



To: Members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**From: Stephanie Redman, Executive Director
Oregon Recreation & Park Association**

Date: February 25, 2014

Re: Support of SB 1514

ORPA is a statewide 501c3 nonprofit association representing 800 park and recreation professionals and agencies across Oregon, including city, county, special district and state parks and recreation agencies. We congratulate County Parks & State Parks on reaching a compromise on the allocation of RV registration fees. ORPA encourages passage of SB 1514.

While we support the legislation and are pleased that county parks will receive much-needed funding to support a backlog in facility maintenance and upkeep, we recognize the challenge faced by OPRD in having its funding reduced both immediately and cumulatively. As a statewide association that represents the interests of all park and recreation facilities in Oregon, including municipal, county, district, and state parks, we feel that this legislation and the compromise it represents only underscores the need for the legislature to begin the conversation about how to expand resources for all park facilities in the state. Moving funds from one part of the park system to another is not a sustainable solution for Oregon's parks, as all park providers are experiencing shortfalls and the resulting disintegration of park facilities and services.

To highlight the need, we have provided examples (attached) of the financial hardships faced by municipal and special district park and recreation programs and facilities. Unfortunately, many other agencies have similar stories of deferred maintenance, facility deterioration, and cuts to programs and services – all of which affect Oregonians' quality of life and community recreation and health and wellness.

ORPA respectfully encourages a collaborative discussion of ways to expand resources for parks and recreation programs and facilities in Oregon, and we welcome the opportunity to foster and participate in that conversation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or our lobbyist, Elizabeth Howe. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Redman
Executive Director



Redmond Area Park & Recreation District

46% of the Redmond Area Park & Recreation District's (RAPRD) budget is based on property taxes; the remainder comes from fees charged for park & recreation services and programs, but the demographics of Redmond don't support the collection of higher fees from service users. Because of decreased tax revenues and the impracticality of raising fees, RAPRD has seen an annual reduction in its revenues of four to five percent annually for each year since 2008.

Naturally, the district has been forced to decrease its expenditures, which translates into a reduction of recreation services and maintenance of its parks and recreation facilities. Specifically, the district has:

- **Delayed capital improvements at all parks** and is able to provide only basic general maintenance (no enhancements)
- **Delayed capital improvements to its swim center** for the last two years, *which has jeopardized the District's ability to meet ADA compliance at its pool facility*
- **Reduced subsidized enrollment and total number of District before- and after-school programs**, *leaving many Redmond-area children at risk during their time outside of school*
- **Tabled all planned improvements and restoration of the 1889 Tetherow Crossing House**, the oldest house in Deschutes County, to save the structure and transform it into a community gathering place. The District acquired the Tetherow house in 2006 but budget realities have prevented the District from performing any maintenance services on the property since 2009, *leaving the site vulnerable to further deterioration or loss.*

Woodburn Community Services (includes parks, library, aquatic center and recreation program)

Property tax compression and flat or declining tax revenues in the face of increased personnel and other program cost increases have forced the City of Woodburn to make reductions in its parks, aquatics, and recreation facilities and offerings. As a result, the City has:

- **Halted park capital improvements**, leaving Woodburn with a backlog of \$20 million in unaddressed park improvement projects. For example, acquisition of land for a new park in southeast Woodburn was terminated because of lack of funding, and the city now operates in a "triage" approach to park facilities maintenance and enhancements.
- **Reduced funding for teen centers and at-risk youth programs**, operated in conjunction with the local Boys & Girls Club. After-school care programs have been eliminated by the City and a teen drop-in center was closed.
- **Raised fees, cut city funding by 50%, and reduced services and operating hours at Woodburn's Aquatics Center** in order to keep the center open. Center staff was also laid off.
- **Reduced development of recreation services and special community events** as staff and funding reductions cannot support service expansion.
- **Been forced to more complex administrative procedures for recreation services that redirect already reduced staff time from service delivery to administration.** For example, to maintain current community recreation programs, staff has spent time raising funds from the private sector instead of operating or developing recreation services. With staff cuts, more time is directed to outsourcing special event services, such as lighting, staging, bathroom maintenance, etc., and services for events like the community Fourth of July celebration, which previously were done by park maintenance staff.