



3/6/13

Senator Chris Edwards and Representative Ben Unger,  
Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: HB 5034, Public Hearing 3/6/2013, 1:00 PM

Chairs and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Parks Association (OPA) urges your support for HB 5034, approving the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) budget for fiscal year 2013/2015. OPA has long been a partner of OPRD and appreciates the assistance provided by the agency to local park providers.

OPA has worked with OPRD to encourage a statewide, holistic approach to meeting the outdoor recreation needs of Oregonians. Cities, counties, special districts, and state providers are all part of the overall Oregon parks and recreation system each contributing vital access to Oregon's outdoor. If anyone of these levels of the parks system is fails then the whole system is in jeopardy. Voters have consistently signified their support for Oregon's system of parks and outdoor recreation facilities. In order to meet the needs of Oregonian, all recreation providers, both state and local, must have adequate funding. The success of Oregon's recreation providers is dependent upon cooperation and coordination, and this especially true in a challenging fiscal environment.

Although the levels are reduced, the proposed OPRD budget will continue grant support for local communities through programs such as the Local Government Grant Program. These grants are critical in providing local recreation opportunities across our state. If approved this bill will also help OPRD provide a solution to managing the State Fair and Expo center, which is critical to a sustainable financial future for OPRD.

Another key aspect of the proposed legislation is a nominal fee increase for select overnight accommodations in State Parks. These fees are necessary to fund park operations, but the increase is equally important to other park providers in determining the market rate for camping in public facilities. Local park providers are increasing being asked to operate more self-sufficiently and without general funds. In order to meet this requirement, park providers will need to maintain fees consistent with that of other local and private providers. If OPRD fees are held artificially low for several years, it has a negative effect on other providers, compounding current budgetary challenges. We urge you to support OPRD's efforts to maintain fees at a market balanced level which sustains equity across the entire parks system.

Lastly, we urge you to support SB 331 which will provide a balanced approach to allocating RV licensing fees between OPRD and Oregon's county parks. The reallocation proposed through SB 331 will have far-reaching effects on the County Park's ability to sustain current service levels and address deferred maintenance issues.

Sincerely,

Steve Lambert  
Oregon Parks Association, President