Sustaining our beloved parks and public spaces is a key concern for public parks agencies around the country as we face aging infrastructure, increased funding challenges, and high user demand. As a result, design professionals serving these agencies struggle with mandates to reduce the capital costs of their designs, or to reduce their design time. Yet, focusing on short-term cost outcomes can actually result in higher costs and less value over the long-term for both agencies and consultants.

This session will explore the triple bottom line of ecology, economics and equity in parks and park systems. We will identify opportunities and challenges for park managers, designers and the public by exploring case studies from around the country, at the site and system scales in urban, rural and regional contexts.

**KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Learn methods to integrate triple bottom line sustainability at the design and planning scales.
- Evaluate design through the lens of lifetime costs.
- Transform the role of design consultant, parks manager and the public in defining sustainability and measuring success.
Sustaining Parks with a Triple Bottom Line: Ecology, Economy and Equity

SESSION PRESENTERS AND OUTLINE

Emily Roth  Emily.Roth@portlandoregon.gov
NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNER & ASSET MANAGEMENT
PORTLAND PARKS AND RECREATION

Emily Roth is the Natural Resource Planner at Portland Parks & Recreation and has been dedicated to natural resource planning, policy and management in Oregon for over 22 years. Her experience includes natural resource and trail planning, regulation and permitting, assessment, restoration and enhancement. For the past 5 years, Emily has worked for Portland Parks & Recreation managing numerous planning projects in natural area and developed parks. Emily holds an M.S. in Natural Resources Planning, Policy and Management from the University Of Michigan and received her B.S. in Botany/Plant Ecology from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. Emily is the primary author of the Oregon Freshwater Wetlands Assessment Methodology. She also co-authored the Urban Natural Areas chapter in “Restoring the Pacific Northwest; The Art and Science of Ecological Restoration in Cascadia”.

Jaime C. English  jaime.english@state.or.us
SENIOR PARK PLANNER / OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

As a Senior Parks Planner Jaime is leading the comprehensive planning efforts for Oregon State Parks in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Prior to working at OPRD Jaime assisted Emily Roth on the Ecologically Sustainable Park Landscape Goals and Standards Initiative for Portland Parks and Recreation. Jaime has experience in sustainable design, restoration projects, retreat and summer camp master planning, and residential gardens and retreats. In 2010 Jaime founded the landscape design firm Kahoots llc. She has also worked at GreenWorks PC, an award-winning firm in Portland, Oregon and The Atelier Dreiseitl in Ueberlingen, Germany. Jaime is a graduate of the University of Oregon’s’ school of Landscape Architecture.

Lauren Schmitt, ASLA, AICP  laurens@migcom.com
PRINCIPAL / MIG, INC.

Lauren Schmitt is a landscape architect and planner who has focused on the planning and design of park systems for more than 15 years. Working with urban and rural communities of all sizes, she has analyzed and examined park systems around the United States, including recent projects in Oregon, Kansas, California, New York, Washington, Colorado and Nevada. A graduate of Smith College and the University of Washington, Lauren’s facilitative leadership and critical thinking skills have ensured the success of many complex, multi-objective projects involving parks, recreation facilities, natural and cultural resources, trails, open space and events/programming.

SESSION OUTLINE

Introduction

Case Studies
- Portland Parks & Recreation
- The Columbia River George
- OpenSpacePGH
- Randall’s Island Park
- Elm Park Playlot

Lessons Learned

Questions and Discussion
Portland Parks and Recreation

PORTLAND, OREGON

Portland Parks & Recreation’s Parks 2020 Vision identifies a long term plan for improving parks. A part of the vision is to “Extend ecologically sustainable landscape management practices over the entire spectrum of PP&R’s green infrastructure.” PP&R is building on their established ecological practices.

PP&R’s initiative uses the American Society of Landscape Architect’s Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES 2009) and the New York High Performance Landscape Guidelines (2010) as references to develop best practices that include robust site analysis, soil conservation and enhancement, protection of existing vegetation, planting native vegetation, tree protection and replacement, water conservation, stormwater treatment, use of local materials, reduction in herbicides, energy conservation, local food initiatives and stewardship.

This initiative builds from these efforts to focus on the ecology of landscapes—the relationship between living organisms and their environment, and the functions and process they provide. It also creates an opportunity matrix to select passive recreation spaces that are underutilized or difficult to maintain as having the highest capacity for rehabilitation.
In the Columbia River Gorge Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), manages 15 parks, six natural areas, three scenic view points, six scenic corridors, and 47 trail heads connecting visitors with countless miles of trails (http://www.oregonstateparks.org/). Oregon state parks is mandated to protect and preserve the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of these state park lands while also promoting recreation now and in the future. With sites like Vista House, Rooster Rock, and Bridal Veil Falls, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area has become more and more popular over the years with an increasingly international draw. Promoting recreation is not a challenge in the least; however, caring for the landscape with limited resources so that it is accessible to future generations is a continual challenge. Technology, inter-agency collaborations, community support, and a better understanding of the value of natural resources (http://gorgeparksplan.com/partners-links/) are all proving to be important components of a comprehensive and sustainable management solution (http://gorgeparksplan.com/).
OpenSpacePGH
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Working with the Department of City Planning and CitiParks, MIG led the development of OpenSpacePGH, a component of the City of Pittsburgh’s first-ever comprehensive plan addressing the City’s parks, open spaces and recreation services. Pittsburgh has been a hub for commerce and industry over its long history, with a highly productive economy that generated great wealth. As industry shifted in the late twentieth century, Pittsburgh went through very challenging and painful times, enduring a loss of jobs, population and governmental tax revenues.

With the downsized population, the city has been left with “legacy” public facilities, parks, and civic infrastructure, a system that was designed for a much larger population and that is now unsustainable. However, the economic shift has also led to the availability of land and the opening up of the riverfronts to public access. OpenSpacePGH focuses on defining urban form and reshaping the park system to meet twenty-first century needs. OpenSpacePGH provides a blueprint to guide City decisions related to the re-use of vacant properties, provision of parks and recreation services throughout the city, and appropriate target areas for various City programs, with the goal of creating an open space system that best serves the needs of Pittsburgh residents, workers, and visitors.
Randall’s Island Park

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Randall’s Island is located between East Harlem, the South Bronx and Astoria, Queens, New York. First established by Robert Moses, Randall’s Island Park was opened in 1936 in conjunction with the opening of the Triborough Bridge (which passes through the Park). One of New York City’s largest parks and a hub for sports, Randall’s Island Park had fallen into serious disrepair by the 1980’s. In 1992, the Randall’s Island Park Alliance was formed to revive the park. This nonprofit organization has worked in conjunction with NYC leadership to realize the island’s unique potential by developing sports and recreational facilities, restoring its vast natural environment, reclaiming and maintaining parkland, and sponsoring programs for the children of New York City.
Elm Park Playlot
RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Elm Park Playlot is a small park (less than 1.2 acre in size) in the heart of Richmond’s Iron Triangle neighborhood. Though more than 3,000 children live within walking distance, the park was always empty because parents and kids felt unsafe. Pogo Park represents a new approach to development of public spaces, revitalizing the neighborhood by revitalizing the playlot with hands-on community action.
Sustaining Parks with a Triple Bottom Line: Ecology, Economy and Equity

LESSONS LEARNED AND RESOURCES

Lesson 1
When working with a public land management agency, ask the following questions to better understand what services you as a landscape architect can offer to support their triple bottom line.

- What is the agency’s mission?
- How did they get where they are today? What are their standard operations and maintenance practices?
- How are they funded—design, construction and operations and maintenance?
- How do they manage their land?

Lesson 2
Master plan and design for succession and to support dynamic ecological and social systems. Include a long-term (25 years) maintenance plan with the design to guide landscape succession.

Lesson 3
Include staff that have responsibilities from planning to maintenance, incorporating as many perspectives as possible into the design and maintenance plan.

Lesson 4
Think system-wide, even while working at the site level.

Lesson 5
Develop the right balance of the triple bottom line for each system, park, public space and neighborhood. You’ll figure out the right balance by following lessons 1 and 2. Don’t forget that most of the reason the trail or park is there is because of its context. Therefore, the recreation facility is not just the trail but the context as well.

Lesson 6
Design 20% above ground and 80% below ground (e.g., soils and irrigation) to maximize ecological benefit and minimize long-term costs.

Lesson 7
Natural resources are park facilities. Place forest or native meadow maintenance (i.e., monitor & maintain or remove & restore actions) on the same maintenance schedule as building, playground or parking lot tasks. Doing so elevates natural resources as equally important facilities, in need of both staff time and budget dollars.

Lesson 8
Include and educate the public in design and maintenance of ecologically sustainable landscapes to encourage them to remain or become active park stewards.

Lesson 9
When “Master Planning” for a park, identify the total scope of enhancements beyond the construction costs for new facilities. Identify associated long term maintenance, needed staff, and programming costs. Such a list allows the shortfalls of a budget to be clearly articulated and better allows for prioritizing based on real need and long term success.

Resources
http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/38296
http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/422356
http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/418535
http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/43222
http://www.gorgeparksplan.com
http://www.oregonstateparks.org/
http://gorgeparksplan.com/partners-links/
http://planpgh.com/openspacepgh/
http://randallsisland.org/
http://www.pogopark.org/Pogo_Park/home.html