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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 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 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 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 monies 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. Lottery funds now provide 40 percent of OPRD's biennial budget. In order to maintain lottery funding, Oregon voters must reauthorize the constitutionally dedicated lottery funds by 2014. Currently, OPRD receives no General Fund dollars as a part of its funding structure. The Department is funded primarily through a combination of Measure 66 funds, park user and recreational vehicle registration fees, gas taxes attributable to off-highway vehicle use, and

small amounts of federal funds, grants and donations.

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 November 2000, the Commission adopted *Target 2014*, 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 Ballot Measure 66 in 1998. On September 18, 2008, the Commission adopted the Centennial Horizon Plan intended to help clarify priority activities, show where the agency needs to focus, and to measure performance.

In May 2004, Governor Ted Kulongoski announced a new mission 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 in 2009, and Beaver Creek State Natural Area near Waldport in 2010.

### **Oregon State Park System**

OPRD manages a park system that includes:

- Approximately 108,612 acres (as of June 2012) including 258 park areas, 180 of which have developed facilities.
- 57 campgrounds, 5,564 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 units.)

- 178 parks have day-use areas. Facilities include 6,400 picnic sites and 77 picnic shelters in 41 parks.
- The system serves more than 42 million people a year, among the top in the nation, and is funded by visitor fees, RV license registration and 7.5 percent of Oregon Lottery profits.

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 – 4,550 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

By legislative action in 2005, the Oregon 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
- Year-round exposition center concerts, festivals, shows, and other events

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

## State Park Funding

The 2009-2011 Legislatively adopted OPRD budget of \$199.9 million is distributed as follows:

- State Park Operations, \$82,000,000 (40 percent)
- Grants, \$27,000,000 (14 percent)
- Facility Investment, \$27,000,000 (14 percent)
- Administration, \$25,000,000 (13 percent)
- State Fair, \$16,100,000 (8 percent)
- Recreation Programs & Planning, \$6,500,000 (3 percent)
- Acquisitions, \$6,200,000 (3 percent)
- Heritage Conservation, \$5,200,000 (3 percent)
- State Fair Debt, \$4,100,000 (2 percent)

The 2009-2011 Legislatively adopted revenues of \$232 million are distributed as follows:

- Lottery, \$86,500,000 (38 percent)
- Park User Fees, \$37,400,000 (16 percent)
- Beginning Balance, \$31,000,000 (14 percent)
- RV Registrations, \$22,800,000 (10 percent)
- Federal, \$14,900,000 (6 percent)
- State Fair, \$12,700,000 (5 percent)
- Other, \$11,600,000 (5 percent)
- ATV, \$9,900,000 (4 percent)
- Trust & Sinking Funds, \$4,800,000 (2 percent)

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