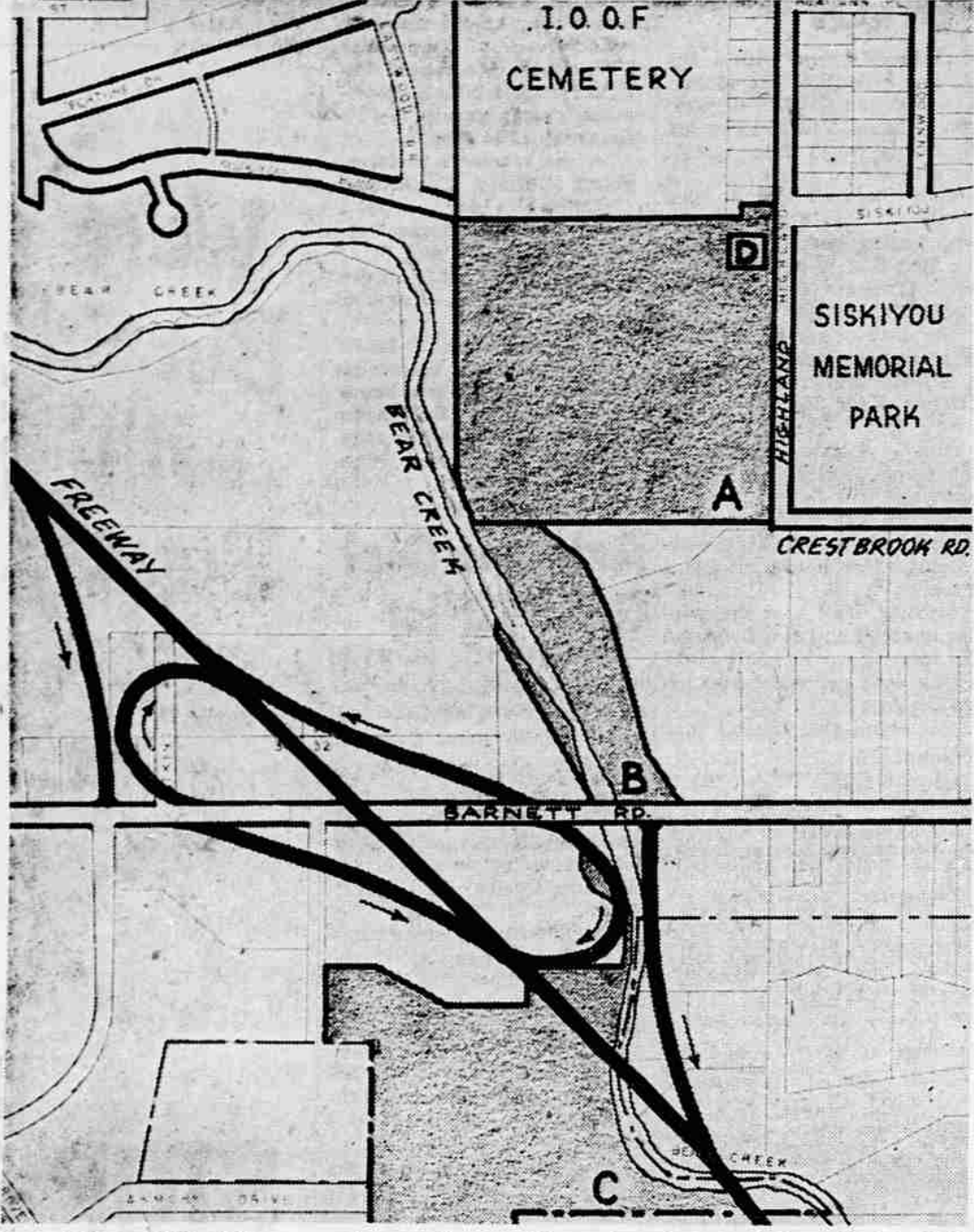


Undeveloped Property Available for Medford City Parks

14 MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or.
Sunday, July 12, 1959



CITY PROPERTY—This map shows city property (dark areas) along Bear creek which could be developed for parks. The 23-acre tract (A) acquired in 1925, once the city garbage dump, was later used for digging buckshot gravel. The city plans to extend Siskiyou blvd. along its north boundary next to the I.O.O.F. cemetery this year. Firemen at the East Side fire station (D)

could guard against vandalism. A strip 200 feet wide (B) running south to Barnett rd. was acquired in 1940 specifically for parks, recreation and flood control. Plans call for the Highway 99 freeway south of its Barnett rd. interchange to cut right through the city park used for over 20 years by Girl Scouts for a day camp. More city property lies to the west and south.

Thoroughfares Cut Into Park Sites Now Being Used

By ERIC WENTWORTH
Mail Tribune Staff Writer
Medford's park and recreation ledger is due for review. On the credit side, during the past year, have been several significant entries.

Among these, the creation of a city parks and recreation commission and the appointment of a full-time parks and recreation director are perhaps the most significant.

A broad program for renovating the neglected facilities in Prescott park atop Roxy Ann butte has taken root. Action by the late Jackson County Housing authority has provided funds and land for a swimming pool and playground area off West Jackson st.

Volunteer Efforts
The efficacy of volunteer efforts has been shown in the development of a neighborhood park by the Union Street Park Improvement group.

The city's summer recreation program, bolstered by additional staff members, is shifting into higher gear this year.

Generally, the sap of public enthusiasm for municipal parks and recreation appears to be on the rise.

In the debit column, however, public thoroughfares for one are taking their toll.

The extension of Eighth st. across Bear creek to East Main st. has exacted the loss of the pleasant little park with stately shade trees below the Girl Scout office.

The imminent Highway 99 freeway, as currently planned will deliver a Johansson-like blow to the city's park area



EMINENT DOMAIN—These picnic tables and a barely visible stone fireplace in the city park area south of Barnett rd. (C on the map) stand neglected among bold weeds. The Girl Scouts used the area for over two decades as a day camp site, but abandoned it after 1957 because of vandalism and Bear creek's pollution. The Highway 99 freeway route cuts through the center of this tract, and state right of way negotiators are expected to knock on the doors of city hall soon to set about acquiring it. The numerous picnic tables and fireplaces could be salvaged and repaired for use elsewhere. But the loss of the park itself would reduce the city's recreation resources.

along Bear creek south of Barnett rd. For more than 20 years, until 1957, the Girl Scouts used this area for a day camp.

Another effect of the freeway-debit or credit depending on how one views it—involves Hawthorne park.

Passive Recreation

Plans call for the freeway to run on an embankment along the west edge of the park next to Bear creek. The resultant shift in appearance, and the noise and odors from freeway traffic, are expected to reduce the park's appeal for those seeking tranquility or communion with nature—what the professionals call "passive recreation."

Some city and school district officials consider it inevitable that Hawthorne park's larger lawns will be converted to baseball diamonds. Young ball players, certainly, would be less bothered than bird watchers by the roar and stink of a passing van truck.

Two other debit items are currently gaining recognition across the nation: population growth, and increased leisure time. These, as in a sack race, run together.

As Medford's census continues to soar, with higher proportions of youngsters and retired persons, and as working hours gradually diminish through technological advances and more generous labor agreements, the need for more parks and better recreation facilities grows apace.

Medford Must Catch Up
To stand still, in this as in other fields of municipal endeavor, is to lose ground. And Medford, many persons believe, has a long way to go just to catch up with parks and recreation progress in other Oregon communities.

Some eyes have turned to Prescott park as having the best potential for meeting this city's present and future needs. There is much to recommend it—spectacular views, for example, and shaded picnic groves.

Another park site, within the city limits, has recently been proposed. The city water department owns a 13-acre tract on Barneburg hill, where some time in the next decade a five million gallon reservoir is to be constructed.

The reservoir would take only a smart part of the tract. The rest, according to City Water Superintendent Robert L. Lee, is available for park purposes. This, the city council must decide.

A considerably larger park site, however, is generally being overlooked. It lies right in the city's lap.

Overlooked Site
This site comprises the 23-acre tract south of the IOOF cemetery between Highland dr. and Bear creek, and the strip 200 feet wide from this tract south along Bear creek to Barnett rd. The city has

owned this land for many years. The land has been neglected.

The 23-acre tract and other property to the north, since sold, were acquired by the city from Mollie Keene in 1925. For many years, the tract served as the city dump. Tony Boitano recalls that when he took over the garbage operation here in 1938 this dump was still going strong.

There was also a large hog farm on the tract. And many rats. Fred Scheffel, city superintendent at the time, tells how incredulous city council members were equipped with flashlights and ushered into the hog pen one night to find that complaints from east side residents were more than justified.

Another major complaint, expressed by Sacred Heart hospital officials among others, was against air pollution from burning the garbage.

Operation Moved

In 1939, Boitano moved his operation elsewhere. Back in 1930, a world-famous city planner named Jacob L. Crane was retained by the city planning commission to assist in surveying the lay of Medford's land.

This survey resulted the next year in a comprehensive "Report on the City Plan for Medford, Oregon."

Among other projects, the plan called for a continuous ribbon of parks on both sides of Bear creek from one end to the other.

A parkway, 80 feet wide, was to parallel the creek on the east. It was contemplated that fill for the parkway could be obtained right from the creek bed. This in turn would create a channel in the creek for flood control purposes.

The plan also called for closing the garbage dump on the former Keene tract and cleaning up the area "that it may be a credit to the community instead of a menace to the health." The dump site itself was described as "susceptible to park development."

Favorable Opportunity
"The Bear creek area," the 1931 report stated, "together with its proposed parkway drive presents one of the most favorable opportunities for park development in the city."

"The first steps are now being taken toward acquiring the necessary property, and efforts should be continued until all of the creek bed itself and as much as that indicated on the maps as being desirable park property, is acquired either by purchase or dedication."

But 1931 was not a good year for such ambitious projects to approach fruition. The depression tended to turn the public eye elsewhere. Parks and recreation development, after all, for the most part is a privilege of affluent communities.

Ten years later, lured by the prospect of federal assistance, the city did acquire several parcels of land along Bear Creek north of Barnett road.



PARK SITE—This view shows part of the 23-acre tract (A on the map) which could be developed by the city for parks and recreation. Though no houses are visible in the picture, the site is well inside the city limits. Formerly, it was the city garbage dump—but authorities state this has no physical effect

on the property's park potential. The tract includes flat areas suitable for playfields as well as sloping ground, and shade trees under which benches and picnic tables could be placed. Two drainage creeks cross the property.

In most cases, it agreed to install "hoglight" fences and cattle guards, and to provide channels for stock watering. Then, of course, came another civic drought, occasioned by World War II.

In 1955 a large portion of the Bear creek property, unimproved, was returned to the Earhart family.

There remains the strip north of Barnett rd., deeded in 1940 by Horace and Eleanor Lytton specifically for parks, recreation and flood control.

After the garbage dump on the old Keene tract was closed, meanwhile, the city dug buckshot from the property for street gravel. City Sanitary service has continued to use one part of the area for parking garbage trucks. Near the northeast corner, the East Side fire station was erected. And in 1951, the California Oregon Power company was sold a small chunk for electrical facilities.

Cemeteries in Area

Just a few years ago, the tract was considered as a site for Rogue Valley hospital. The existence of cemeteries to the immediate north and east was one reason this proposal was discouraged.

The proposed freeway route passes to the west, on the other side of Bear creek. Below Barnett rd., it slashes through the center of the Girl Scout day camp area, where tables and stone fireplaces built years ago by civilian conservation corps crews now stand neglected. These may be salvaged but the site itself appears destined to be a victim of "eminent domain."

The Girl Scout camp itself was stopped after 1957 for two principal reasons: vandalism and Bear creek's pollution.

Should the city's Keene and Lytton tracts north of Barnett be developed for parks and recreation, firemen at the East Side fire station could provide an effective guard against vandals.

Stream pollution, unfortunately, is a more serious problem. Most observers appear convinced that no matter how much Bear creek can be

cleaned up it will never again be suitable for swimming. Keeping children from the water on hot days, as the Girl Scout counselors well knew, is no easy matter. Fencing of one sort or another might prove necessary.

Nevertheless, the area offers myriad possibilities for both "active" and "passive" recreation. It would also offer freeway motorists a most attractive vista, which is an aspect the Chamber of Commerce in particular should appreciate.

Siskiyou Blvd. Connection
The city proposes during the new fiscal year to construct the Siskiyou blvd. con-

nection from Highland dr. west between the city property and the IOOF cemetery.

This step will open up the area more than ever before to public view. City residents and visitors driving past on Siskiyou will be confronted each time with the sight of a vast unkept tract.

This city property may not be improved for many years, if indeed it ever is. After all, it could conceivably be sold for some type of private development.

Meanwhile, it remains on the Medford's park and recreation ledger—a debit today but some day, perhaps, a distinct credit.

Officials Inspect Diversion Dam On Applegate River Near Recreation Site

The Jackson county court has taken under advisement the problem of a diversion dam across the Applegate river near a proposed county recreation site.

A group of Applegate ranchers using the Comstock irrigation ditch had protested to the county court that turning the Gebhart mining claim, a mile above the McKee bridge, into a public recreation spot would endanger their temporary diversion dam each year.

They complained also that they have trouble now, under limited recreational use of the spot, with picnickers and swimmers damming up their water flow control box and tossing beer bottles into the diversion channel.

Those making an inspection trip to the spot Friday included County Judge Earl Miller, Commissioners Chester Wendt and Ralph James; Clem Ault, work unit conservationist for the Rogue Soil Conservation district; Paul Corak, Grants Pass, area engineer for the soil conservation service; County Engineer Paul Rynning and Assistant County Engineer Bob Carstenson.

Suggestions
Suggestions made to assure the farms of a steady flow of water included putting a lock arrangement on the water flow control box at the diversion channel, erecting warning signs, housing a caretaker on the site during the summer, and constructing a permanent dam at rock outcroppings a short distance above the present temporary gravel and sand dam.

Fred West, Applegate

rancher, had suggested that an apron dam be constructed across the river. This would be a low, oval-shaped dam consisting of wire mesh and heavy rock. Gravel washed down the stream would pile up in the mesh to further reinforce the dam.

Jim Corson, Applegate rancher, and spokesman for the Comstock ditch-users, suggested that a permanent type dam be constructed which wouldn't be hurt by high water. The SCS would engineer

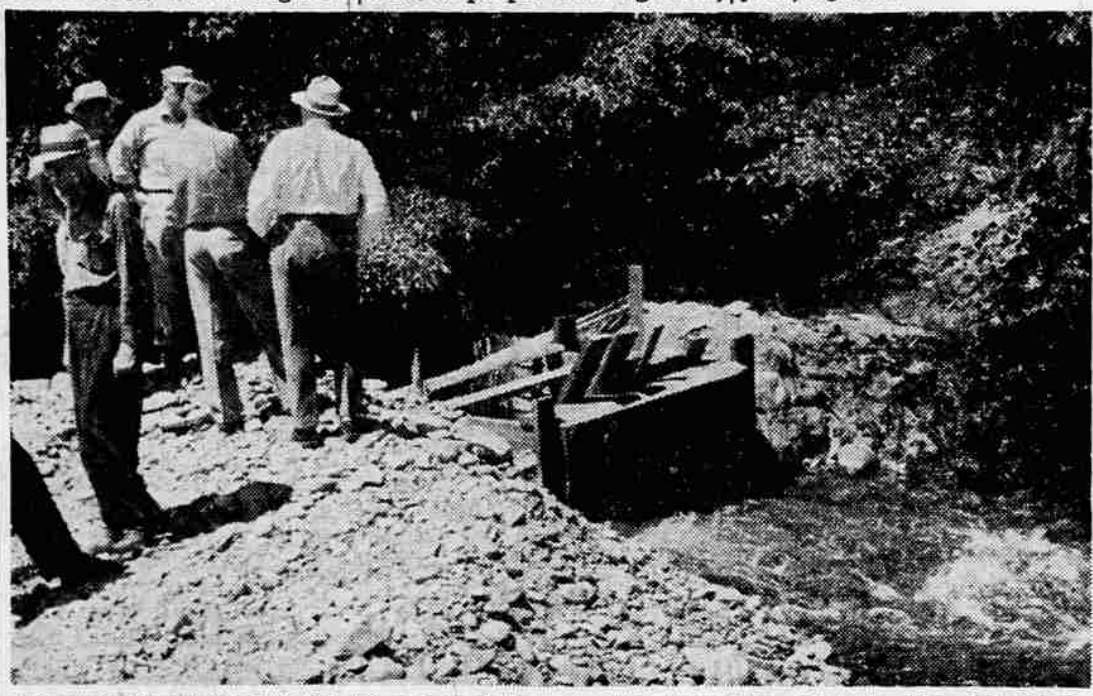
it and the ranchers might pay part of the cost, Corson said.

He also suggested that a screen be placed around the water flow control box to catch trash and bottles discarded by picnickers. Too often, he said, the bottles are carried through the ditch and into the farm fields where tractor tires are cut.

Warning Signs
County officials remarked that the temporary dam looked strong enough to stand a lot of people walking on it,

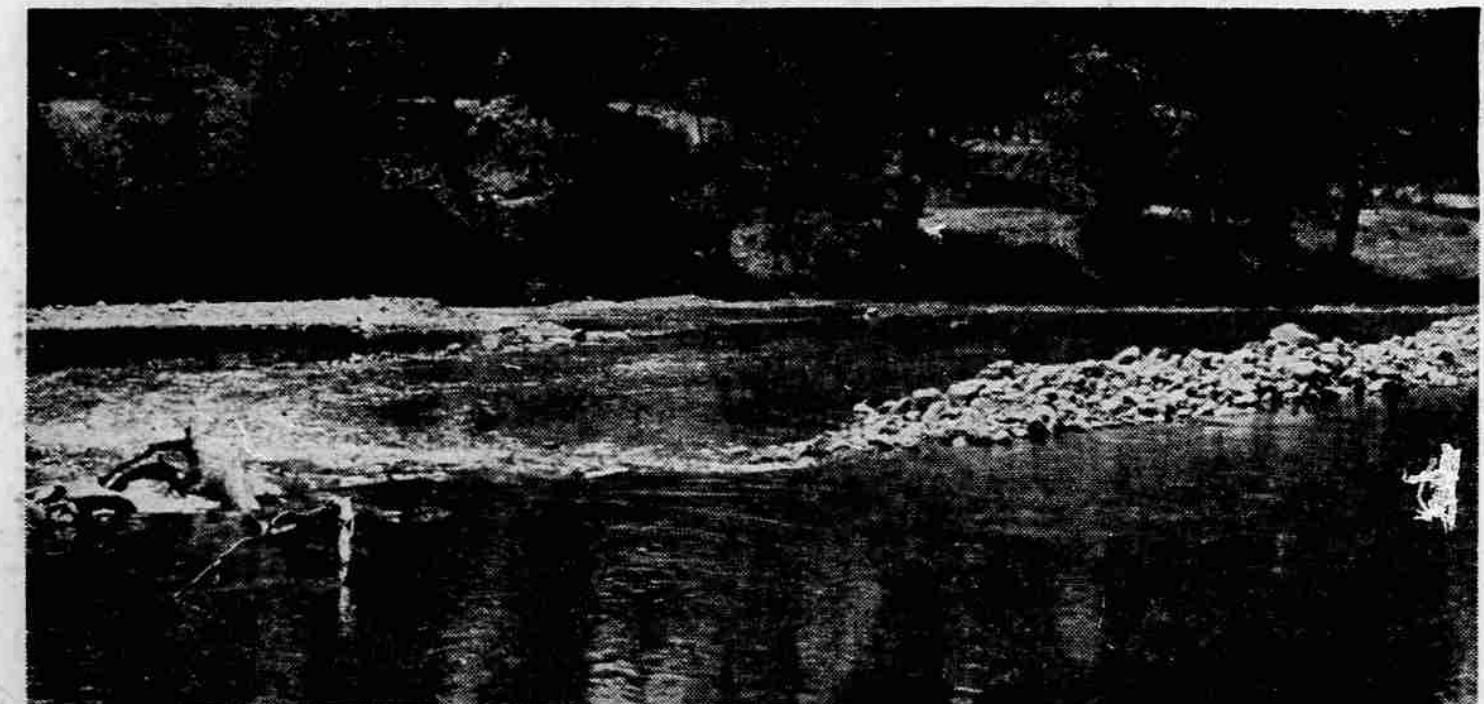
but thought warning signs might help.

County Watermaster D. C. Hendrix during a meeting of the county court with the farmers earlier last week said the irrigation water would be worth \$90 a day to the farmers if they had to pay for it. Corson emphasized Friday afternoon that some solution to the problem had to be found soon. The farmers cannot risk interference with the normal flow of water even for one year, he said.



INSPECT CONTROL BOX—Members of the county court, soil conservation service and the county engineer's department Friday morning inspected the water flow control box near the diversion dam on the Applegate river. The control box is used to regulate the flow of river water through the Comstock ditch. The ditch users have protested that they need some protection for their dam located at one end of the proposed

county recreation site. In the left foreground is County Engineer Paul Rynning. In the background overlooking the makeshift control box is Paul Corak, Grants Pass, SCS area engineer; Clem Ault, conservation field engineer for the Rogue soil conservation district; Bob Carstenson, assistant county engineer, and County Commissioner Ralph James.



DIVERSION DAM—Applegate river water swirls through a cut in the temporary diversion dam constructed by the Comstock ditch-users on the Applegate. To the right and not shown in the picture is the swimming hole created by the backed up river water. The ditch users have com-

plained to the county court that with wide-spread public use of the proposed county recreation site, shown at the right corner of the picture, their dam would be damaged by people walking on it.

Umatilla Court Probe Postponed

Pendleton — UPI — Umatilla county court's operations will not be investigated July 13 by the Umatilla county grand jury, it was announced Friday by District Attorney Richard J. Courson.

Courson had been asked to undertake an investigation of the county court after charges of improper actions were made by the Umatilla County Good Government league of Hermiston.

Courson, said, however, he expected an investigation would be held at a future date.



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