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Background Brief on...

State Parks and Recreation

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Background

Oregon's state park system originated in 1921 when the State Highway Commission was authorized to acquire properties dedicated to the protection of roadside forests and scenery. The Legislature expanded that authority in 1925 to include acquisition, improvement, maintenance, and supervision of land for parks, parking places, camp sites, public squares and recreation grounds. In addition, the 1925 Legislative Assembly further authorized the use of state highway funds for these purposes. State highway funds from gasoline taxes, private land donations and federal funds have provided the necessary funding to grow to a network of over 200 park areas.

During the early 1980s, voters removed the park system from the state highway fund. In response, the 1989 Legislative Assembly created the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (**OPRD**) as a separate entity from the Department of Transportation. Throughout the 1990s General Fund support for OPRD declined as other demands for state monies increased.

Currently, OPRD receives no General Fund dollars as a part of its funding structure. The department is funded primarily through a combination of constitutionally dedicated lottery funds, park user fees, federal funds, grants and donations. The department's responsibilities include ocean shores, scenic waterways, recreation trails, state recreation areas, and historic, archeological and cultural preservation programs.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission sets policy and approves major actions of the department. The seven-member commission is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. In November 2000, the commission adopted *Target 2014*, which provides a strategy and eight goals to support OPRD's mission. This time frame reflects the 15-year funding commitment approved by voters with the passage of Measure 66 in 1998.

In May 2004, Governor Ted Kulongoski announced a new mission for OPRD – to create one new state park a year for the next 10 years. The first park to be named, following the Governor’s vision of a balance between recreational opportunities and the state’s heritage, is Hares Canyon State Park in Washington County. The 1,755 acres of forested land near Buxton will offer camping, picnicking and hiking. To help with acquisition, the 2003 Legislature increased OPRD’s budget from \$4 million to \$7 million for the 2003-05 biennium.

Oregon Park System

OPRD manages the state’s park system, which includes the following:

- approximately 95,000 acres; 230 park areas, 179 with developed facilities
- 53 campgrounds; 5,650 traditional campsites, 62 group camp areas, and 275 other types of “camping” options including yurts, log cabins and teepees
- 171 day use parks, totaling 4,500 picnic sites, 63 picnic shelters and 28 group picnic areas

Other recreation facilities include ocean beach access, recreation trails, boating and fishing docks, and river access points. Special facilities include:

- Silver Falls conference center, youth camp and group indoor overnight facilities
- 11 group meeting halls
- 8 interpretive centers/museums
- 3 historic inns

Outdoor Recreation & Resource Management

Recreational Resources:

- Grant assistance for local government parks and recreation
- Motorized, non-motorized and water trails
- Beach Safety Education

Natural Resources:

- Ocean shores, protects 362 miles of shoreline

- State Scenic Waterways – 19 rivers, totaling 1,150 miles and Waldo Lake
- Willamette River Greenway – 250 miles

Volunteer Opportunities:

- Park Host, Adopt-A-Park, Friends’ Groups, Junior Rangers and annual clean-ups

Heritage Conservation

- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Oregon Heritage Commission
- Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries
- Administration of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Archaeological site assessments and permits
- State and federal tax incentive programs

State Park Funding

The 2003-05 budget of \$146.59 million is funded as follows:

- State lottery = 39 percent (\$57.17 million)
- Park user fees = 22.2 percent (\$32.51 million)
- RV registrations = 14.8 percent (\$21.76 million)
- Federal funds = 6.1 percent (\$8.98 million)
- Other agency transfers = 4.7 percent (\$6.86 million)
- ATV revenues = 4.9 percent (\$7.23 million)
- Small donations/grants = 2.1 percent (\$3.04 million)
- Other funds = 6.2 percent (\$9.04 million)

The budget is allocated 92 percent to operations, maintenance and programs’ supporting OPRD’s mission, and 8 percent is spent on administration.

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