

# TILLAMOOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*"To Serve and Protect"*



*Sheriff Andy Long*

**To: Chairman of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**  
**Attn: Representative Brad Witt**

**From: Deputy Dean Burdick-Forest Patrol Division**  
**Tillamook County Sheriff's Office**  
**5995 Long Prairie Road**  
**Tillamook, Oregon 97141**

**Re: Testimony-Senate Bill 2453**  
**Prohibiting Unauthorized Commercial Events**

**Dear Representative Witt,**

First and foremost, I want to thank you for your time and consideration in helping us address the issue of illegal rave events that are being organized on Oregon Department of Forestry land. This recent issue has caused risk of serious health and public safety issues not just in Tillamook County, but to the surrounding counties as well. Over the past four and half years, I have been involved in the enforcement of illegal rave activities while on duty as a forest deputy for the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office.

### **What is an illegal rave event?**

An illegal rave event is often referred to as an outdoor music event by rave organizers. The illegal rave events typically involve hundreds of participants. Most of the rave events are scheduled as a three day event from Friday to Sunday. By statute, organizers of these events are required by law to obtain a permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry. To this date, organizers of the rave events that have occurred on Oregon Department of Forestry land have not obtained the required permits from the land manager. The required permits are related to sanitation, parking, road use, fire safety, security, as well as other public safety issues.

While investigating the illegal rave events, I typically have seen hundreds of motor vehicles that are parked on the Oregon Department of Forestry roads. Once on scene at the rave site, I usually see hundreds of participants that are dressed in costume or theme related attire. Sometimes I have observed the participants as being partially clothed. These participants range in age from 12 years to 50 years of age.

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While on forest patrol, I have observed that the rave event participants typically wear animated costume theme attire. In the past I have seen themes ranging from Star Wars, Fuzzy Animals, Disneyland characters, Pirates, Unicorns as well as other themes. I have been told that the bright, animated, and sometimes fuzzy costumes add a euphoric state of mind for the participants of the rave event. Most of the participants of the rave events are often found to be under the influence of the illegal drugs MDMA/Ecstasy. In 2012, the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office investigated the drug related death of a female subject that occurred at a rave event on public land in south Tillamook County.

While investigating illegal rave events, I have often found camping style tents that were placed throughout the Oregon Department of Forestry land. These tents are typically hidden out of view and out of the rave dance area. It is at these tent locations that you often find females and males inside of the tents. The average age range of the participants who are in the tents range from 12 years to 50 years of age. I have learned that illegal activity including sexual acts as well as narcotic activity take place inside of these tents. I have been told that participants are often charged a fee for using the tents while they are at the illegal rave event. Deputies often suspect that underage juveniles are often victims of sexual abuse by the adult participants.

Rave events typically have a disc jockey or live music entertainment. In addition, the rave events include techno lights, strobe lights, as well as neon lights that glow in the dark. There is a strong correlation between the themed costumes techno music, neon lights, and the illegal use of MDMA/Ecstasy at these rave events. I know that the combination of the above create a very stimulating and euphoric experience to the participants. This combination also provides a very dangerous situation as the participants are typically not in control of their personal safety as well as the safety of the other participants.

## **Why is there illegal rave activity on Oregon Department of Forestry land?**

First and foremost, law enforcement does not have information about an illegal rave event until the rave event has actually started. Early detection of rave events is very difficult because these events are usually held on Oregon Department of Forestry land in areas where the general public could not see the event from a known location. On rare occasion, the sheriff's office will get an anonymous report from a citizen who has seen a rave event being advertised via social media.

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Illegal rave events have increased on Oregon Department of Forestry land for several reasons. One of the reasons is that cell phone technology allows organizers to invite thousands of potential participants to a rave event using social media. Rave organizers can sell hundreds of admission tickets to a rave event using their cell phones and computers in a very short time frame.

Secondly, early detection of a rave event is very difficult because of cell phone technology. Rave event organizers do not have to use traditional advertising methods such as billboards, newspapers and or posters to advertise the rave event. Most of the advertising is done through private messaging using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, as well as other social media sites. The advertising of future rave events is almost undetectable unless law enforcement is provided with an anonymous tip or complaint.

Third, it has been reported to law enforcement that the reason for the increased trend of illegal rave events on Oregon Department of Forestry land is due to the fact that indoor venues and or locations are becoming very hard for rave organizers to contract with. In addition, there is very little cost to the organizer of a rave event held on Oregon Department of Forestry land. While investigating rave events, I have been told by rave organizers that the fines on the violation tickets that have been issued are a very small fraction compared to the amount of money proceeds that they gain from one single rave event.

### **Example of Ineffective Rave Enforcement**

During the 2012 and 2013 calendar years, the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office and the Washington County Sheriff's office responded to the report of approximately twelve illegal rave events that had occurred during the summer months on Oregon Department of Forestry land. It was at these rave events that deputies had made contact with a rave organizer identified as Alex. It was at these rave events that Alex was warned about having to obtain the required permits from the Oregon Department of Forestry before he can organize a rave event. Alex was given several warning during this time frame.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, I responded to the report of an illegal rave on Oregon Department of Forestry land near Highway 26 near milepost 28. Upon arrival I recognized the rave event organizer as once again being Alex who was the same suspect from the 2012/2013 rave events that occurred on Oregon Department of Forestry land. It was at this time that I cited Alex for not having the required permits from the Oregon Department of Forestry.

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On April 20<sup>th</sup> 2014 at about 2:00am, I responded to the report of an illegal rave on Oregon Department of Forestry land near the intersection of Fire Road and Salmonberry Road. Upon arrival I could see several hundred vehicles as well as several hundred participants that were taking part in an illegal rave event. While I was conducting my investigation, I made contact with a male suspect who was one of the rave organizers. I immediately recognized that male suspect as once again being Alex who had been previously cited by me on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013 for organizing an illegal rave event near Highway 26 at milepost 28 on Oregon Department of Forestry land. To this date this subject has refused to comply with the requirements set forth by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

### **Example of the Risk Of Physical Injury/Death Related To Illegal Raves**

Rave events on public land have created the risk of serious physical injury and or death due to hundreds of vehicles that are traveling to and from the rave events using public roads and or state highways. In August 2013, the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office responded to the report of a motor vehicle accident that occurred on Oregon Department of Forestry land near Sterling Ranch Road. The motor vehicle accident occurred at the location of a very large illegal rave event.

Following an investigation, deputies learned that a male suspect age 65 drove his Mercedes Benz into a tent that was occupied by three subjects that were attending the rave event. Once the driver drove through the tent, he continued driving north on the gravel road before crashing his vehicle over an embankment. The driver of the vehicle was arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). The driver is also suspected of being a MDMA/Ecstasy dealer for the rave event. The driver of the vehicle was found guilty of the related charges.

Rave Events on public land have created the risk of serious physical injury and or death due to violent assaults that have occurred at rave events. In 2012, the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office responded to the report of a rave event located on Oregon Department of Forestry land on University Falls Road. It was estimated that there were over 600 motor vehicles parked on the single lane gravel road that belonged to the participants of the illegal rave event. These motor vehicles made it impossible to travel to the location of the illegal rave event.

It was reported that a riot had occurred at the illegal rave event which resulted in serious physical injuries to the participants. The following morning, deputies were able to drive within walking distance to the rave event in attempt to shut down the event. Once on

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scene, deputies found very large pools of blood and other matter in the area of the reported riot. No arrests were made due to lack of evidence and or victims in the case.

## **Other Risks Related To Illegal Rave Events**

Rave Events on Oregon Department of Forestry land have created health risks due to illegal littering. Participants often leave large amounts of garbage including tents, sleeping bags, condoms, sanitary napkins, food products, as well as other garbage. In addition, hundreds of participants are using the public forest area as a restroom. Large amounts of human feces have been observed being left behind in plain view following the termination of the rave event.

Rave Events on public land have created the risk of forest fire due to the fact that these events typically have dozens of large campfires throughout the rave event. Deputies have observed camp fires that were in the middle of the forest during fire season. There is typically no water resource or fire apparatus on site during these events. In June of 2013, I responded to the report of an illegal rave event on Oregon Department of Forestry land on Rutherford Road. It was at this time that I observed between 5-10 very large fires.

## **What is a possible solution to the enforcement of illegal rave activity?**

It is my belief that developing laws that are directly related to organizing and or participating in the illegal rave events on Oregon Department of Forestry land is the key to reducing this illegal activity as well as providing safety to the public. These rave parties pose potential risk for health issues, serious physical injury, deaths, as well as financial loss to the property manager. Enforcement of illegal rave events on Oregon Department of Forestry land has not been effective due to the fact that there are no laws that directly allow us as a law enforcement agency to take action on the rave event organizer or to a participant. Most recently, we have had to rely on some statutes that apply to the case, but that do not provide us with appropriate fines, fees, or sanctions that help deter future illegal rave activity. The current statutes that we have been exercising are violation level statutes related to outdoor music events that carry very little fines and or fees.

In closing, I want to thank you once again for your time and consideration in this matter. It is because of your efforts that we have support in providing public safety to not only the general public, but to the law enforcement officers who respond to these high risk events.

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Sincerely,

*Deputy Dean Burdick*

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