



TO: Senate Committee on General Government & Accountability
79th Oregon Legislative Assembly
Senate Bill 384, State Fair Council

14 March 2017

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee members: of *Camassia*, 3 of *Chlorogalum*

On behalf of Oregon citizens, I aim to speak to the **ecological, cultural, historical, and other values of two sectors of the state fairgrounds in Salem**, for which Senate Bill 384 proposes to modify ownership and responsibility, i.e. "exclusive care, custody, and control over fairground properties" (p. 1, lines 19-20), including the potential acquisition, sale, and management of fairground properties (p. 3, lines 15-19). I understand ownership is currently vested in the State of Oregon, with management by Oregon's Department of Administrative Services (DAS), recently changed from Oregon State Parks a few years ago. The State Fair Council, a public corporation as of 2013, also now provides services related to the State Fair with board members appointed by the governor.

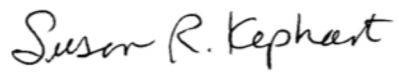
Regardless of eventual vesting of ownership or management, whomever the public trust resides should be aware of the following facts and values, and directed to act to retain and protect in perpetuity the native trees, wildflowers, and habitats which provide essential ecological services in these communities, and to Oregon citizens, and local neighborhoods. The two sectors include most importantly, the Fairgrounds Oak Grove (at junction of 17th and Silverton road, adjacent to railroad), and the camas meadow (SE corner of 17th & Sunnyview, and ideally the adjacent sector N of that, just E of the Fair entrance). Supporting reasons include:

1. Both sites are **important spring wetlands that retain water through at least March, and support diverse wildflowers** including **camas plants dug for food/trading by Native American tribes**.
2. These include **populations of great camas (*C. leichtlinii*) and/or camas (*C. quamash*) that provide essential nectar, pollen for pollinators that are likely important in neighborhood gardens** as well. The trees, seeds and bulbs also sustain or provide habitat for birds and small animals. The camas populations are unusual in their size and/or flowering time, so may be important genetically.
3. **Historically and culturally, the Oak Grove was an encampment sited used Native tribes during the State Fair** and likely prior to that time and by other Oregonians as well. Until its decay and removal very recently, a totem was erected to honor the Native American Heritage of Kalapuyas and/or other tribes. Sometime this past year, the commemorative sign was removed, but will hopefully is being restored.
4. **Ecologically, and most importantly for the future, the Fairgrounds Oak Grove represents one of the few remaining stands of old to mid-aged oaks in N Salem within city limits. It provides wetland and oak savannah-woodland habitat, and serves as a green space that is valuable as a corridor, usable for shade during the fair, and has sustained at least four nesting pairs of the acorn woodpecker.**
5. **Finally, the Oak grove (*Quercus garryana*) has received attention by many as for "heritage trees" that need state protection.** See the websites: Salem's heritage tree page and our ordinance to protect them. <http://www.cityofsalem.net/Residents/Parks/UrbanForestry/Pages/Salem%27sHeritageTrees.aspx> and <http://www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/Planning/Documents/Land%20Use%20App%20process%20packets/Tree%20Preservation%20Ordinance%20-%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>

Please feel free to ask me questions that will help in your deliberations.

Thank you for this opportunity to share and present testimony today at the hearing.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan R. Kephart".

Dr. Susan Kephart
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and Salem Citizen
Salem, Oregon

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