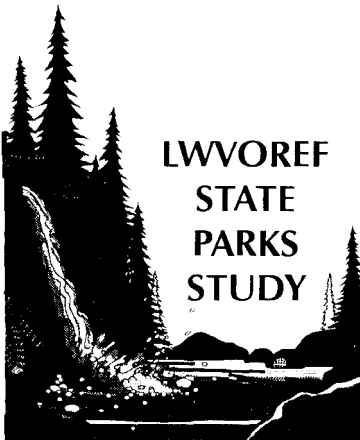


A STUDY OF OREGON STATE PARKS: PART 1

Background Material



OREGON PARKS SYSTEM FALLS BEHIND

The State of Oregon has outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic, and recreation sites in each of its climatic areas: coastal, valley, mountain, and high desert. Parks in Oregon are open to all, in keeping with Oregon's populist background. Although increasing disparity exists today among income groups in Oregon, parks represent a government spending program that benefits everyone, according to Brian Booth, who completed eight years as chair of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission (OPRC) at the end of 1997.

The Oregon parks system has been a model for other states in the past but during recent decades has fallen behind in land acquisitions, maintenance, and funding. This lag is occurring during a period of rapid increase in population and tourism, creating pressures and problems the parks system is struggling to meet. At the same time the state is enjoying a robust economy. Oregon's population is expected to increase by nearly 560,000 by the year 2010. Oregon State Parks' visitors-per-acreage ratio of 465:1 is far above the national average (63:1) and is the highest of the contiguous western states (average of 70:1). With 40 million visitors spending \$550 million annually including lodging taxes, state parks are Oregon's largest tourist attraction. In order to maintain this key economic advantage for the state, Booth maintains that we must not ignore the crisis in our parks system: "Parks mitigate the adverse consequences of growth." ▲

PARKS IN OREGON FACE FUNDING CRISIS

The Funding Crisis. In June, 1996 the OPRC announced the proposed closure of 65 of the state's more than 220 parks and the layoff of ten percent of the staff because of lack of funds. Following that action, the Legislative Emergency Board in November, 1996 appropriated \$1.8 million in General Fund dollars to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to avoid park closures during the 1995-97 biennium. While this action resolved the immediate crisis, no long-term assured funding mechanism is in place.

Stable funding for operating, maintaining, and expanding Oregon State Parks is the primary problem of the OPRD and related agencies. For 60 years prior to 1980 most revenue for parks came from the gasoline tax and matching federal funds. In 1980 voters approved a measure to prohibit the funding of parks from gasoline taxes, which were to be used exclusively for highway construction and maintenance. The lost funds were never replaced. Gas tax dollars had supported more than half of the state parks budget. Thus began the downward spiral of the parks system in Oregon.

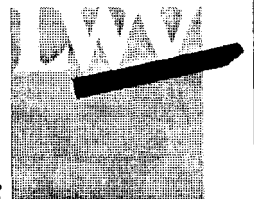
Another action that contributed to the parks crisis was passage in 1990 of Measure 5, which required that state income tax revenue be used to replace property taxes for funding schools. In addition, Measure 5 reduced parks revenue by decreasing the number of dollars designated

for parks from the registration of recreational vehicles. In 1994 voters passed Measure 11, which called for larger amounts of state income tax to be used for building prisons, thus further reducing income for parks.

According to Nan Evans, Senior Policy Analyst for the OPRD, significant changes have occurred in parks budgets from 1980 to the present. Although gas-tax dollars could not be used for state parks activities after 1980, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) continued to provide such services as accounting, personnel, payroll, and fiscal management. When OPRD became a separate agency in 1989, the parks department needed to begin to provide these services for itself.

The parks budget, adjusted for inflation, has increased just 7.2 percent since the 1983-85 biennium. Factors affecting the parks budget include the addition of programs, major technological changes, and rising costs, such as utilities. From 1983-1997 total staff increased by 3.4 percent--equivalent to 15 full-time positions. During

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this same time period, visitation increased by 26.7 percent--about five million more people per year.

Since 1980, parks money has been used almost entirely for daily operational expenses and short-term maintenance. Evans estimates that the cost of deferred maintenance for parks is close to \$120 million.

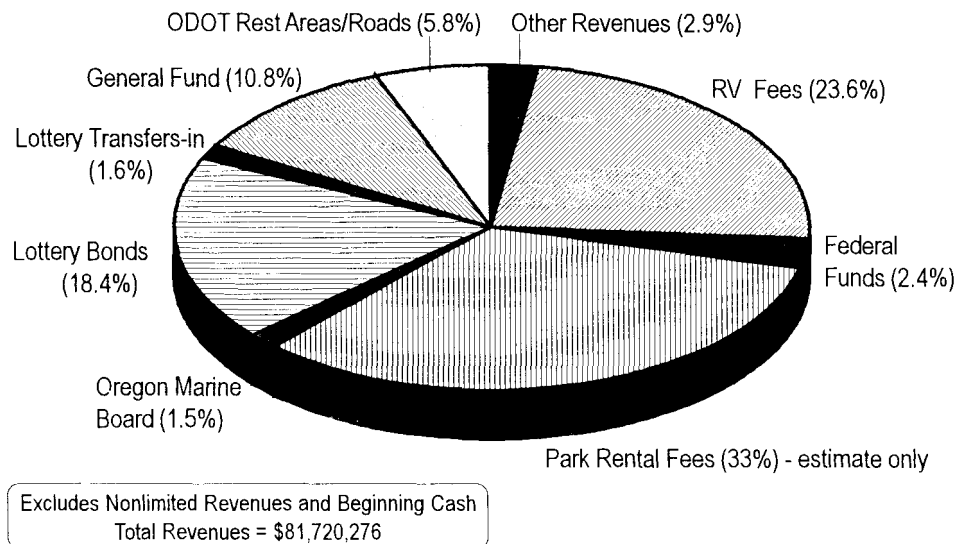
As a result of legislative actions and decreased federal funding, the parks system in Oregon has had to rely primarily on user fees (among the highest in the nation) and recreational vehicle registration fees to fund its operations. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which financed the construction of many park facilities and supported long-range planning efforts, has been discontinued in recent federal budgets. To help alleviate the problem of declining funds, the department has encouraged extensive volunteer participation, including legislatively sanctioned non-profit, tax-exempt Friends programs (educational and interpretive activities), Park Hosts, Adopt-A-Park programs, and annual beach-cleanup days. In addition it has sought help from foundations, entered into partnerships, contracted with private businesses, made property transfers, used prison inmates on some maintenance crews, and cut a significant number of staff.

During the 1997 legislature the majority party (R) recommended privatization of parks as a solution to the funding problem. This proposal did not go unnoticed by the public and the news media. Such an uproar occurred over the issue that legislators quickly withdrew the proposal and subsequently passed funding legislation.

According to Jackie Franke, liaison officer for the Oregon State Parks Trust, the perception by some that parks would be more efficiently run by private businesses does not take into account the fact that the OPRD must manage and maintain 362 miles of ocean beach, 19 rivers and lakes, and many historic trails as well as manage and maintain parks and campgrounds.

Dealing With the Crisis. The 1997 legislature responded to the funding crisis by increasing funding for the OPRD so the department can try to keep all parks open and can begin to renovate and repair facilities. OPRD officials

OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
1997-99 Legislatively Adopted Budget Revenues



consider the actions of the 1997 legislature to be "band-aid" remedies rather than long-term solutions. The major portion of the \$15 million lottery bond funds for the 1997-1999 biennium is scheduled to be used at Silver Falls and Fort Stevens State Parks. See table below for sources of budgeted revenues.

Moneys for the OPRD budget from the General Fund account for only 0.12 percent (less than one percent) of the entire state General Fund Budget. In the 1995-97 biennium these same moneys provided 8 percent of the department budget. The total budget equals \$85.9 million. Potential problems for Oregon's state parks have been identified by the OPRD as reduced camping revenues, unanticipated cost-of-living increases for employees, reclassification of some ranger positions (increased cost), and lack of funds for emergencies, such as water and sewer system problems. ▲

OPRD Funding in millions of dollars (as of 12-97)

State General Fund	\$ 8.8	32% increase over 1996-97
User Fees	27.0	Estimate
RV Registration Fees	19.3	
ODOT	4.7	Rest areas and roads
Oregon Marine Board	1.2	
Lottery Transfers	1.3	
Federal Funds	2.0	Decrease from prior years
Miscellaneous sources	6.6	
Lottery Bonds	15.0	Capital improvements

OREGON STATE PARKS HISTORY

Oregonians recognized early in the history of the state that they were fortunate to live in the midst of a variety of scenic and cultural attractions that needed to be preserved and managed for citizens and visitors. Since 52 percent of the state is federal land, our state parks system has emphasized areas with lower federal presence, especially the Pacific Coast, the Columbia River, and the Willamette Valley. Governor Oswald West in 1913, recognizing the aesthetic and economic value of Oregon's coastline, "with stealth and deception"¹ succeeded in getting legislators to declare that all of the wet-sand areas of Oregon beaches should be reserved for the public. Theodore Roosevelt considered Oswald West to be "a man more intelligently alive to the beauty of nature than almost any other man I have ever met holding a high political office."

Parks and highways have been closely related in Oregon, and the first push for state parks grew out of concern for parks and waysides needed by travelers. In 1933 the State Highway Commission was authorized to acquire park lands, and the Sarah Helmick State Park/Bradley Wayside parcels near Monmouth became the first, a gift to the state. Recognition of a state parks system occurred under Governor I. L. Patterson in 1929 as part of an effort to protect scenic areas along Oregon's highways.

Samuel Boardman, who had been a highway employee on a road crew and an inveterate tree planter, was named State Parks Engineer within the highway department in 1929. Over a 21-year period he built the land base that is the backbone of the present system. Boardman was skilled at negotiating bargain purchases and soliciting special gifts. He worked to acquire and protect timber strips on the borders of the state highways and to preserve the natural beauty of the state.



STATE PARKS MISSION

"To provide, protect and enhance sites and areas of outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic or recreational value for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations of Oregonians and their visitors."

Facilities were developed during the depression years of the 1930's, many of them by federally-funded Civilian Conservation Corps workers. The Silver Creek Recreation Demonstration Area near Salem was one of the projects built by CCC workers. It was later dedicated to the state and became one of the largest and most developed parks in the system.

The following chronology illustrates the development of a parks system in Oregon over a 15-year period (1947-1963):

- 1947 The State Parks Division was established in the Highway Department and a modern field organization began to evolve, with five regional offices established.
- 1957 The first permanent State Parks Advisory Committee was established within the State Highway Commission.
- 1959 The legislature broadened the commission's responsibility to include recreation and facility development, renaming the division the State Parks and Recreation Division.
- 1962 The first master plan for outdoor recreation became a guide for park planning.
- 1963 The Legislature directed the Highway Commission to acquire and develop scenic and historic areas in order to preserve these special places for public enjoyment.

In 1966, when the owner of the Surfsand Motel at Cannon Beach blocked public access to the beach for the exclusive use of his motel guests, Oregonians realized that Governor West's earlier efforts protected only *wet* beaches. A tough legislative battle in 1967, which included on-the-scene action by Governor Tom McCall, resulted in the passage of the so-called Beach Bill, establishing the public's access rights to the **dry-sand** beach areas as well. This became the basis for the state parks and recreation Ocean Shores Management Program.

¹ Walth, Brent, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story*, Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994.

Today all of Oregon's 362 miles of ocean beaches are public recreation areas under the control of the OPRD.

By comparison only 5 percent of the recreational shoreline of the United States is publicly owned. Only 8.4 percent of coastal miles in California are publicly owned.

The development of the Willamette River for public enjoyment became a campaign issue in the governors' campaigns during the 1960s. Bob Straub and Tom McCall both encouraged development of a greenway along the river, although the original idea came from Straub. Federal money from the Secretary of the Interior's contingency fund became available, and purchases of exceptional parcels began. A number of parks and trails along the river have been developed, but the concept of a continuous greenway has never been realized.

Waterways and trails were emphasized in the 1970s with the Willamette Greenway receiving new attention. Statewide land use planning, begun in 1973, included goals related to open space, scenic and historic areas, and recreation needs.

The State Parks 2010 Citizen Advisory Committee was established in 1988 by the Transportation Commission to

direct a strategic long-range process that would guide the Oregon State Parks program to the year 2010. This group identified major funding needs for park rehabilitation, land acquisition, maintenance and operation, and program development, and also recommended alternative funding sources. The 2010 Plan serves as a valuable reference for current and future state parks

Changes in State Park Acreage and Usage, and Oregon State Population, 1980-1996

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1996</u>
State Park Acres	92,489	89,141	91,605
State Park Visitors	34.4 mil	40.6 mil	39.5 mil
Estimated Oregon Population	2.63 mil	2.84 mil	3.2 mil

needs. It has not been implemented due to a lack of funding. However, it did lead directly to the formation of an independent department of parks.

In 1989 Governor Neil Goldschmidt convinced the Legislature to remove the administration of state parks from the Oregon Department of Transportation and to create a separate Parks and Recreation Department, with an appointed Parks and Recreation Commission authorized to oversee operations. Parks staff continue to work closely with ODOT in many areas where cooperation is desirable. ▲

OREGON'S PARKS SYSTEM IS BROAD AND COMPLEX

Oregon's parks system is a multi-million dollar public investment in land and facilities and is administered in six areas: North Coast (Lincoln City), Portland/Columbia (Portland), Central-Western Oregon (Florence), Southwest Oregon (Coos Bay), Central Oregon (Bend), and Eastern Oregon (Baker City). The department estimates its land value in excess of \$230 million, its timber value at \$100 million, and its facilities value at \$250 million. The investment includes about 92,000 acres of some of Oregon's most beautiful scenery, including the following developments:

- 172 day-use areas (over 6500 picnic sites and 63 picnic shelters)
- 69 public beach-access properties
- 83 Willamette Greenway properties and 24 scenic waterway properties
- 489 miles of recreation trails (biking, hiking, and equestrian)—224 paved miles
- A complex system of utilities in most parks, including more than 1000 restrooms and other utility buildings
- 112 boat ramps and/or docks in 40 parks plus 3 concession marinas
- 7 interpretive centers/museums
- Several thousand tables and stoves

More than half of Oregon's campgrounds are open year-round. The season for the remainder runs from about March 1 to dates in late October and November or early December. An innovation called Discovery Season (October through mid-May) features reduced rates and special camping incentives.

Programs assigned to the Department through public initiative or legislation include Historic Preservations, the Willamette River Greenway, Scenic Waterways, Outdoor Recreation Planning, and local Grants. Other functions of the Department are providing public information, budget and fiscal services, administrative support (including volunteer work), design engineering, and master planning.

A third of Oregon state parks are adjacent to the ocean shoreline. Most coastal parks have picnic areas and trails leading to beaches with spectacular seascapes, inter-tidal areas, miles of coastline, and the opportunity to see whales, sea lions, seals, and many species of waterfowl and marine birds. Other scenic sites in Oregon include the plunging waterfalls at Silver Falls and in the Columbia Gorge, wild flowers at Saddle Mountain, and the botanical garden at Shore Acres. Old-growth forests exist at Oswald West Park on the north coast, at Loeb on the south coast, and at Silver Falls in the Willamette Valley.

The Columbia River Gorge, a major travel corridor with highly visible scenic glory, is managed by the Columbia River Gorge Commission, an entity organized after passage of the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986. The bi-state Commission works with the U.S. Forest Service to manage the area. An Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Commission also exists to preserve, restore, and maintain "Old US30," the original Columbia River Highway. Although OPRD works with these groups, they are not part of the parks department.

Notable among state park sites are Rooster Rock, a tall

basaltic spire, and Crown Point State Park, whose principal features are the high basalt promontory and the Vista House.

Massive geological formations rise from canyon walls at parks in central and eastern Oregon, such as at Cove Palisades, Smith Rock, Succor Creek, Fort Rock, and Wallowa Lake.

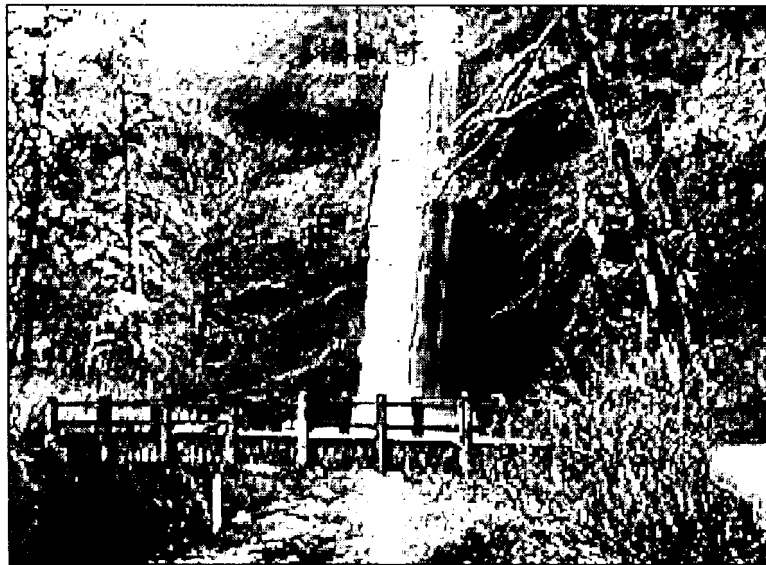
Cultural and historic site preservation includes Fort Stevens near Astoria, a remnant of a military outpost. Wolf Creek Tavern in southern Oregon, originally a stagecoach stop, and Frenchglen Hotel in the heart of southeastern Oregon's cattle country are operated as historic inns. Inactive lighthouses are preserved at Yaquina Bay, Cape Meares, Bullards Beach and other sites on the Oregon Coast.

Pioneer and cultural heritage is explained at Oregon Trail information shelters in four state parks and seven highway rest areas along I-84: in the Columbia Gorge at Crown Point, built in 1918 as a memorial to the pioneers who braved the rapids of Columbia River on the final leg of their westward journey; in the mid-Willamette Valley at Champoe, site of the establishment of Oregon's provisional government in 1843; and in John Day at Kam Wah Chung, a unique trading post used during the mid-19th century gold-mining era. Collier Park, north of Klamath Falls on Highway 97, features an open-air

museum of logging equipment used during the pioneering days of Oregon's timber industry.

These natural and cultural resources provide for outdoor recreation experiences in terms of solitude and relaxation, as well as for more active recreation such as swimming, boating, camping and picnicking.

While many approaches to acquiring, maintaining, and enhancing parks exist in the State of Oregon, the overriding principle is the original and enduring slogan of Oregon's parks agencies: "Protect the Best of Oregon." ▲



Silver Falls State Park located in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains is the largest park in the Oregon State Park system and is considered by many to be the crowning jewel of the park system.

OREGON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT (OPRD) AND RELATED AGENCIES

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), proposed by Governor Neil Goldschmidt and created by the State Legislature as an independent unit of state government in 1989, actually began operation on January 1, 1990. It is a small agency with a small budget, relative to other state agencies. The current Director is Robert Meinen. The total number of positions in the agency (about 670 full- and part-time positions) is roughly the same today as it was in 1981. The Department was authorized to specialize in a variety of park matters and promote support for park programs. The mission of the Department is "To provide and protect outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational sites for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations." Its slogan is "Protect the Best of Oregon."

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission (OPRC), appointed at the same time to replace the former Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, consists of seven members appointed by the governor to set policy, adopt rules for the agency, appoint the Director of OPRD, and oversee the activities of the agency. From its inception through 1997, the Commission has been chaired by Brian Booth. The newly appointed chair is Betsy McCool of Bend. The Commission also promotes the state's outdoor recreation policy and has specific authority to hire the department director, acquire property, and set fees for the use of park facilities.

Commissioners serve staggered four-year terms. As specified by state law, the commission has a representative from each of Oregon's five congressional districts, plus representatives of the area east of the Cascade Mountains and the area west of the summit of the Coast Range.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has maintained a relationship with the OPRD and provides a variety of support services, including some accounting, maintaining equipment inventories, some directional signing, some road engineering and paving, and funds for maintaining some rest areas and roads.

The Oregon Outdoor Recreation Council was established by governor's executive order to periodically review priorities for recreational development in Oregon and recommend methods of meeting the needs through coordination at all levels of government. The Council represents federal, local, and state agencies, including the state institutions of higher education where degree programs in the recreation field are offered.

The Oregon State Parks Trust is a non-profit corporation whose task is to raise money to accomplish tasks regarding Oregon State Parks. The Trust has a volunteer board, chaired by Dave Talbot, past director of the OPRD. The Trust solicits funds for specific projects, provides public-awareness education, and attempts to find development funds for endowments. The Trust has successfully solicited money from corporations, state agencies, and foundations.

The Oregon Heritage Commission was formed by the 1995 legislature with administrative responsibilities assigned to OPRD. The Commission is charged with broad responsibilities to assure the conservation and development of Oregon's heritage and to coordinate heritage activities. The Commission has nine citizen members, appointed by the governor, and an OPRD staff coordinator.

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3. Jackie Franke, Liaison Officer, State Park Trust.
4. Oregon State Representative Mike Lehman, Coos Bay.
5. Oregon State Representative Terry Thompson, Newport.
6. Lawrence C. Merriam, Jr., author, parks expert.
7. Robert Meinen, Director, OPRD.
8. Lynn Lundquist, Speaker of the House, Oregon Legislative Assembly.

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