

News Release

For Immediate Release



River Park Public Comment Periods Expected Soon

Ketchum R&PP Environmental Assessment Nears Completion

Ketchum, Idaho (August 6, 2013) – The public will soon have two opportunities to comment on plans for Ketchum’s proposed River Park at Sun Peak, a project that would restore wildlife habitat, reduce flooding risk to downstream properties, and allow the creation of a white water park.

The Seattle firm of GeoEngineers expects to complete an environmental assessment of the project this week and submit it for review to AECOM, a Colorado firm under contract with the federal Bureau of Land Management.

The park would be located on property managed by the BLM, and federal law requires both the environmental assessment and review of the assessment for 316 acres of federal land requested in a land disposal action known as the Ketchum Recreation & Public Purposes (R&PP) application. BLM anticipates opening a 30-day period for public comment on the environmental assessment and AECOM’s review later this summer.

At the same time, S2o Design and Engineering is developing the final design for the park, with completion of the plan expected in October or November. The plan will be presented at a public meeting, and there also will be an additional period for public comments, the City Council was told by Jennifer L. Smith, Ketchum director of parks and recreation.

Once there is a consensus on the design, the City will develop a management and maintenance plan, Smith said. “We are committed to being certain that a plan and funding for management and maintenance are in place before any construction begins,” she said. “However, it is not practical to create a maintenance plan until we have the final design.”

The park, to be created in cooperation with the Wood River Land Trust, would offer trails, river and pond access, habitat restoration, wildlife viewing, dog play areas and a white water feature along approximately 1,500 feet of the Big Wood River north of Ketchum near Hulen Meadows.

Private donors have raised \$125,000 of the expected total cost of the \$2.3 million project, and are expected to pay the majority of the construction costs. The City hopes to begin construction in 2014 and open the park in 2015.

“One of the main benefits would be to restore river banks and habitat, as well as the Hulen Meadows pond, all of which were dramatically altered when State Highway 75 was relocated in the 1990s. An unfortunate result of the highway relocation was changes in the river channel that



increase the potential for downstream flooding, as we saw in Ketchum in 2006,” said Jennifer L. Smith, Ketchum director of parks and recreation. “Creation of the park also would allow the City to take over maintenance of Hulen Meadows Pond, which is filling up with silt.”

The white water portion of the proposed park would increase recreational opportunities in the early spring and summer floating seasons, when tourism revenue in the area traditionally is at a seasonal low. White water parks in other areas have generated more than \$2 million annually in revenue to local businesses, such as restaurants, hotels and sporting good stores.

The park also would provide a place for novice to expert kayakers to test their water safety skills. Strategically placed features would create a variety of waves during the early spring and summer floating season.

The City has maintained the property since 2004 under an agreement with the BLM. It has asked the BLM for permanent permission to use approximately 316 acres of federal property, including the location for the proposed river park, for conservation and recreation enhancements. The next step will be for BLM to make a decision on the City’s request.

For additional information and to be advised of updates and opportunities for public comment, contact Smith at jsmith@ketchumidaho.org or 726-7820. Detailed information also is available at www.ketchumidaho.org under the “Special Projects” heading.

#

About the City of Ketchum

The City of Ketchum is located in the Wood River Valley in south central Idaho. Founded in 1880 during the mining boom, Ketchum is now regarded as one of the most popular destinations for winter and summer visitors due to its world-class skiing, mountain biking, fishing, hiking, restaurants, art galleries and shopping. The City of Ketchum hosts the famous annual Wagon Days Parade, held on Labor Day weekend, and numerous other year-round attractions. Ketchum is home to more than 3,000 full- and part-time residents. For more information about the City of Ketchum, visit www.ketchumidaho.org.

Contact: Jen Smith
208-726-7820, jsmith@ketchumidaho.org