

SB 331

Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee

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The Association of Oregon Counties urges your support for SB 331 which changes how revenues from RV recreational vehicles are apportioned between the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) and county parks.

SB 331 would revise this apportionment to a more equitable 50/50 split. Counties provide nearly half (49 percent or 5,139 campsites) of Oregon's combined OPRD and county park campsites yet receive only 35 percent of the funding from this dedicated source. In 2015, this percentage will drop to 30 percent.

County parks play an important role in the provision of recreation in Oregon's statewide system that includes State Parks, federal lands and local government parks. Each of Oregon's 36 counties has a parks system. For the most part, these parks are managed by a county, but a few counties have parks districts that provide parks services in unincorporated areas. In total, Oregon's county parks have about 56,500 acres of land and 178,000 acres of water resources.

County parks provide more than one-quarter (and as much as one-half) of water recreation opportunities in the state, such as boat ramps, non-motorized boat launches, and fishing piers. Many county parks were established to ensure access to prized fishing holes and allow for affordable and easily accessible family recreation close to home. County parks also have land-based recreation, such as tent campsites, RV/trailer campsites, and day-use picnic tables.

Our system of recreation is fraying: a report released in 2012 by EcoNorthwest documented that counties face a significant and growing backlog of deferred maintenance amounting to an estimated \$81 million. This backlog is found in counties of all sizes in all parts of the state. Left unaddressed, the backlog of deferred maintenance is likely to grow overtime, with some county facilities becoming unavailable for use. The deferred maintenance projects include, for example, deteriorating potable water systems in Douglas County; boat ramps and marinas in need

of repair in Josephine County; restrooms that need replacement in Coos County; septic system repairs in Lane County; electrical repairs for campgrounds in Josephine County; and replacement of showers in Baker County.

Counties have been resourceful and innovative in dealing with large scale reductions in revenues. Statewide, county park revenues have declined an average of 10 percent in the past six years, with a 53 percent reduction in General Fund support. Counties have mitigated this loss of revenues as creatively as possible, including forming public/private partnerships. For example, Jackson County negotiated a long-term agreement with the Britt Festival in Jacksonville to ensure the long-standing musical festival continues to operate in a county park, while at the same time contributing to revenues that fund other important parks. Counties have additionally taken aggressive business-like approaches to increasing fees for park use. Expenses have been managed through services level cuts which have included reductions in staffing and capital programs. As a result, park facilities are aging and deteriorating.

Revising the RV revenue apportionment would boost funding to county parks to help address this deferred maintenance backlog. By statute, the money must be used for “acquisition, development, maintenance, care and use of county park and recreation sites.” We recognize that this change will impact OPRD’s budget by about 2.5 percent of their total budget. With the passage of Ballot measure 76, State Parks now has a permanent, dedicated source of lottery revenue amounting to 7.5 percent of net lottery distributions, doubling their budget from \$105 million in 1999 to about \$200 million in 2013. As a result of this dedicated funding, OPRD has successfully reduced their original maintenance backlog of \$97 million in 1999 by 76 percent. According to OPRD, their deferred maintenance adds about \$3.6 million each year.

In summary, we support SB 331 because it will strengthen Oregon’s overall system of parks and recreation, provide a more equitable funding split of RV revenues, and help address a large backlog of deferred maintenance needs in county parks throughout the state.