



PARKS DEPARTMENT

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February 12, 2013

Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 347
Salem OR 97301

Dear Members:

The Douglas County Parks Department respectfully asks for your support of Senate Bill 331. Senate Bill 331 would provide for the equitable distribution of recreational vehicle registration fees between County Parks systems throughout the state and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

We believe a healthy county parks system is important to the unique lifestyle we all enjoy in Oregon. Our County Parks provide a diverse recreation experience that is tailored to meet the needs of our local residents as well as visitors from throughout the west. Douglas County Parks provide opportunities to ride ATV's across the Oregon dunes, camp along the beautiful North Umpqua River or go horseback riding and birding in the inland oak savanna foothills.

As you are aware, budgets in Oregon's rural counties are dwindling. Scarce resources are used for essential services such as public safety and roads while services such as County Parks and libraries are being reduced. Douglas County's total Parks budget has been reduced 45% since 2005; the dollars received from the general fund are down 70% and staff has been cut by 37% since that time.

Douglas County supports 52 developed parks including 8 campgrounds with a total of 303 campsites. At present we have six full time maintenance workers and one mechanic.

Many of our parks were built in the 1960's, 70's and 80's when the County budget was much healthier. Now these facilities are in need of upgrading and repair. Our deferred maintenance list includes over 40 significant projects with a conservative cost estimate of nearly three million dollars.

We are doing what we can to improve the situation. We have recently begun a program to identify and sell undeveloped/surplus Parks properties. Beginning the end of February an on-line reservation system will be available for our customers and we have revised our campsite reservation strategy to better reflect the current market.

Passage of SB 331 will ensure fair distribution of the RV license fees paid by our parks users. This small step will make a significant difference to County Parks systems throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,
Douglas County Parks Department

Gary Groth,
Director, Parks Department