor, 15 miles to the City

### **History of Park Expansion and Parcel Acquisition**

- Land acquired in 1969, trails were in place, a number of them were abandoned logging roads or deer paths
- Logging was done off of Ivy Hill Road
- Merryman property at south end of the park and behind the Lodge
  - Occupies the land around the yellow trail and north of Ivy Hill Road
  - Four women raised 3 million dollars to purchase that property, one of the women is still alive in Rhode Island and is being interviewed regarding this transaction and the idea of creating a memorial woodland garden near the Nature Center in honor of these four women
  - Purchased 180 acres that was slated to be developed for housing
  - McCormack gave \$100,000 towards this acquisition in the late 1980s

### **What Do You Want to See From the Master Plan?**

- Enhance and preserve natural environment
  - Keep border intact
  - Remove invasives
  - Native plants
  - Vernal ponds – one near the Nature Center – would be wonderful if resurrected
  - Establish more natural areas
  - Woodland restoration
  - Park easily becomes a wilderness, away from hustle and bustle on the hill
- Better trails
- One plus mile (or more – stacked loop equaling three miles) controlled loop trail (one-way, open to bikes and walkers) multi-use trail in woods
- Improved ballfields at Cuba Road (reorientation to allow use of two fields at the same time for adult play; potential third diamond or rectangular field on terrace above existing fields)
- Enhance diversity and equity in the park
  - Don't want upcharges
  - No commercial entities to charge high rates excluding people
- Wayfinding
  - Signs in multiple languages
  - Better signage
- Protect and enhance historic sites within the park

- Incorporation of programs working elsewhere
  - North Carolina recommendation for development of a Trail Ambassador program
- Updated infrastructure – permanent restrooms, better lighting that is more environmentally responsible
- Enhanced grounds management – reduction in mowed area, better forest management, preservation of open meadows
- Explore opportunities to link activities between ORP and Ag Center and expand offerings– relocate community gardening to Ag Center and incorporate Ag Center greenhouses; current use as site for winter Bike Race ‘Frosty Cross’ and practice fields at ORP model for future large events co-located at both sites
- Consideration of expanding recreation activities at ORP, using park as host site for local, state, and national events

### **What Do You Cherish Most About the Park?**

- Biodiversity – variety of habitats, birds, wildflowers, forest, and streams,
- Baisman’s Run – 1970’s stream ecology started here; stream used as the urban stream baseline
- Meadow along Shawan Road – degraded by pipeline construction, slowly coming back
- Oregon Ridge woodland/ open space
- Vernal pools
- Pristine streams
- Maryland Piedmont
- Woods/forest – why go to the park
- Particularly area around Baisman’s Run where there is no trail
- Frog watch – 20 + years participating
- Working with school groups – exposing them to the forest/ more like wilderness
- Sharing the park
- Newcomers – like sharing the park features with them, doing things like teaching how to measure the height of a tree – determined that the park may have the tallest tulip poplar in Baltimore County
- Mostly do campfire programs in the evening – had a recent person at a campfire who said it was the first campfire she had ever been at – and she was in her 30’s or 40’s
- Park is a unique resource in the County
- Park provides a fundamental service – forest understanding; landscape of park was extensively disturbed in the 1800s; forest practices still disturbed
- Opportunity to teach how a forest works, introduction to the forest
- People staffing the park are fabulous, support staff is great
- Park is beautiful
- Park provides great site for biking skill practice sessions (field near Lodge)
- Hot summer afternoon, great place for kids
- Summer concerts
- Park location – easy access from I-83 corridor
- Facility – Lodge area – relationship between adequate parking, playground, safe access for activities (biking on field for example), open fields for flexible use (overflow parking, bike drills, play, 5k run)
- Oregon Ridge has the highest concentration of breeding bird species in the County (over 50 species)

- Park is the largest preserved hardwood forest in the County
- Ongoing meadow management in the park – large and contiguous enough to support breeding birds

### **What Is of Concern in the Park?**

- Trail network
  - Certain portions of the trail network have been neglected
  - Many of the existing trails were once logging roads
  - Red Trail is the easiest hiking trail
  - Yellow trail to Baisman Run used by serious hikers
  - Trails do not accommodate all users
  - Unofficial trails are cropping up, particularly on the west and southwestern side – people are heavily using the park and making unofficial trails
  - Currently there are no official trails on the western side of the park
  - Without formal, approved trails on the western side of the park - ATV/ dirt bikes are coming in on the western side, damaging streams, and trails, develop trail systems to deter dirt bikes
  - Green Trail on a Friday – say a man who had draped his suit jacket on a tree and was beating a log – letting frustration out on a tree
  - Trails Conservancy has done a trail assessment (Austin Steo) and proposed work on the Orange Trail to add boardwalk or pavement, cost in range of \$40- \$50k, did not get funded
  - Citizen Generated request to approve trails based on that work was submitted to County but is on hold pending the recommendations of the master plan
- Use of the forest land – short-sighted objectives vs. long-term objectives
  - Don't want painted tree issue again – the visual impact of the painted trees is very large and in the location of the only ADA accessible trail near the Nature Center; painted trees (50-80 large oaks) visually interrupt and is visible from a number of areas within the park, particularly in the winter, non-leaf season
    - Historic story interpretation
    - School training program
    - Visible not just at site of trees
    - See trees from Shawan Road
    - See from clearcut
    - Entrance to parking lot
  - Forest – to the extent the forests are intact, emphasize contiguous forest cover – never change the forested character of the park
- Retention of the interior forest and meadows is important for breeding birds
- Lack of trust between the public and the Recreation and Parks Department and that impact on the development of the master plan. It is very important that the Recreation and Parks Department acknowledge the issue regarding the painted trees – and the disagreement that installation provoked to better ensure that trust can be re-established and put towards the support of the master planning process as the painted tree issue continues to fester.
- Will the master plan actually be used, or will it end up dusty and on a shelf?
- Large concern is that the park is going to be overused and lose its wilderness aspect
  - Concerned with the heavy use of the park, and its ability to accommodate increased users and to police their activity - during the pandemic the parking lots are full almost always, dog waste is left on the trail side
  - Don't make Oregon Ridge a neighborhood park, with accommodation for activities such as a

- place to walk your dog, have a picnic – instead reserve park as a place for woodland
- Zipline – adventure line – is this the best place for it? Lodge? Ski Slope?
- Don't want to see ropes, mountain bikes, horse trails, pickleball in park
- Concerned that park will be gobbled up for athletic fields, recreation use, ziplines
- Overuse shows a demand for nature park – respect the nature value of the park
- Concerned that proposed activities will not be appropriately assessed, and their impact (unintended or not) will extend far beyond the immediate activity area – noise, visual, etc.
- Don't bring more into the existing park – it is a jewel of an existing park, want people to appreciate it for its natural features
- Poor land management of the park
  - Parts of the park are not usable, 1/2" tulip trees and briars prevent use – can't get through (southwest area of the park)
  - Impact on interior forests
    - 2007 logging plans – did not account for the interior forest
    - 300 acres were logged since initially started
    - Brought in a lot of invasives to the western side – stilt grass, silver grass
  - Concerns about Lodge area plans – County plans – trails look down at Lodge
    - View from trail – take a hike in the park to get away from seeing something like the Lodge plans to develop
- Invasives are a big concern – barberry, stilt grass, some places so bad cannot walk through it
- Protection of the extensive park perimeter against illegal use (ATV, dirt bike access, illegal trails), as well as illegal activities within the park such as the weightlifting course with ropes and obstacles set up in park
  - Police have been involved in the past on ATV/ off road bikes – under control for now
  - Neighbors and bikes on trailers – coming in with dirt bikes, will ride on local roads
- Concerns – major assaults on the park in the last 10-15 years
  - Logging was a thinning operation, not a clear cut and disturbed forest interior
  - Painted trees
- Limit – how to educate kids and get them to appreciate what is in the park
  - Do not need ziplines to do this
  - Listen to the birds
- Pandemic did bring people to the park – concern that things look and are rundown, need to fix up trails to keep visitors coming back
- Lack of permanent, open, operable, year round restrooms
- Parking – lot often full on nice weekends, current parking (paved and overflow) limit event attendance
- Pool internal vehicular access and circulation at Lodge and access to Nature Center via bridge (flooding, age of bridge of concern)
- Nature Center
  - Needs to be redone, it is a draw to Oregon Ridge
- Terminology – use of the 'WOW' factor, how can the natural features of the site be recognized and acknowledged as being the only WOW factor needed for park identity?
- Activities added to the park need to be 'real', for example, there is a difference between an artificial climbing wall and a real rock wall

### **What Would be the First Improvement You Would Make to the Park?**

- Trails
  - Upgrade quality, address erosion
  - Develop a Trails Plan by a professional, such as Jeff Marion @ VT
  - Study of existing trails – not acted upon – need to review for shortcomings
  - Add additional trails
  - Look to the southern part of the park
- Invasives management
- Nature Center is very old – improve, remodel, or replace
- Deer management
  - When a section of the forest was cleared to promote oak regeneration, some deer management was done, but it was stopped – the oaks were eaten and now it is a stand of tulip poplars
  - DEP – promoting Forest Management
- Park staffing
  - Nature Center is short-staffed – pandemic increased its visitor count
  - Staff shortage – how to increase number of staff in the park?
- Lighting
  - Reduce amount of lighting at Lodge overnight – too bright, not turned off
- Add permanent restrooms throughout park (particularly to serve playground and grassy fields near Lodge) that are ADA accessible, winterized, and open to the public during park hours, not just for special events; if not possible, maintain porta-potties throughout site
- Enhance and improve ADA accessibility
- Add equipment storage bins for current recreation users
  - Cuba Road fields – equipment boxes and home plates
  - Bike use of grass field near Lodge – equipment box to store course flags
- More transparent reservation system for field and pavilion uses

#### **Who Uses the Park?**

- List provided to Baltimore County by an interviewee, sampling below
  - Green School Center
  - Hopkins Hydrology program
  - Lunch time hikers from Hunt Valley
  - Historians
  - Photographers
  - Volunteers from local businesses
  - Volunteers of all ages – little kids to older folks
  - Regular park programs
  - Campers – day campers focused on nature
  - Occasional overnight campers
- Permits are required for groups of 10 or more
- Large events
  - BSO July concert and fireworks
  - Hot August music festival
  - 5k Walk/Run Kennedy Krieger in April
- Bicycle clubs – practice fields adjacent to the Lodge several times per week



**Who is Missing From the Park?**

- People who can't afford the transportation to get to the park
- People who are not currently comfortable being in the woods - multi-forest, multi-generational fear of the woods
- Women walking alone
- Some not aware of park
- Look at who is using North Pointe State Park – diversity of park goes at that park, especially along the waterfront; high Latino use at waterfront
- Reach out to people on the Nature Center/ Nature Council membership list – postal mail – seasonal – reach out to the people who receive the mailer

**Natural Resources not discussed elsewhere in these notes**

- Orchids
  - Native orchids, pink lady slippers, yellow lady slippers seem to be diminishing
- Fishing/Quarry Pond Lake
  - Lake doesn't overflow as much as it used to
  - Would be concerned about stocking the pond/lake and fish escape into streams
  - Water levels in the lake can be maintained by pump

**Facility Comments**

- Utilities
  - Systems not well mapped, in people's head
  - Intent is to push to more sustainable and energy saving systems
  - County policy on reduction of greenhouse gases – replacement with electricity
  - Potable water
    - No public water on site; all well water, multiple wells throughout park
    - Water system is problematic
      - Water is sometimes not available for flushing permanent restrooms facilities on Lodge side
      - Reports of running out of water at events on Nature Center
    - Public water
      - Available on Shawan Road – serving new church recently constructed; fire hydrants near church tied to public water source?
    - No knowledge of well yields, information may have been documented when the wells were drilled
    - Lodge, Dinner Theater, 3 outbuilding restrooms
      - Lodge has domestic water (well)
      - 4 wells southeast of the Lodge; two wells northwest of the Dinner Theater
        - Water gets pumped to two tanks on top of ski slope – one is 8,000 gallon and the other is 6,000 gallon [different source said storage tank is 2,000 gal at top of ski slope]
        - Water then returns down to Lodge; length of run requires that water be treated
        - Storage tanks require chlorination 3x / week
        - Big desire to convert away from pump up hill and then treatment – requires much staff time
      - Gravity fed from tanks on slope to Lodge and Dinner Theater, 3 outbuilding restrooms

- Plumber said of 4 wells for the Lodge, they only use 2 at a time and they do not get rotated
- If redone, might be incorporated for fire suppression
- Nature Center
  - Well separate from Lodge
  - Nature Center has well, a second well by lake on top of hill feeds 1 yard hydrant
  - Reported that the Nature Council has run out of water during events
- Irrigation
  - No irrigation present in park today [once had at Cuba Road athletic field? No well now there]
  - Fire hydrants – ‘fire trail’
    - Fire Flow tests – Baltimore County does them – need to get information (David to chase)
- Stream water
  - Park has permission to pump water out of the creek with a State permit to fill the quarry and potentially the pond near the Nature Center [REDACTED]; never needed to fill quarry in Jason’s three years of service; pond was dry in summer of 2021
- Underground piping – nothing out of the ordinary, no current problems – although may be reaching end of their life given time of installation
- Septic (no public sewer on site)
  - No back up has occurred in buildings; when it overflows, it overflows into overflow parking area in fields
  - If event/concert will have more than 500 attendees, requires rental by host of sporti-pots (portable restrooms), hand washing stations, and lights for after dark
  - If wells and / or septic system has to be shut down due to capacity issues, the entire event then has to be shut down
  - Lodge
    - Septic drain field by Lodge is on the right side of the driveway – gets soggy
    - One year at large event, septic tank/field overflowed
    - Septic tank size – Lodge is 4,000 gallon
    - Each of the freestanding restroom has two septic tanks, all @ 2,000 gal capacity except for one at 1,500 gal
    - Two septic tanks indicated on drawings northeast of Dinner Theater at 2,000 gal each
    - Lodge Septic system has limitations – events for over 500 attendees are required to bring their own porta-potties, wash stations and cannot use existing facilities on site
  - Comfort stations behind Lodge are winterized October - April
  - Nature Center
    - Separate septic system – one 2,000 gallon tank
- HVAC
  - Nature Center
    - If current Nature Center building stays, it needs ac system – central air
    - The original design of the building was for sustainability but no longer works
    - The wood heater does not work appropriately
    - Window units AC are also dysfunctional
    - If you do nothing else in the master plan, acclimating the building for habitation year-round is critical
  - Lodge

- Window unit for ac in office space
- Limited use during summer months due to lack of ac (not rented for events)
- Electrical
  - No known issues
  - Lighting
    - Parking lot – desire to move to LED lighting here and elsewhere
    - Lighted bollards along driveway that goes back to Nature Center – some have been hit or broken and they are not made any more so cannot be replaced
  - Nature Center
    - Perhaps electrical heat or propane heat or heating oil – unsure
- Gas
  - Lodge
    - Service supplied to Lodge and Dinner Theater
- Utility pipeline
  - Big grassy areas - Area A and Area C are utility easements (gas)
  - Columbia Gas/Electric/Cable/Fiber Optic/Williams Trans Continental
- Ski lift equipment has been removed from ski slope

### **Circulation and Parking**

- Entry Drive
  - Lodge drive single entry/exit
    - Need second vehicular entry / exit
    - Current intersection of entry drive and Beaver Dam has poor sight distances when leaving park, utility within fence blocks view of southbound traffic
- Parking
  - Lodge
    - 300 hard/paved parking spaces
    - 7 ADA spaces (not clear if included in 300 count or in addition to 300)
    - Lodge uses grass fields on either side of paved lot for overflow parking for big events
      - Caveat is that the use of the grass lots is weather dependent – the one on the right/uphill side can get very muddy, very wet, vehicles get stuck
      - If a 5k is being held, can't use the grass field for parking as it is needed for the course
      - MIAA stopped coming because of parking limitations on site – needed to accommodate 20 buses and 500 cars, very much liked the course itself
      - BSO now caps attendance at their July event at 4,500-5,000 attendees, had gone as high as 7,500 in past years, but shuttle system was not effective
      - Parking is significant issue, any event at 4,000 – 5,000 person range maxes out on-site parking – need to be able to park 1,200 – 1,500 cars on site (figure 3 attendees per car)
      - Shuttle
        - Offsite parking and shuttle has not worked for some event hosts – closet large parking area available offsite is at State Fairgrounds – 20 minutes away one way
        - Some events successfully have used shuttle to Light Rail station
  - Nature Center
    - 60 parking spaces (need to check if this includes new spaces that are not paved by the lake)
    - 27 spaces at nearby lake

- Mass transit
  - Light Rail is ½ to ¾ mile away from The Lodge, but is not connected by a shuttle or a sidewalk or a trail to the park
- Bicycles
  - Bikers entering the park are usually not visiting the park itself, but using the park's parking lot to unload their bikes to ride the nearby roads
- Roads and drives
  - Historical well house @ Nature Center – issue w well house
  - Fixing the access bridge to the nature center is key
    - Constantly worried about flooding and getting in and out of the Nature Center (when bridge floods, there is no alternative access to the Nature Center
    - Bridge @ / to Nature Center has major wash out on side, dumps on asphalt; floods frequently
    - Bridge needs new abutment
  - Culvert near Oregon Grill
  - Road access to current Nature Center is dangerous; close to corner of Shawan and Beaver Dam
- Trails
  - There is a trail committee working on rerouting proposals
    - Yellow trail has four stream crossings – want to bridge with logs across streams and without using equipment – need permission from County
    - Blue Trail has had some modifications made to it to remove its unintentional function as a drainage ditch
  - Trail management is all done by volunteers
  - Need to improve trails – been on hold waiting for the master plan – several citizens generated projects
  - Trail near the stream constantly floods
  - Would be nice to reroute and or make with better drainage
  - Marble Trail is not in great condition
- ADA Accessibility
  - Could use paved accessible area by the stage
  - Restrooms not easily accessible
  - Consider using temporary ADA accessible path materials for events

### Activities in Park

- General Park Attendance
  - No traffic or pedestrian counters
  - Baltimore County sends a number ahead to plug in for upcoming calendar
  - 31,000 had been annual attendance count placeholder
  - Daily walkers are big park user – assumption is if they are daily visitors, they likely live nearby, perhaps in Cockeysville (no data available); they park at the Lodge lot and walk
- Attempt in the past to make park totally revenue dependent – not successful
- No pricing policy for parks and recreation in place
- Fields on Cuba Road
  - Mostly used by Cockeysville Recreation Council for adult softball M-F (fields are not in high demand, can't use both fields at the same time as they overlap)

- Lutherville Timonium girls' softball uses them on weekends for practice fields
- Used in the past for flag football, but encountered issues with parking (only about 20 cars fit in the lot) and perhaps behavior – no longer a permitted user for fields
- Sports leagues are drawn from nearby surroundings or Baltimore; Hereford expressed initial interest in Cuba Road fields, but determined distance was too far (could also be unexpressed that field conditions do not make long travel worthwhile)
- Facilities do not support hosting tournaments
- Lodge
  - Lodge Use
    - Big events such as special ed activity with all special ed children from County assembling at park for the day to do art projects and other activities (unrelated to Nature Center)
    - Big fields used for parking
    - Pancake Breakfast held at Lodge – Biggest fundraiser for the ORNC
    - ORNC once hosted a speaker at the Lodge – Tom Horton from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation
    - Hosts 1 event per day
    - Lodge use books up to a year in advance
    - Renters like the Lodge for the nostalgia factor
    - Often rented for Quinceanera parties or Sweet 16 parties in months when AC is not needed
    - Large events – Lodge serves as green room for performers, is not open to the public
    - Lack of AC can make Lodge uncomfortable when serving as staging area and staff area for large summer events
  - Capacity capped at Lodge area via limitations on parking and infrastructure
    - Summer – no AC in Lodge, so facility not rented for groups
    - Picnic pavilions not rented in winter – too cold
    - Summer – picnic pavilions are full
    - Winter – Lodge is full
  - Lodge outdoor areas – geography
    - Area A – hilly grass area to right of concert pavilion
    - Area B – paved parking area
    - Area C – grassy area
  - Competitors to Lodge rentals
    - Indoor facility such as local hotels with air conditioned ballroom; events at the State Fairgrounds; lots of opportunities for similarly scaled events and event spaces in Hunt Valley
    - Main competition:
      - Coppermine Field House – private sports with indoor/outdoor facilities
      - Other regional parks
  - Large events at Lodge area
    - Do not have data on who attends as each event sells their own tickets, and the event is marketed separately from the park
    - Split between attendees over 500 and under 500
      - Over 500 attendees – term is Licensed Agreement, goes through the Office of Law
        - 1 big event per month - occasions over 500 – 7 per year, no more frequent



- Drama – facility was leased for about \$1/ year with the understanding tenant would cover repairs and do maintenance on the building
- Picnic Pavilions
  - High demand for picnic pavilions throughout the County
  - Oregon Ridge has to turn away a lot of potential renters
    - Might be higher price – electric / plug in/ larger capacity / can bring in food truck on Lodge site in conjunction with pavilion rental
  - Lodge Picnic Pavilions
    - Rent 1 per day each pavilion, cannot rent multiple time slots for the same pavilion
    - 20 years ago – did 2 rentals per pavilion a day, ran into problems with caterer staying over, trash
    - Don't rent picnic pavilions when Lodge itself is rented due to limitations in parking, water, and septic
    - Large events rent entire area – lodge and picnic pavilions near lodge (not the ones related to the Nature Center), usually use the Lodge facility itself for the event workers staging area – not open to the public
  - Nature Center Pavilions (funded and leased by ORNC)
    - Rented separately – two pavilions by quarry lake cannot be rented at the same time due to parking limitations; also, not rented for full capacity, again due to parking limitations
    - Pavilion near Nature Center and historic buildings – currently not rented due to COVID, used for outdoor education activities
- Concert Shell and Stage
  - Covered with permanent lighting
  - Good facility
  - Orchestra playing outdoors is always amplified, so acoustics of the stage not an issue
  - Stage is elevated for a County park system scaled stage, it is not a performing arts facility at the level of the Ag Center across the street or meant to be a venue 52-weeks out of the year
  - Stage is not physically connected to the Lodge
    - BSO connects a temporary tent connecting the stage to the Lodge
  - Would like an easier way to rig lighting
  - Bigger is better
  - Vendor brings in own lights and sound
  - Need more power at stage
- Restrooms
  - Free standing restrooms (3 separate buildings) on hillside above Lodge
    - Open for pavilion rentals
    - Vandalism issue in restrooms – gloves put down toilets, broken sinks
    - Infrequently open to the general public, never without onsite staff available
    - Not winterized, closed for winter season
    - Not ADA accessible – walk uphill from Lodge on grass
  - Lodge has interior restroom open to the public when Lodge is open and staffed, usually until 4 PM
  - Do provide ADA accessible port a potties seasonally – April 1
- Nature Center
  - Concerned that access to nature center from parking is not proper, not ADA accessible, concerned about ADA trail and also exhibits

- Wayfinding
  - Many people arrive at the parking lot and aren't sure which way to go
  - Wayfinding in the park for nature center and trails is not clear
  - Nature Center entrance and signage poor
- Building
  - Current Nature Center
    - Roof needs attention
    - Too dark
    - Not air conditioned
    - Mammals (vermin?) in center
    - Too small
    - Lots of people like that the current center is tucked in the woods, you can watch birds, you can see nature, but there are many problems with the current Center
    - Hot in summer, no AC
    - Not enough room for activities
    - Need more staff
    - Not visible when arriving, hard to find
    - Current facility is old and needs help
    - Interior restroom is the only permanent restroom on the Nature Center side of the park – open to the public until 5 PM
    - Pest Control
      - The building suffers from rodent infestation
      - The county strategy for dealing with rodents is to poison them which doesn't align with our nature center philosophy of sustainability
      - So again, basic habitation means making sure unwanted pests are not in the building
    - Animal Care
      - Is one of our key missions in the center and presently the way we must care and feed the animals is not the most efficient and safe
      - We don't really have separate areas to take care of animals vs. take care of the building.
      - So, we are sharing sinks for cleaning tanks and cleaning floors
      - We also don't have enough space for proper storage of animal material; "our quality of care for animals is their quality of life" - if we are not caring for the animals correctly, then we aren't doing our basic task
    - General Classroom
      - We currently can only have one age camp per week because we have to maintain public access
      - We are constantly juggling school groups, camps, and the general public
      - Would also allow birthday parties to come back
      - A general classroom expansion would need sinks and proper storage.
    - Internal Storage
      - In general, we do not have enough for all the internal items we use between programming and animal care
    - External Storage
      - We need a shed and/or protected areas to store our tractors, canoes, tools, and other items, right now most stuff is sitting outside
  - Remodeled existing Nature Center
    - Provide better access to the building



- Better emphasis that there is a nature center there
- Better visibility as the Center is hard to find from the parking lot
- Art room
- Storage space
- Science lab
- Better signage
- Limited size for programs – to extend programs need more space and staff
- Current parking lots packed on weekends
- At least do something to make the current Nature Center a show piece
- IF we are taking any redesign of building, contemplating different design for tanks including back of the house vs. front of the house care would be critical
- We really need one more 40-to-60-person classroom in order to really expand our programming
- It would be nice to display artwork in the Nature Center – have a gallery for children’s artwork, photography, artists (botanic illustrations)
- New Nature Center
  - Example of a 21<sup>st</sup> century building – with LEED, rainwater capture – examples
  - Potential site for new Nature Center – by the lake would be a lovely place, overlooking the lake – would still have to do something about the road in
  - Look to
    - Robinson Nature Center in Howard County, although too big for ORP it is top quality and design says we care about the environment
    - Irvine in Owings Mills, privately operated and financed
    - Garrison Forest Road in Baltimore County – large track of meadow/forested/wetland – good model for woodland garden, they have a nice one
      - All built with environment in mind – green roofs; compostable toilets; not huge, blends into surroundings
    - Arboretum – compostable toilets
    - Letchworth Park in New York, fairly new
    - Cylburn Arboretum – ecological @ Vollmer Visitor and Education Center in Baltimore City – compostable toilets, woodland trails and garden trails, gardens, nice signage
    - Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in PA – blended in with surroundings, compostable toilets for 30 years
    - Kemp – compostable toilets
    - Chesapeake Bay Foundation HQ
    - Nixon Park Nature Center – 5922 Nixon Drive, York, PA 17402
    - Howard County Conservancy Mt. Pleasant 10520 Old Frederick Road, Woodstock, MD 21163
    - Carry Murray Nature Classrooms
    - Baltimore Aquarium
    - Baltimore Zoo

- Robinson Nature Center in Howard County
  - Other counties' nature centers
- Nature Center Picnic Pavilions
  - 3 picnic pavilions – do not know where users come from, would have to go back to the individual contracts (will provide data for Margaret)
  - No food trucks, don't go with rentals / pavilion
  - Pavilion adjacent to buildings has not been rented the past 2 years – used for outdoor programming for Nature Center instead; 100 person capacity
  - Pavilions were added in 2017 -2018 (2 @ 100 person capacity - one at lake and one near buildings at Nature Center)
  - Wonderful for programming outdoor events; don't have staffing or parking for more
  - Pavilion near lake – new; 100 person capacity
  - Woodland pavilion near lake – older; 30 person capacity
  - Can't rent both 100 person capacity pavilions at the same time due to parking limitations
  - Generally, only permit groups of up to 75 people to rent large pavilion near lake
  - Pavilion use of parking absorbs parking needed for casual park users and Nature Center visitors
  - 4 hour rental block of time; try to stagger pavilion rentals so not occurring at the same time
  - Nature Council sets pricing for pavilions, pricing was set before Jessica arrived; pricing is a conversation to have with the Director and the Council
  - Not really excited about using a new pavilion instead of developing expanded programming space
  - Challenge to make functional even if an outdoor pavilion is enclosed and has a protected area (e.g., storage, sink, power); issue is space is still not climate controlled which is needed supply storage; concerns regarding potential vandalism
  - Focus is on using the pavilions for outdoor education, not as a revenue stream
- Nature Center playgrounds
  - Nature Play Space – popular area; highly desirable amenity; did not add stump jumps – concerned about risk; similar nature play spaces scattered around county; no longer rented with pavilion rental – made clear that this playground is not available for those renting pavilion – overwhelmed use when formerly linked
    - Children's playground at Nature Center is very successful
    - All natural materials
    - Want that to be preserved
    - Natural structures added to it
    - Manipulable playground materials
    - Would like a well-designed vs. ad hoc designed nature playground, believes it could be a very important addition, in the manner of the natural playground currently at the Nature Center
  - Tot Lot across from center – traditional playground with slides
  - Tot Lot near lake – artificial natural equipment (plastic log)
- Nature Center restrooms
  - No restroom at lake pavilions; County puts in port a potty April 1
  - Distance from Nature Center to lake is about ½ to ¾ mile walk

- Nature Center users
  - People drive to the Nature Center and then hike, use the bathroom and may or may not also use the Nature Center itself
  - Nature Center? Bulk of membership seems to be clustered in zip codes beginning with 210, 211, and 212 – central to northern Baltimore County
  - Bulk of mailings go to 3 zip codes – 85%-90%
  - School users - heavy Nature Center programming attracts school field trips from Baltimore City public schools, private and home schoolers, Baltimore County based schools
  - Families with children using programs – seem to be coming from geographically nearby neighborhoods
  - Reisterstown, Cockeysville, Timonium tend to be the communities that the park draws visitors from
- Nature Center Programs
  - Zero waste program for pavilion is funded by Nature Council – Council provides paper plates and utensils for all pavilion rentals on the Nature Center side of park to allow for compost/zero waste participation; contractor hauling costs funded by Nature Council
  - Jessica oversees program schedule; schedule is set up seasonally and usually timed to be published with the Council's newsletter
  - Priority is given for registration if a member of the Council
  - New programs come out 3-4 times a year
  - Asks staff for program proposals
  - Staff comes up with programs for schools – example is the watershed/mayfly program
  - Volunteers also lead programs
  - Pricing is based on materials costs; does not include staffing costs unless the program exceeds normal staffing and then the increase in staffing costs is added to program cost; Baltimore City schools have come via NPS Trust program – 'nature education', other
  - Programs are discounted in pricing for members; also offer free cost or low cost options for participation
  - Large community events
    - Maple sugaring (Feb for two weekends)
    - Honey festival
    - Music in the Woods
    - Parking is an issue
    - Events are mostly held outside so if it rains not large enough indoor space for people
    - Do some events with shuttles – related to Lodge though, not for Nature Center program
    - Occasionally there are competing events at the Lodge and the Nature Center
  - Audubon comes out and does bird walks, most activities are family oriented – can see them on the Wild Apricot program list
  - Many Home School programs
  - Trail renovation
  - There is a bond for the restoration garden and the trails; if County would let ORNC

- get going and not wait for Master Plan, could start to make trail improvements with volunteers and get garden going
- Woodland Garden Restoration – have \$100,000 in hand via bond and grant and have an area picked out – on hold for master plan
  - Will share proposed location with ESA
  - First is to install deer fencing and remove invasives – found area with minimal lesser celandine up the hill above the Nature Center – and develop design plan with a landscape architect
  - Intent to plant in spring 2023
  - \$50,000 is earmarked for the garden
  - \$50,000 state grant
  - Elaine and Ralph – citizen generated request for the garden – Winnie writing it up – then gets submitted to County for approval
- School groups returning (COVID) on April 5 – first day in the park
  - 2 school buses – Patterson Park in Baltimore City
  - Five different programs – teacher picks programs, they are all aligned with school curriculum
  - Field trips whole fall and whole spring
  - Creek to stream program
  - 40-60 children at a time – this group was fifth graders
  - Naturalist will talk for about an hour about the Chesapeake Bay, pollution as an introduction, then volunteers take groups of 10 children – children pretend they are a scientist and, on this day, looked for macroinvertebrates – found may fly larvae, beetle larvae
- Have much respect for Backyard Base Camp – Itea Wells, with farm animals and camping
- Nature Council – supports many programs for outdoor education
  - Dedicated volunteers
  - Camping for families
  - Night walks to hear owls
  - Many nature programs in the park could not run without the volunteers
  - About 20 volunteers that go through the trail guide training every year
- Relationship between Nature Center and Nature Council
  - Oregon Ridge Nature Council formed in 1981-1982 before there was a building for the Nature Center, built in 1983
  - Staff and Council have a good working relationship; Nature Council has been very generous to the park; many ideas come from staff; Nature Council is able to extend the County's budget and investment in the Nature Center
  - Nature Council meets monthly Sept – June, except for July and August
  - Jessica attends Nature Council meetings; works on their budget, makes asks for the park
  - Staffing for summer camps paid for by the Nature Council
  - If camps and pavilion rentals are growing, can add to fund request
  - Roles are outlined in the Nature Council Bylaws – maybe on website
- Budget for Nature Center
  - Budgeting process changed in past year – much better and now better able to monitor

- Base current year budget on past budget
- Salaries for permanent staff included
- Oversee BP Leadership employees
- Office supplies/operation supplies
- Separate budget not under NC control for mobile phones, other items
- Budget is digitally available
- July 1 – June 30 is fiscal year
- Justin Robey is Management Analyst and can answer other questions on budget process
- Nature Center Staffing
  - Jessica – permanent staff full time
  - Naturalist 1 – permanent
  - Administrative Assistant – part time permanent
  - Currently hiring for Permanent part time position
  - Currently hiring for Activity Specialist 2
  - 10-12 part time weekend staff – at will – schedule monthly basis
  - 3 seasonal staff for summer
  - Ben Porter could expand on how allocate positions
  - Part time staff for weekend – Jessica recruits and hires
  - Part time staff can move between sites within the park – just need to fill in a form for determining funding source
  - Jessica manages volunteers for the Nature Council
  - Site activities and programs would be limited without volunteers – pull in trail guides from volunteer pool
  - RPSS statistical database – notes amount of volunteers/ number of hours spent; data goes back to 2018
  - Jessica has actual numbers – spectators/ chaperones/ program attendees/ volunteers/ work hours
- Eagle Scouts do regular projects
  - Floating pier in pond (it sank), bridges
- Example of Environmental Stewardship – paid staff
- No history of AmeriCorps staff – do work in Baltimore County, 7 or 8 years ago AmeriCorps did Gypsy Moth work in park
- Need for expanded staff to take on maintenance and natural areas of the park
- No Natural Resource Manager on staff
- Right now, \$\$ an issue – volunteer driving due to staff size
- Reservations / sign ups
  - Council's website – where picnic pavilion or event at Nature Center requested
  - During COVID, all reservations and requests were done via email – prior all had been done by phone and paper sheets
  - Group picnic pavilion -new – came online since COVID
  - Admin staff part time person does all scheduling and calendar development
- Baltimore County has 5 or 6 nature center sites across the County; when an inquiry is received, suggestion that inquirer uses a site/facility near them
  - Lake Roland (lease from City, County money; park with Nature Center and naturalist program)

- Cromwell Valley Park with Willow Grove Nature Center
- Marshy Point Nature Center
- Other nature center or nature focused sites nearby
- Historic buildings
  - History of the park – historical buildings – recently redone, docents talk about mining and logging history
  - Old buildings by Nature Center require regular maintenance
  - Peter Goff house
    - White color
    - Had mold issue; had to install a small split system to control humidity and moisture; good amount of drywall had to be removed
    - Repairs would be stopped; likely problem began with a roof leak
    - No running water in house – kitchen not plumbed
      - Historical Features in Park
        - Former story of mining location is disappearing through non maintenance and overgrowth
        - Only thing still functioning is the Spring House - need to decide if this is going to go away as a focus or stay
        - There are people who come who are interested in that history
- Cuba Road Fields
  - Two fields, diamonds
    - Field 1
      - 270-280 foot line; potentially could hit into Field 2; no longer allowed to use Field 1 and Field 2 simultaneously for adult softball; can be used for adult softball on one field and youth softball on another simultaneously
      - Field 1 used for Youth softball on M, T, W, T, F evenings during girls fastpitch softball season March – June, with Travel teams using field for practice through November
    - Field 2
      - Used for Adult softball T, W, T evenings and M and F for girl's fast pitch during Adult season April 1 through late September or early October
      - No practice for adults, usually two games a week with 10 people on a team
    - Both fields used for travel teams/ practice or sometimes adult games on weekends
  - Field conditions
    - Pretty playable, serve as backup fields for games when other fields not playable, drains quickly
  - Field demand
    - CRC (Cockeysville Recreation Council) could not host as many players without two fields available
    - CRC would not have enough practice sites
    - Adult use bottomed out about 420 players about 4-5 years ago
    - Youth use has been growing
  - Past use of site
    - Large area north of parking area once used for flag football, soccer, fields were striped
    - Actual diamond fields were striped for rectangular use in past
    - Some pickup activities – Stretching on the Diamond, frisbee
  - Field improvements
    - Rotate Field 1 by 15 degrees NW to remove overlap between fields

- Add field boxes for equipment storage behind backstops
- Provide permanent home plates
- Add third field on terrace of strip of land near Cuba Road

#### Activities NOT allowed at park

- BMX, mountain biking, and trail bike riding not allowed at Oregon Ridge Park; available at                     
  - Benjamin Banneker

#### Park Maintenance

- Maintenance is not done through Department of Parks and Recreation, provided by County maintenance
- Utility corridor maintenance all done by utility companies/ maintenance easements
- Work records – Jason can pull the records for the Lodge, Dinner Theater (walls are starting to warp in Dinner Theater now)
- Ball Fields at Cuba Road
  - Natural slope and grade
  - Erosion an issue at the fields and for the whole park
  - When there are heavy rains, fields wash out
  - Cuba Road needs swale along tree line
  - Fields at Cuba Road need significantly more maintenance than other fields due to damp and wet conditions, drainage patterns
  - No need for ball diamonds – need parking lot and rectangular field
  - 15 – 20 minutes north of park there is a turf field at the HS
  - New turf field 10 – 20 minutes south of park at County Home
- Trail maintenance
  - Primarily done by volunteers
  - County crews cut large tree fall off of trail, do not do regular trail maintenance
- Grass
  - Consider repurposing areas of turf
  - Ski slope gets cut on weekly basis
  - Could cut as much as 4 times a year instead
  - Replant woodlands for stormwater management
- Ski slope
  - Used for sledding
  - July 4<sup>th</sup> – attendees sit on hillside (Annie source)
  - Work out group uses it in the morning – runs arm to arm (not single file) up 200 yards or similar
  - Needs erosion control
- Former ski slope management
  - Mowed weekly
  - Gas pipeline in same corridor [aside – does not appear to be that way on GIS – EL]
  - Fire personnel runs the hills
  - Others run as a ‘wall’, not single file
  - Used by various groups
  - Event seating takes place on hillside, serves as viewing stand
- Trees – grass area – maintain

- Erosion and Stormwater Management
  - Around parking lot
  - Mess of erosion at Nature Center side swale under parking
  - Failure of existing infrastructure @ Nature Center
  - Stormwater management and erosion trail issue throughout the park
  - Lots of erosion issues on trails – rerouted some trails for that reason
  - ORNC has plans to reroute some of the trails
- Maintenance Facility and Storage Needs at Oregon Ridge
  - ATV housed for park operations – need storage space
- ATVs in park – not a problem
- Playgrounds
  - Two large playgrounds in park – at Lodge and at Nature Center side of park
    - Nature Center side near road through gate – typical park playground, not visible and not used; consider relocating closer to Nature Center
    - Separate ‘native/natural playground’ at Nature Center
  - Playground surfacing
    - Preference is for use of fibar, not poured in place
    - Current surface at large playground is poured in place – has warranty for 10 years unless it receives ‘high use’; vendor says will last 1-15 years in high traffic area – not been experience
    - Replace fibar 3-4 times a year, not an issue if there is adequate drainage
    - Could consider use of tile – plug and play, but very costly per sf
    - Fibar is supposedly ADA accessible, but not always the case (requires maintenance)
  - Angel Park playground equipment – mis use – only lasted one year after installation
- Maintenance issue – especially volunteer built, or funded projects get installed and then volunteers are not able to keep up with maintenance

### Sources of Additional Information

- Save Shawan
- Historic information is already printed
- Drafts of old documents
- E-bird – 263 birds
- People to talk to
  - Dr. Heidi Schreiber-Pan – Founder at Center for Nature Informed Therapy - in Towson
  - Bradley Ashton – retired from Baltimore City YMCA, Maryland Mountain Club – regularly taking kids from Baltimore City to maybe Oregon Ridge but definitely Cromwell Heights
  - Barbara Hopkins at BCGA Green Alliance /Neighbor Space Executive Director
- Where to find past studies and documents (list in questions)
  - Local universities have used the park for research and student field trips – well-preserved streams
  - Baltimore Bird Club will have good data
  - Audubon Bird Club
  - Speak with Jessie about deer management, vernal pools, and other studies
  - ORNC can provide information if needed
  - Pond has been sampled by past studies (Elaine can get info if needed)
  - Baisman Run – national scale – model stream



- Budget source – how is park budget set up?
  - Overall budget is divided into sections and regions
  - NEAP – Annie’s section
  - Revenue generating facility
  - Talk with Justin Robey

**Other Concerns**

- Concern about statement ‘no park plan in place yet’
  - There was a park plan developed internally by County as a park plan in 2018 – included horse trails on the western side of the park
  - In the past, the County has done these things before going public
- Concern that staff is being censored
- Consultant contract
  - Missing 7-8 pages not in the contract (EL explained those were the proprietary rates and hours)
    - Recreation services mentioned 6 times
    - No mention of education, land stewardship, ecology, education
    - What is the task of the master plan – only thing mentioned in contract is recreational activities