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Background Brief on ...

State Parks and Recreation

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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 the OPRD declined as other demands for state monies increased.

Currently, the 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 (also called Measure 66 funds), park user and recreation vehicle registration fees, gas taxes attributable to off-highway vehicle use, and small amounts of federal funds, grants and donations. Voters approved lottery funds to repair aging state parks, support local community grants, and expand the state park system to keep pace with Oregon's population.

The department's responsibilities also include ocean shores, natural areas, 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 commission members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. In November 2000, the commission adopted *Target 2014*, a strategy and eight goals to support the OPRD's mission. This time frame reflects the 15-year funding commitment approved by voters with the passage of Ballot Measure 66 in 1998.

In May 2004, Governor Ted Kulongoski announced a new mission for the OPRD – to create one new state park per year for the next ten years. In 2004, the OPRD broke ground on Stub Stewart State Park

in Washington County, the state's first new full-service state park in 30 years, which opened in 2007. The department has also opened Sunset Beach State Park on the north Oregon coast in 2005, Fort Yamhill near Grand Ronde in 2006, and the Thompson's Mills historic site south of Albany in 2007. Crissey Field near Brookings is scheduled to open in 2008.

Oregon State Park System

The OPRD manages a park system that includes:

- Approximately 102,000 acres including 238 park areas, 180 of which have developed facilities
- 53 campgrounds, 5,656 traditional campsites, 62 group camp areas, and 275 other camping options, including yurts and log cabins
- 174 day-use parks, totaling 6,400 picnic sites, 57 picnic shelters, and 35 group picnic areas (the 2007 Legislative Assembly transferred responsibility for a portion of the state capitol mall from the Department of Administrative Services to the OPRD)

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
- Eleven group meeting halls
- Eight interpretive centers/museums
- Two historic inns

Outdoor Recreation & Resource Management

Recreational Resources:

- Significant local government grants for parks and recreation
- Motorized, non-motorized, and water trails
- Beach safety education

Natural Resources:

- Ocean shores – 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 Programs

- State Historic Preservation Office
- 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 Fair and Expo Center

By legislative action in 2005, the Oregon Fair and Exposition Center was merged into the OPRD, effective on January 2006. The fairground includes:

- The annual State Fair in late August through Labor Day
- Year-round exposition center concerts, festivals, shows, and other events

Since assuming management of the fairgrounds, the OPRD has created a new master plan, overhauled the business operations, and made several improvements to the grounds and marketing.

State Park Funding

The 2007-2009 budget of \$215.2 million is distributed as follows:

- State Park Operations, \$77,438,571 (36%)
- Grants, \$30,235,008 (14%)
- Acquisitions, \$22,739,224 (11%)
- Facility Investment, \$29,947,277 (14%)
- Recreation Programs & Planning, \$6,474,079 (3%)
- Heritage Conservation, \$5,914,859 (3%)

- State Fair, \$18,339,731 (8%)
- Administration, \$24,134,808 (11%)

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