



September 2014

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Background Brief on ...

State Parks and Recreation

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 Legislative Assembly 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 authorized the use of state highway funds for these purposes, so in these early years, state highway funds from gasoline taxes, private land donations, and federal funds provided the necessary funding to grow the system 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 an entity separate from the Department of Transportation. Throughout the 1990s, General Fund support for OPRD declined as other demands for state funds increased.

In 1998, voters approved Measure 66 which amended the constitution and dedicated 15 percent of Oregon lottery funds to state parks, beaches, habitat, and watershed protection. The 15 percent is split 50/50 between OPRD and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Lottery funds now provide 32 percent of OPRD's biennial budget. In order to maintain lottery funding, Oregon voters had to reauthorize the constitutionally dedicated lottery funds by 2014. Ballot Measure 76, approved by voters in 2010, amended the Oregon Constitution to continue the dedication of 7.5 percent of net lottery fund revenues to OPRD.

Currently, OPRD activities are funded primarily by state park user fees, Oregon lottery dollars, and recreational vehicle license fees.

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 (**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 May 2004, then-Governor Ted Kulongoski announced a new goal for OPRD – to create one new state park per year for the next 10 years. In 2004, 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 also opened Sunset Beach State Park on the north Oregon coast in 2005, Fort Yamhill near Grand Ronde in 2006, the Thompson's Mills historic site south of Albany in 2007, Crissey Field near Brookings in 2008, Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site near Joseph in 2009, Beaver Creek State Natural Area near Waldport in 2010, Bates State Park northeast of John Day in 2011, and Cottonwood Canyon State Park southeast of The Dalles in 2013.

Oregon State Park System

OPRD manages a park system that includes:

- 108,654 acres (as of June 2013) with over 250 park areas, 219 of which have developed facilities and/or other improvements; 55 campgrounds (28 open year round; 38 campgrounds have reservable sites) that charge an overnight site rental fee; approximately 5,500 standard campsites (including improved tent, primitive, and hook-up sites,); 48 group camp areas; and 350 specialty sites (including yurts, log cabins, tepees, and horse camp unit).
- Nearly all state parks have day-use areas. Facilities include 57 reservable day-use

areas at 17 parks, and 39 reservable picnic shelters at 24 parks; 26 parks charge a day use parking fee.

- The system serves more than 42 million people a year, among the top in the nation.

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; and
- 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 – 382 miles of shoreline
- State Scenic Waterways – 19 rivers totaling 1,150 miles and Waldo Lake
- Willamette River Greenway - 3,838 OPRD-managed acres

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

The Oregon State Fair began in 1858 as an agricultural exhibition and expanded in 1977 to

include an exposition center. By legislative action in 2005, the Oregon State Fair and exposition center was merged into OPRD, effective on January 2006. The fairground includes:

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

Since assuming management of the fairgrounds, OPRD has suggested that the State Fair and exposition center would benefit from a new governance structure. Senate Bill 7 (2013), established the State Fair Council (**Council**) as a public corporation to conduct and oversee the Oregon State Fair and exposition center and associated operations. The measure requires the Department of Administrative Services to report progress to an interim legislative committee on economic development by October 1, 2014, and sets a deadline of July 1, 2015 for transfer of the State Fair to the new Council.

State Park Funding

The 2013-15 legislatively adopted OPRD budget of \$209.4 million is distributed as follows:

- Direct Services: \$94.1 million (45 percent)
- Community Support and Grants: \$35.4 million (17 percent)
- Oregon State Fair and Expo Center: \$15.3 million (7 percent)
- Director's Office: \$4.6 million (2 percent)
- Central Services: \$33.1 million (16 percent)
- Park Development: \$26.9 million (13 percent)

The 2013-15 legislatively adopted revenues of \$248.17 million are distributed as follows:

- Lottery: \$79.2 million (32 percent)
- Park User Fees: \$42.0 million (17 percent)
- Beginning Balance: \$47.2 million (19 percent)
- RV Registrations: \$22 million (9 percent)
- Federal: \$11.8 million (5 percent)

- Oregon State Fair and Expo Center: \$11.0 million (4%)
- Other: \$19.0 million (8%)
- ATV: \$12 million (5%)
- Trust & Dedicated Funds, \$3.7 million (1%)

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