



COOS COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

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Chairman Roblan , Senators Baertschiger, Burdick, Close, and Prozanski :

My name is Larry Robison and I am the Director for Coos County Parks. I am a past President and Board Member of the Oregon Parks Association and am representing both Coos County and OPA today.

I am here today to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 331. Coos County is a rural county with a population of around 61,000 people. Coos County for years has always relied on its natural resource jobs to fuel its economy, but over the last three decades has seen those jobs almost disappear. Most believe it can be attributed to government regulations and the Endangered Species Policy and others believe it's a change in our culture. No matter what the causes the result is the same, less families moving to or staying in Coos County. There has been a constant through this time however, and that is the natural beauty of Coos County has not changed and is still being discovered by visitors. The historic natural resource economy is now being supplemented by growing tourism economy. As a provider of many recreational facilities in close proximity to our local communities the Coos County Parks Dept has become a major asset to their economies.

The Coos County Parks Dept was established in 1966 to provide recreational opportunities to its citizens. At that time our funding source was the county general fund and was adequate for our needs. However as referred to above, times have changed and the Parks Dept is no longer in the general fund. We like other parks departments have had to rely on other funding sources. When the original RV licensing bill was passed and designated to help support State and County Parks it was needed and helped to offset the reduction in both agencies General Fund dollars. Since that time the citizens of our state have approved a state lottery system and out of that approved through Ballet Measure 66 funding for State Parks. That measure was supposed to expire in 2014 but with the passage of Measure 76 State Parks funding is now guaranteed in perpetuity. With State Parks funding now in place it is time to look at how county parks can begin to address their needs. While the increase of the allocation percentage from the current 35% to 50% in Senate Bill 331 will not solve all the needs of county park departments it will at least give us the opportunity to stay viable.

The Coos County Parks Dept currently manages 32 park facilities which include 7 major campgrounds with hookups, 5 primitive campgrounds, 9 boat ramps, 6 day use areas, and 5 non-developed areas for hiking, walking etc. In four of our major campgrounds we have at least two restrooms each which are over 30 years old and need major upgrades or replacement. The roadways and campsites are in need of overlays and the utilities in need of replacement. Historically we have had 12 FTEs and 6 seasonal positions to maintain and operate our facilities, but due to budget cutbacks we currently have 9 FTEs of which 2

include the Director and Office Manager and 1 seasonal position. It has become increasingly difficult to maintain our existing facilities let alone do any upgrades.

The increase in the distribution percentage would allow Coos County to at least get back to some kind appropriate staffing and allow us to begin some upgrades and or replacements.

You have or will hear many of the same concerns from other county parks departments and I urge you to listen to their concerns. Oregon is a great place to live and play and in order to provide the amenities required, it will take the county parks to help fill the need that OPRD can't.

I thank you for your time and would appreciate your support for Senate Bill 331.

Larry Robison Director Coos County Parks