

DATE: December 5, 2019, Updated October 8, 2020
TO: City of Gladstone
FROM: ECONorthwest, Laura Marshall & Melissa Carson
SUBJECT: FINAL - MEMORANDUM ON THE FEASIBILITY OF A FEE AT MELDRUM BAR PARK

1 Executive Summary

This memorandum contains the results of a feasibility analysis to estimate and describe the costs, revenues, and other considerations resulting from implementing a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park. A parking fee could be implemented in a variety of ways. We consider three primary scenarios for a parking fee: 1) a parking fee charged to vehicles towing boats, 2) a parking fee charged only in the boat parking area, and 3) a parking fee charged in the entire park. To inform the revenue projections we compiled information on total visitation and visitation by vehicles towing boats. We also perform a competitor analysis of nearby facilities with river access to evaluate the degree of potential substitution away from Meldrum Bar Park if a parking fee is implemented.

Trailer Parking Fee: Implementing a parking fee for only vehicles towing trailers likely would not provide enough revenue to cover the associated expenses of implementing a parking fee.

Parking Fee in the Boating Area: Charging for parking in the boating area of Meldrum Bar Park could provide sufficient revenues to cover costs. However, there is moderate likelihood of visitors parking elsewhere in the Park to avoid the fee. Because revenue margins could be relatively small if visitation decline is significant, there is still a risk of net revenue not being positive, especially in the initial years.

General Parking Fee: Charging a parking fee in Meldrum Bar Park for all vehicles has positive net revenues at all fee levels and under all visitation conditions.

Other factors that could affect the feasibility of implementing a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park are Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) requirements that would apply to charging fees to recreational boaters. Revenues from fees charged to recreational boaters, such as a trailer parking fee, could only be used for projects that benefit boaters. Some OSMB grant levels would also decrease with a fee greater than \$2. A parking fee would also need to be reviewed by OSMB prior to implementation and deemed reasonable.

In addition to the OSMB requirements, another consideration is the effect of a parking fee on particular user groups, such as low-income or disabled visitors who may not be as able to substitute to alternative sites. In addition to that consideration, there are two other strategies that should be vetted prior to implementing a parking fee. The first is to consider a parking fee in the context of future Master Plan updates, such as roadway changes that could reduce the ability for users to park elsewhere to avoid paying. The second strategy that should be

considered is to contact nearby parks with boat ramps and river access to implement a fee together. This type of coordination on a parking fee would reduce substitution and not disadvantage Gladstone users relative to other locations.

2 Overview of Issue

The City of Gladstone owns and maintains Meldrum Bar Park, a prominent park and boat ramp on the Willamette River. Operation, maintenance, and services of Meldrum Bar Park depend on funding from the City of Gladstone. In previous years, Gladstone parks were subsidized by enterprise funds. In order to operate within budget constraints, there has been a decrease in park spending and an associated decline in the quantity and quality of amenities at Meldrum Bar Park. Without additional funds, infrastructure and services at Meldrum Bar Park are likely to continue to be underfunded.

To help abate the decline in park funding, the Park and Recreation Board of Gladstone has proposed implementing a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park. A parking fee could help make Meldrum Bar Park more financially self-sufficient by generating revenue from parking permits. The revenue could then be spent on park services and operation and maintenance. These expenditures are currently funded by the City of Gladstone's general fund.

ECONorthwest was contacted to identify the financial feasibility and implications of a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park. Specifically, this memorandum seeks to answer the following questions:

- What would the annual costs of enforcement, fee collection, and administration of the parking fee be?
- What would the annual revenues of the parking fee be based on the future demand for Meldrum Bar Park and amount of the fee?
- How would implementation of a fee at Meldrum Bar Park impact state grant funding for the City of Gladstone?

To answer these questions this memorandum begins with a demand and competitor analysis to inform how a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park could impact visitation at the site. Next, we estimate revenues and costs associated with different fee levels to determine the financial feasibility of a parking fee. Lastly, we discuss other considerations associated with a parking fee and summarize our findings.

2.1 Meldrum Bar Park Description

Meldrum Bar Park is located in Gladstone, Oregon and provides access to the Willamette River. The Park spans over 85 acres and has amenities in addition to river access including baseball and soccer fields, picnic tables, a walking path, community gardens, and a wetland area. The park has over 150 parking spots open year-round as well as overflow parking areas that can be used during periods of high visitation. Entrance to Dahl Beach, a 15.33-acre City of Gladstone

riverfront park on the Clackamas River, is accessed via Meldrum Bar Park Road. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of Meldrum Bar Park.

Figure 1. Location of Meldrum Bar Park



Source: Google Maps

This analysis focuses on the northwest corner of Meldrum Bar Park designed to serve recreational boaters and that includes the bar which can be used by visitors depending on water levels. Amenities in this area include public restrooms, a boat dock, two boat ramps, multiple river access locations along the bar itself, boat trailer parking, and general parking. There are approximately 40 boat-trailer parking spots, six general parking spots, and one ADA spot. Visitors also park on the bar. During peak seasons it is common to see both boat parking and general parking overflow on Meldrum Bar Park Road.

3 Market Analysis

In accordance with the law of demand, as a price increases the quantity demanded of that good decreases. Implementing a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park could decrease visitation to the Park because of the price increase. Generally, if an individual is considering substituting away from Meldrum Bar Park, they will weigh the trade-off between visiting a different park and

staying and paying for parking at Meldrum Bar Park.¹ Depending on the price of parking at Meldrum Bar Park, visitors are likely to weigh some of these questions and others:

- What is the probability of incurring a penalty for not paying the parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park?
- Does the substitute site have a parking fee?
- Does the substitute site have equal or better fishing/recreation opportunities?
- Does the substitute site have equal or better amenities?
- What is the water depth at the substitute site?
- How far away is the substitute site?
- How busy is the substitute site?

To understand the market for river access near Meldrum Bar Park we conducted a competitor analysis. This investigation includes documenting parking fees charged at similar, nearby facilities. Using this information, we then discuss how a parking fee could affect visitation at Meldrum Bar Park if users substitute to other sites and visitation declines.

3.1.1 Competitor Analysis

In Oregon, there are approximately 1,500 river access points for recreational boaters, most of which are free.² In the Portland-Metro region and nearby surrounding area, there are at least 12 boat ramps which provide public access to a major river. Major rivers considered in for the competitor analysis include the Willamette River, Clackamas River, and Tualatin River. Four of the 12 public boat ramps are located on the Clackamas River, six are located on the Willamette River, and two are located on the Tualatin River. All 12 public boat launches are within 20 miles of Meldrum Bar Park and are a viable substitution option for recreational fishermen and boaters. However, each boat ramp offers different site-specific conditions, such as number of other recreators, water depth, fishing quality, land-based fishing opportunities, restrooms, etc.

Four of the 12 public boat ramps that we identified as a viable substitution option to Meldrum Bar Park currently impose a parking fee. Figure 2 shows the location of these 12 public boat launches in the greater Portland-Metro area and Table 1 describes their fee status.

Three of the four boat launches that charge parking fees are along the Clackamas River: Milo McIver State Park, Carver Park, and Barton Park. Milo McIver State Park imposes a \$5 day use parking fee. Both Carver Park and Barton Park charge a \$6 parking fee and an additional \$2 boat parking fee. The only boat ramp with a parking fee along the Willamette River is the Boones Ferry Boat Launch located near Wilsonville and managed by Clackamas County. The

¹ The responsiveness of a change in demand to a change in price is known as the price elasticity of demand. If there is a positive cross-price elasticity of demand between Meldrum Bar Park and available substitutes then a price increase at Meldrum Bar Park will increase demand at substitute sites.

² Personal communication with Oregon State Marine Board.

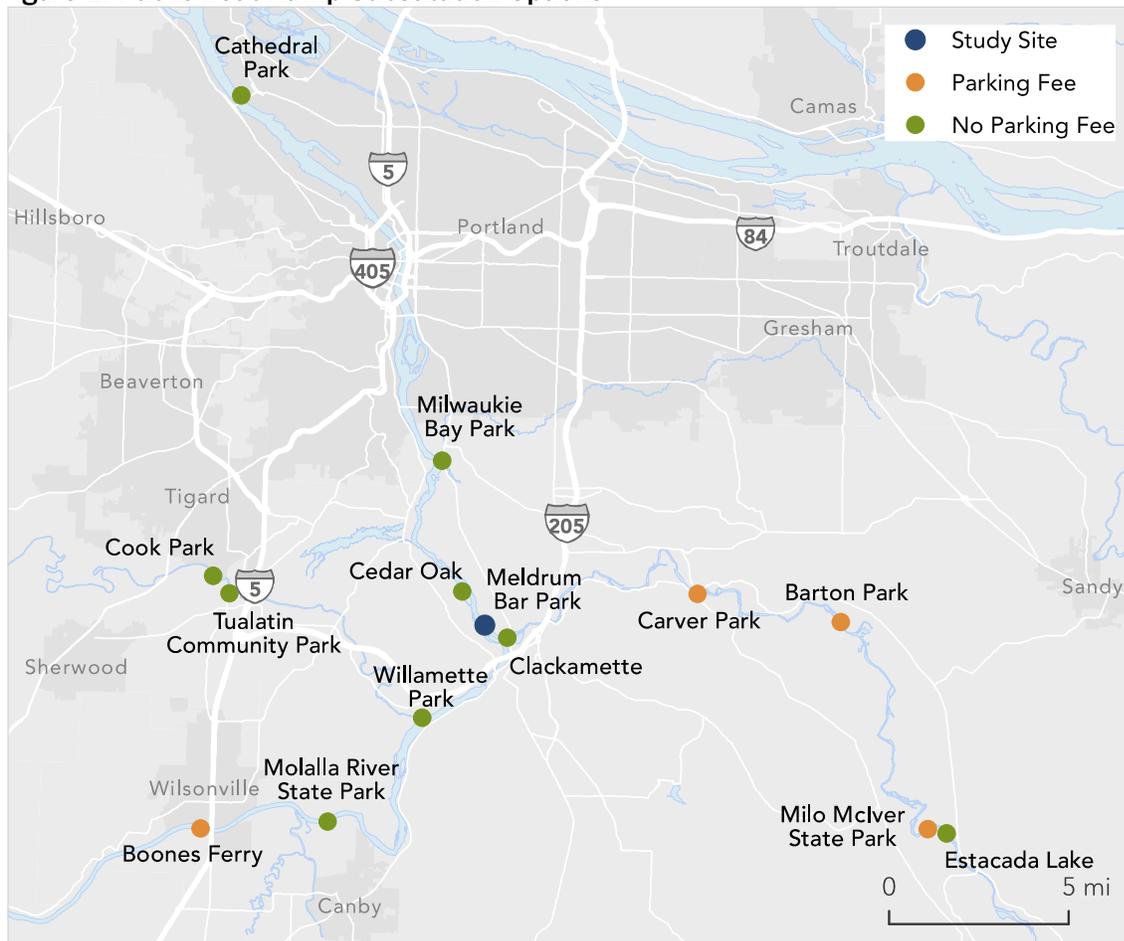
Boones Ferry Boat Launch is also home to the private moorage facility, the Boones Ferry Marina and Boating Club. The Boones Ferry Boat Launch charges a \$6 parking fee and an additional \$2 boat parking fee.

Table 1. Fees Charged at Nearby River Access Parks

Park	River	Management	Parking Fee?	Fee Amount
Cedar Oak Boat Ramp	Willamette	City of West Linn	X	
Willamette Park and Bernet Boat Ramp	Willamette	City of West Linn	X	
Milwaukie Bay Park	Willamette	City of Milwaukie	X	
Molalla River State Park	Willamette	Oregon State Parks	X	
Boones Ferry Boat Launch	Willamette	Clackamas County	✓	\$6 Car and \$2 Boat
Cathedral Park	Willamette	Portland Parks & Rec	X	
Tualatin Community Park Boat Ramp	Tualatin	City of Tualatin	X	
Cook Park Boat Ramp	Tualatin	City of Tualatin	X	
Clackamette Boat Ramp	Clackamas	Oregon City	X	
Carver Park	Clackamas	Clackamas County	✓	\$6 Car and \$2 Boat
Barton Park	Clackamas	Clackamas County	✓	\$6 Car and \$2 Boat
Milo McIver State Park	Clackamas	Oregon State Parks	✓	\$5 Car
Estacada Lake Boat Ramp	Clackamas	Oregon State Parks	X	

Source: ECONorthwest

Figure 2: Public Boat Ramp Substitution Options



Source: ECONorthwest

Because three of the four substitution sites that currently charge a parking fee are on the Clackamas River and not the Willamette River, the quality of fishing and type of recreation experience could differ. Popular fishing species on the Willamette and Clackamas are nearly identical and include Winter Steelhead, Summer Steelhead, Spring Chinook, Coho Salmon, and Fall Chinook.^{3,4} With similar species and similar run seasons, the Clackamas River is a likely reasonable substitution for fishing the Willamette River. However, depending on the time of year and the rainfall, some boat launch locations on the Clackamas River may not have deep enough water for some types of boats to launch,⁵ making Willamette River locations more attractive to fishermen.

³ <https://www.portlandgeneral.com/corporate-responsibility/environmental-stewardship/water-quality-habitat-protection/fish-counts-fish-runs/clackamas-fish-runs>

⁴ <https://www.portlandgeneral.com/corporate-responsibility/environmental-stewardship/water-quality-habitat-protection/willamette-river>

⁵ <http://www.perfectflystore.com/wlackamasr.html>

The capacity of nearby sites is also a consideration that could affect the likelihood of substituting away from Meldrum Bar Park if a parking fee is charged. During the peak fishing seasons, many of these sites operate at capacity currently and have limited parking,⁶ so additional users would constrain resources further and result in a lower quality experience for visitors. Other times of the year, such as hot summer weekends, could result in significant competition from other users, such as river floaters and kayakers, particularly on the Clackamas River.

3.1.2 Change in Demand

To understand how a parking fee could affect demand we analyze three alternative scenarios relative to a no fee baseline: 1) Trailer Parking Fee, 2) Boat Area Parking Fee, and 3) General Parking Fee.

No Parking Fee Baseline, maintains the current no parking fee status at Meldrum Bar Park. However, even without a parking fee in the future, visitation could decline if the quality of amenities decreases as a result of reduced funding. Although the loss associated with lower quality amenities is not known at this time, it is unlikely to be substantial.

Alternative 1: Trailer Parking Fee, assesses a fee for vehicles towing boats who park in either the designated spots or on the bar. If Meldrum Bar Park implements a trailer parking fee, only recreational boaters would be required to pay for parking. Some of these boaters would likely substitute to other sites to avoid paying a fee. For recreational boaters who chose to stay at Meldrum Bar Park, they may try to avoid paying the boat parking fee by parking their vehicle and trailer in an area of the Park without the fee. However, because these users have trailers they value the longer sites in the lots near the boat ramp. There are also potential increased administration costs and legal requirements associated with only charging recreational boaters (discussed later). Because they would be singled out, there is the potential that recreational boaters could be upset and the City of Gladstone could experience backlash and negative publicity with this type of fee, which could further reduce demand.

Alternative 2: Boat Area Parking Fee, assesses a fee for the entire boat area parking lot in the northwest corner of the Park, regardless if vehicles are towing a boat. In this scenario there would be a higher likelihood of users, particular those who are not towing a boat, to park near the ball fields or south of the boat area to avoid paying the parking fee. The segment of visitors that would least likely to substitute are those who would want to fish from the bar.

Alternative 3: General Parking Fee, assesses a fee for parking anywhere in Meldrum Bar Park. If Meldrum Bar Park implements a General Parking Fee, the same principles of substitution anticipated with the Boat Parking Fee will occur. However, there are two distinguishable differences in visitation loss from implementing a General Parking Fee compared to the first and second alternatives. First, the General Parking fee will not allow recreational boaters to

⁶ Personal communication with City of West Linn and City of Milwaukie.

avoid paying the parking fee by moving to another parking lot in the Park. Second, because of the General Parking Fee, visitation to all park amenities may decrease, not just the boating area. For example, a decrease in baseball teams hosting weekly games or practices at Meldrum Bar may occur if a parking fee is charged. Similarly, citizen participation in the community gardens decrease because of the parking fee. Because the number of people and scope of activities impacted is higher, there could also be a higher likelihood of community backlash and upset citizens with a broad fee for all users.

3.1.3 Summary of Market Analysis

Based on the competitor and demand analyses, we believe that a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park would reduce visitation because there are nearby sites with similar amenities without parking fees. However, substitution to nearby sites could be diminished because capacity is currently constrained. Maximum capacity in nearby sites, such as Willamette Park and Bernet boat launch and Cedar Oak boat launch, is reportedly constrained during fishing and boating season.⁷ Meldrum Bar Park does offer unique land-based fishing opportunities from the bar, so there is some differentiation that could be difficult for some users to substitute away from. In the revenue and cost cashflow analysis we estimate fee payment using rates of 10, 20, 50, and 75 percent of current visitation to account for potential substitution to other sites and to account for non-payment of the parking fee by some users.

4 Revenue and Costs Cashflow Analysis

To understand the financial feasibility of implementing a fee, we incorporate the assumptions about visitation developed in section 3.1.2 to develop projections of revenues from a parking fee in the various alternative scenarios. We then compare revenues to costs to model financial feasibility for the parking fee.

4.1 Revenues

Visitation levels and probability of non-payment of the parking fee will determine revenues generated at Meldrum Bar Park. Starting in the spring of 2019, Gladstone Parks and Recreation began tracking visitation to Meldrum Bar Park. Visitation levels average approximately 800 to 900 vehicles per day, which equates to 292,000 to 328,500 vehicles per year. Of the 800 to 900 vehicles per day, Gladstone Parks and Recreation estimates that approximately nine percent of visitors used the park for boating activities. This equates to 26,280 recreational boaters per year at Meldrum Bar Park. However, visitation data analyzed from Barton Park and Carver Park suggest that only one to three percent of all visitors use the parks for boating activities. Because Meldrum Bar's visitation data is relatively new, our analysis uses the average percent of recreational boating visitation from Barton and Carver parks (2.1 percent) to ensure a conservative revenue estimate.

⁷ Personal communication with City of West Linn and City of Milwaukie.

For all of the alternative scenarios, it is important to note that 100 percent of visitors will not purchase parking permits. The revenue generated from parking fees will depend on the level of both real and perceived enforcement. If enforcement is infrequent and a visitor perceives a low likelihood of getting caught and fined they may risk parking without a pass. Higher levels of demand loss should be used to reflect higher rates of non-payment.

The remainder of this section estimates revenues under the three alternative scenarios relative to a no fee baseline.

4.1.1 No Fee Baseline

In the No Fee Baseline scenario, no additional revenue is generated, and the City will continue to allocate money from the general fund for the operation and maintenance of Meldrum Bar Park. Given the uncertainty about future funding, there could be a decline in the quality of services and amenities at Meldrum Bar Park, such as less watering, mowing, field preparation as well as forgone investments in the Park. These impacts of insufficient funding could affect visitor experience and result in a decline in visitation.

4.1.2 Trailer Parking Fee

In the Trailer Parking Fee scenario, our analysis assumes that 6,132 of the 292,000 visitors per year are recreational boaters with trailers. Therefore, if the boat parking fee is two dollars per boat and there is no demand loss, then annual revenue generated from the parking fee would be \$12,264. However, as discussed in previously, visitation will likely decrease with the implementation of a parking fee. Depending on the decrease of visitation, annual revenue will vary. For example, if the Boat Parking Fee is two dollars per vehicle, 6,132 vehicles visit per year, and there is a 10 percent demand loss, then annual revenue generated from the parking is \$11,038. Table 2 describes the different annual revenue levels associated with each boat parking fee and different level of demand loss.

Table 2. Alternative 1: Trailer Parking Fee Annual Revenue Relative to Price and Demand

Fee	No Demand Loss	10% Demand Loss	20% Demand Loss	50% Demand Loss	75% Demand Loss
\$2	\$12,264	\$11,038	\$9,811	\$6,132	\$3,066
\$5	\$30,660	\$27,594	\$24,528	\$15,330	\$7,665
\$8	\$49,056	\$44,150	\$39,245	\$24,528	\$12,264

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Values assume 6,132 vehicles per year for the “No Demand Loss” scenario

4.1.3 Boat Area Parking Fee

In the Boat Area Parking Fee scenario, our analysis assumes that 26,280 of the 292,000 visitors per year are vehicles that would park in the boating area (9 percent of visitors based on the higher estimate provided by the City of Gladstone). Table 3 presents the revenue estimates for this larger pool of vehicles paying the parking fee, relative to Alternative 1. If the parking fee is two dollars per vehicle, 26,280 vehicles visit per year, and there is a 10 percent demand loss/non-payment rate, then annual revenue generated from the parking fee would be \$47,304.

Table 3. Alternative 2: Boat Area Parking Fee Annual Revenue Relative to Price and Demand

Fee	No Demand Loss	10% Demand Loss	20% Demand Loss	50% Demand Loss	75% Demand Loss
\$2	\$52,560	\$47,304	\$42,048	\$26,280	\$13,140
\$5	\$131,400	\$118,260	\$105,120	\$65,700	\$32,850
\$8	\$210,240	\$189,216	\$168,192	\$105,120	\$52,560

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Values assume 26,280 vehicles per year for the “No Demand Loss” scenario

4.1.4 General Parking Fee

In the General Parking Fee scenario, our analysis assumes 292,000 vehicles per year pay the parking fee. Therefore, if the General Parking Fee is two dollars per vehicle, 292,000 vehicles visit per year, and there is a 10 percent demand loss, then annual revenue generated from the parking fee would be \$525,000. As discussed previously, visitation will likely decrease with the implementation of a parking fee. Depending on the decrease of visitation, annual revenue will vary. For example, if the General Parking Fee is two dollars per vehicle, 292,000 vehicles visit per year, and there is a 20 percent demand loss, then annual revenue generated from the parking would be \$438,000. Table 4 shows the different annual revenue levels associated with each boat parking fee and different level of demand loss.

Table 4. Alternative 3: General Parking Fee Annual Revenue relative to Price and Demand

Fee	No Demand Loss	10% Demand Loss	20% Demand Loss	50% Demand Loss	75% Demand Loss
\$2	\$584,000	\$525,600	\$438,000	\$292,000	\$146,000
\$5	\$1,460,000	\$1,314,000	\$1,095,000	\$730,000	\$365,000
\$8	\$2,336,000	\$2,102,400	\$1,752,000	\$1,168,000	\$584,000

Source: ECONorthwest

4.2 Costs

There are three primary costs associated with implementing a parking fee: technology costs, enforcement cost, and loss of grant funding. Technology costs include the cost of the hardware, software, training, servicing, and additional costs associated with the fee collection system and administration. Enforcement costs would include the wages of officers or security personnel for enforcing parking. Loss of grant funding would occur proportionally, depending on the fee level.

4.2.1 Technology Costs

An initial quote from Northwest Parking Equipment Co. estimated the upfront cost of the technology and infrastructure desired in the Park as \$11,206 dollars. This price estimate includes: an automatic fee collection machine with credit and debit card acceptance, 4G service and ac powered battery, a dual hybrid card reader, an LCD screen, pedestal mount and bolts, on-site set-up and associated trainings, shipping, a one-year warranty, and touch-up paint for vandalism. To have the option of cash and coin acceptance would be an additional upfront cost of \$1,200. The automatic fee collection system serviced from Northwest Parking Equipment Co. has an expectancy of four to five years. Annual costs after the year of purchases are \$1,195 for the VenLITE administrative software and ticket paper.

A second option for the automated fee collection system is a Cale machine serviced by Flowbird. The Cale system is used at both Carver and Barton State Parks. For equivalent amenities to Northwest Parking Equipment Co.'s automatic fee collection system, the Cale system costs \$7,525 to purchase. Annual costs after the year of purchase are \$1,200. To have the option of cash and coin acceptance it is an additional upfront cost of \$1,200 and an increase of \$180 per year. Bill and coin acceptance increase the risk of vandalism and theft for these types of machines.

The feasibility analysis uses the costs from Northwest Parking Equipment Co. We assume replacement of the machine after 7 years. Technology costs do not include administration costs for the city of Gladstone associated with installation or implementation of a parking fee system or the cost of creating connectivity to the internet at the fee collection site, so there could be additional costs depending on the site-specific conditions. We also assume \$600 per year in additional administrative costs paid to City of Gladstone employees as salary. This value is based on the estimate we received from Clackamas County for administration each year. Administrative costs would increase from this estimate if bill collection is required or if administration of revenues requires additional staff time.

4.2.2 Enforcement Costs

Enforcement is critical to the effectiveness of implementing a parking fee. Currently, parking at Meldrum Bar Park is not regularly regulated by the city of Gladstone police department. Currently, illegal parking is only addressed when a complaint is placed, or when the illegal parking is creating a hazard. Gladstone police currently patrol the park on a random basis, if a parking fee was implemented, enforcement and patrol of the park would increase. Parking enforcement would likely be contracted out to an organization like Oregon Patrol Services, rather than Gladstone police.

The greater parking enforcement presence, the higher the probability of receiving a ticket is, and the more likely a visitor is to pay the parking fee. Depending on the desired level of enforcement, costs of enforcement will vary. Oregon Patrol Service has a rate of approximately \$27 per hour. For the feasibility analysis we assume in the No Parking Fee Baseline scenario that no enforcement costs would be incurred. In Alternative 1, Trailer Parking Fee, and Alternative 2, Boat Area Parking Fee, one part-time Oregon Patrol Service officer will patrol the park for four hours for 6 months each year, at a cost of \$19,440 annually. In Alternative 3, General Parking Fee, two part-time Oregon Patrol Service officers will be hired. Each officer will patrol the park for four hours throughout 180 days of the year, costing a total of \$38,880 annually. The timeline of 180 days is used to account for the spring and fall fishing season and warmer summer weather when visitation is likely to be highest. The length of four hours is to capture the morning and afternoon visitors as recommended by Clackamas County representatives, with patrols from 11 am to 3 pm, for example.

4.2.3 Loss of Grant Funding

In addition to enforcement costs, the loss of grant funding is a potential cost of implementing a parking fee. Currently, the city of Gladstone has four boat-related grants: the Maintenance Assistant Program (MAPS) grant, Sediment Analysis Grant, Boat Dock Fabrication Grant, and the Dredging Grant. These grants are administered by the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB). OSMB grants have stipulations regarding the implementation of boat parking fees and boat user fees.

The OSMB has authority to review and either approve or reject of the fee placed on boaters. If the OSMB finds the fee placed on boaters to be ‘unreasonably high’, then grant funding can be lost.⁸ ‘Unreasonably high’ is generally determined if the fee is significantly higher than the fee being charged by nearby, similar facilities. Based on our competitor analysis, a parking fee of between 2 and 6 dollars would likely be considered reasonable. Additionally, if the revenues generated by the boater fee are not used exclusively to benefit boaters, funding could be lost. For example, boater fee revenue cannot be used to supplement non-boating facilities, such as the construction of another baseball field. However, the boater fee can be used to improve, maintain, or construct an amenity which jointly benefits boaters and non-boaters, such as roads, bathrooms, garbage, parking lots, or other amenities. In this circumstance, the boater fee revenue can only provide funding equal to the proportion of benefit boaters receive.

Specific to Maintenance Assistance Program (MAP) funding, according to OAR 250-014-0004(2), if the City of Gladstone were to charge a boater fee, it will lose MAP funding based on the fee rate. Currently, the City of Gladstone receives \$5,400 per year in MAP grant funding. Implementing a boater fee will decrease funding based on the schedule in Table 5.

Table 5. MAPS Grant Funding Reductions with Fee

Fee Level	Percent Reduction	Funding Loss	New Funding Amount
\$0 - \$2	No Reduction	\$0	\$5,400
\$2.01 - \$3.00	15% Reduction	\$810	\$4,590
\$3.01 - \$4.00	40% Reduction	\$2,160	\$3,240
\$4.01 - \$5.00	75% Reduction	\$4,050	\$1,350
\$5.01 and Above	Not Eligible	\$5,400	\$0

Source: OAR 250-014-0004

Additionally, OAR 250-014-0004(4)(g) states that “Any daily, monthly or annual use fees charged at MAP sites must be uniform for a specific class of users. No differential in-area or out-of-area annual, seasonal or day use fees may be charged at MAP sites.” This provision implies MAP funding could also be lost if the City of Gladstone provided free parking permits to residents.

⁸ ECONorthwest spoke with Janine Belleque at OSMB to inform this section.

Carver Park and Barton Park in Clackamas County have different parking fees for boats and general vehicles. The boat parking fee is 2 dollars and the general parking fee is 6 dollars. The pricing stagger allows for Carver and Barton Park to receive full MAPS funding while maximizing revenues. This may also be a viable option for Meldrum Bar Park and is worth further consideration.

4.3 Feasibility of a Fee Over Time

The return of investment of a parking fee occurs when the cumulative revenues from the parking fee exceed the costs of implementing and maintaining the parking fee. We evaluate financial feasibility using a return on investment assessment for each of the scenarios based on various fee levels and reductions in visitation from substitution or non-payment. We include the initial and annual costs of machinery, annual enforcement costs, administrative costs, and declines in grant funding as costs. For the decline in grant funding we account for loss of MAP funding but exclude losses of other funding types. Because the loss of funding to the Sediment Analysis Grant, Boat Dock Fabrication Grant, and the Dredging Grant are subject to the OSMB's review, our analysis assumes Gladstone operates within reasonable bounds to maintain funding.

In all the alternatives where boaters are paying a parking fee, the excess revenues from fees charged to boaters can only be used for the benefit of boaters.

4.3.1 Alternative 1: Trailer Parking Fee

Table 6 shows the net revenue of the Trailer Parking Fee scenario over time at each parking fee price and visitation loss level. Assuming that 6,132 vehicles towing pay this fee each year (with no visitation loss), the fee does not break even at the \$2 level under any assumption. At the \$5 level a return on investment only occurs if there is no more than a 20 percent reduction in visitation (breakeven by at least year 3). At the \$8 level a return on investment occurs in the first year with 10 percent and 20 percent reductions in visitation but does not occur within 15 years in the 75 percent visitation reduction scenario.

Table 6. Alternative 1: Trailer Parking Fee Net Revenue Over Time

Fee	Visitation Loss	Year 1	Year 5	Year 10	Year 15
\$2	10%	-\$16,643	-\$35,613	-\$71,226	-\$94,938
	20%	-\$17,870	-\$41,745	-\$83,490	-\$113,334
	50%	-\$21,549	-\$60,141	-\$120,282	-\$168,522
	75%	-\$24,615	-\$75,471	-\$150,942	-\$214,512
\$5	10%	-\$4,137	\$26,919	\$53,838	\$92,658
	20%	-\$7,203	\$11,589	\$23,178	\$46,668
	50%	-\$16,401	-\$34,401	-\$68,802	-\$91,302
	75%	-\$24,066	-\$72,726	-\$145,452	-\$206,277
\$8	10%	\$11,069	\$102,951	\$205,902	\$320,754
	20%	\$6,164	\$78,423	\$156,846	\$247,170
	50%	-\$8,553	\$4,839	\$9,678	\$26,418
	75%	-\$20,817	-\$56,481	-\$112,962	-\$157,542

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Values assume 6,132 vehicles per year with no demand loss.

4.3.2 Alternative 2: Boat Area Parking Fee

If a higher portion of users pay the parking fee because all users are charged for parking in the boating area, not just trailers, then most scenarios break even in the first year. Alternative 2 assumes 26,280 cars pay a fee each year (with no visitation loss). The \$2 fee with 75 percent reduction in visitation (6,570 cars paying the fee each year) is the only scenario that does not breakeven after 15 years. Table 7 summarizes the breakeven analysis for the different fee amounts, visitation levels, and time periods.

Table 7. Alternative 2: Boat Area Parking Fee Net Revenue Over Time

Fee	Visitation Loss	Year 1	Year 5	Year 10	Year 15
\$2	10%	\$19,623	\$145,719	\$291,438	\$449,058
	20%	\$14,367	\$119,439	\$238,878	\$370,218
	50%	-\$1,401	\$40,599	\$81,198	\$133,698
	75%	-\$14,541	-\$25,101	-\$50,202	-\$63,402
\$5	10%	\$86,529	\$480,249	\$960,498	\$1,452,648
	20%	\$73,389	\$414,549	\$829,098	\$1,255,548
	50%	\$33,969	\$217,449	\$434,898	\$664,248
	75%	\$1,119	\$53,199	\$106,398	\$171,498
\$8	10%	\$156,135	\$828,279	\$1,656,558	\$2,496,738
	20%	\$135,111	\$723,159	\$1,446,318	\$2,181,378
	50%	\$72,039	\$407,799	\$815,598	\$1,235,298
	75%	\$19,479	\$144,999	\$289,998	\$446,898

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Values assume 26,280 vehicles per year with no visitation loss.

4.3.3 Alternative 3: General Parking Fee

Table 8 shows the net revenue of the General Parking Fee scenario over time at each parking fee price and visitation loss level assuming that 292,000 cars would pay a parking fee each year (with no visitation loss). All permutations have positive cashflow with a General Parking Fee and breakeven in the first year. In the General Parking Fee scenario, total visitation loss is likely to be greater than total visitation loss in the other two scenarios because a higher number of people would be subject to the fee and may decide to not visit the park due to the higher cost.

Table 8. Alternative 3: General Parking Fee Net Revenue Over Time

Fee	Visitation Loss	Year 1	Year 5	Year 10	Year 15
\$2	10%	\$465,438	\$2,422,398	\$4,844,796	\$7,290,996
	20%	\$407,038	\$2,130,398	\$4,260,796	\$6,414,996
	50%	\$231,838	\$1,254,398	\$2,508,796	\$3,786,996
	75%	\$85,838	\$524,398	\$1,048,796	\$1,596,996
\$5	10%	\$1,249,788	\$6,344,148	\$12,688,296	\$19,056,246
	20%	\$1,103,788	\$5,614,148	\$11,228,296	\$16,866,246
	50%	\$665,788	\$3,424,148	\$6,848,296	\$10,296,246
	75%	\$300,788	\$1,599,148	\$3,198,296	\$4,821,246
\$8	10%	\$2,036,838	\$10,279,398	\$20,558,796	\$30,861,996
	20%	\$1,803,238	\$9,111,398	\$18,222,796	\$27,357,996
	50%	\$1,102,438	\$5,607,398	\$11,214,796	\$16,845,996
	75%	\$518,438	\$2,687,398	\$5,374,796	\$8,085,996

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Values assume 292,000 vehicles per year with no visitation loss.

5 Other Considerations

Prior to implementing a parking fee, there are additional considerations beyond the costs of technology, enforcement, and loss in funding. Other feasibility considerations include restrictions on revenue from recreational boaters, visitor expectations, liability, adverse impacts to certain populations, coordinated parking fee implementation, and the potential benefits of waiting to implement a fee.

5.1 Use of Boater Fees

Per OSMB, fees charged to recreational boaters cannot be used to benefit users other than boaters. For example, the parking fee amount charged to boaters could be used to maintain Meldrum Bar Park Road, but only to the extent that boaters are the ones using the road (if 30 percent boater use could only pay for 30 percent of the road maintenance, for example). This means revenues could not be used for other general purposes such as the gardens or the ballfields at Meldrum Bar Park, or as the sole funding source for investments that would jointly benefit boaters and non-boaters. Any fee at Meldrum Bar Park would require approval from OSMB before being implemented.

5.2 Expectations & Recreational Immunity

If a parking fee is charged at Meldrum Bar Park visitors could have higher expectations about the quality of the park. The higher expectations from visitors because of the parking fee could increase visitor complaints and therefore increase maintenance and operation's needs. Similarly, when a fee is charged there could be expectations about the safety of the park that could impact recreational immunity (i.e. a landowners ability to avoid lawsuits from recreation on their property). Under ORS 105.682, recreational immunity means the owner of land used for public recreation purposes is not liable for "personal injury, death or property damage that arises out of the use of the land for recreational purposes". There has been concern in the past that charging a fee would waive recreational immunity in some instances. However, guidance from

CIS (Citycounty Insurance Services) formed by the League of Oregon Cities and the Association of Oregon Counties suggests that as long as the parking fee is less than \$15 there would be no adverse impact to recreational immunity.⁹

5.3 Impacts to Vulnerable Populations

Because Meldrum Bar Park provides fishing access via the bank and bar, access to the water is particularly valuable for disabled anglers who cannot use a boat and lower-income anglers who cannot afford a boat. Media reporting has suggested that Meldrum Bar Park is “the safest and most popular bank-fishing area on the lower river for disabled anglers to cast near their vehicles and from wheelchairs”.¹⁰ Because of the value of the site to disabled and lower-income anglers, they could be disproportionately disadvantaged if a parking fee is charged because they may not have access to alternative sites and would therefore be unable to avoid paying the fee and more likely to forgo a trip to the Park if they are not willing or able to pay.

5.4 Benefits of Coordination

Before proceeding with a parking fee, we recommend that the City of Gladstone first try to coordinate with nearby facilities that are also not currently charging for parking. If the cities of Gladstone, West Linn, Milwaukie, and Tualatin all implemented either a boat or general parking fee in their parks with boat launches, the quantity of visitor substitution away from Meldrum Bar Park would likely decrease. However, coordinated parking fee implementation between the cities could create barriers to recreation for lower-income anglers in the region.

5.5 Future Considerations

In Alternative 2: Boat Area Parking Fee, a challenging aspect about implementing a fee in the northwest boating area parking lot and bar is the ability of users to drop off their boats and park their vehicles in other areas. Although Meldrum Bar Park is large, some users will choose to walk further instead of paying for parking. Design changes at Meldrum Bar Park, such as having a separate entrance for river-users and other park users, could be implemented to reduce the likelihood of fee aversion behavior. We recommend this type of change is considered in the next Master Plan update.

6 Summary of Findings

This analysis compared three parking fee alternatives at Meldrum Bar Park relative to a baseline of no parking fee. Each alternative has a different set of trade-offs. The primary adverse impact of the No Parking Fee Baseline scenario is a decrease in Park quality because of a loss of funding. The primary adverse impacts for a Trailer Parking Fee and Boat Area Parking Fee scenarios are a potential loss of grant funding coupled with higher visitor expectations, as well as potentially negative net revenue; however, some scenario iterations suggest a boat parking

⁹ <https://www.cisoregon.org/RecImmunity>

¹⁰ https://www.oregonlive.com/sports/oregonian/bill_monroe/2016/01/post_228.html

fee could be a positive source of revenue. The considerations of a General Parking Fee include a potential larger visitation loss and adverse impacts to park users, but positive revenue.

There is significant uncertainty regarding fee aversion behavior, substitution to other parks, and the number of vehicles that would pay the various fees. Because of this uncertainty and the potentially low number of covered vehicles, charging only vehicles towing boats does not appear to be a financially feasible option for revenue generation. Charging other user groups, including those parking in the northwest portion of the Park in the boat area or all parking areas would likely yield positive net revenue at most fee levels.

Before proceeding with a parking fee at Meldrum Bar Park we recommend the following actions are taken:

- If charging only vehicles with trailers is desired, conduct additional monitoring and/or administer a visitor survey to estimate the number of trailers and portion of visitors who park near the boat ramp and bar. ECONorthwest could assist with a visitor survey as an extension of this work. A visitor survey could also ask about likelihood to substitute away from the site if a fee is implemented determine which sites would receive the substitute visitation.
- Discuss fee implementation and potential for coordination with the cities of West Linn, Milwaukie, and Tualatin. Implementing fees together at the same time and rate could reduce substitution away from Meldrum Bar Park, provide those cities opportunities for revenue generation, and minimize adverse distributional impacts for City of Gladstone residents.
- Consider fee implementation within the context of future planning activities that could provide efficiencies or changes to the financial feasibility considerations, such as redesign of Meldrum Bar Park as part of a Master Plan.