



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Parks and Recreation Department

725 Summer St. NE, Suite C

Salem, OR 97301-1271

(503) 986-0980

Fax (503) 986-0794

stateparks.oregon.gov

March 6, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you about the importance of SB 838 to the long-term financial sustainability of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. I am Lisa Sumption, Director of OPRD.

Oregon State Parks are integral to the state's tourism economy, recreation, and preservation of natural, cultural, historical and scenic recreational resources. We are unlike other state agencies—visitors must choose to use our services which are spread around the state in more than 250 state parks and 360 miles of public coastline.

The agency is currently funded by three main sources: state lottery funds, user fees and recreational vehicle registration dollars. OPRD is not supported by taxpayer's general fund dollars and has tried to meet growing demand and maintenance on the state park system with these limited revenue streams. However, the system faces severe financial constraints due to fixed expenditure limits and reliance on state lottery funds and user fees. Without action, a budget deficit is imminent in the 2027-2029 biennium. To sustain and enhance park operations, there is a critical need for greater flexibility in both expenditure authority and revenue generation.

Because of the agency's unique service portfolio and public role, statutory purchasing and printing restrictions increase costs and reduce efficiency without providing a parallel increase in public value. SB 838 provides exemptions from requirements for procurement and printing that other executive branch agencies follow.

Procurement

State procurement processes that are not designed for 24/7 hospitality services, often located in rural areas. Changes in state procurement systems have exacerbated purchasing problems across the agency. Department staff have worked diligently with the Department of Administrative Services to seek exemptions from many of these requirements. Recognizing our unique role and well-developed internal systems, OPRD has been granted exceptions to many of the most onerous and expensive requirements. SB 838 would further exempt OPRD from procurement regulations while communicating with visitors and promoting or providing education about state park or recreational resources. If amended, SB 838 would allow OPRD exemptions from procurement statutes similar to Travel Oregon, Oregon Lottery and the Travel Information Council.

Many state parks run like small communities, Fort Stevens on the North Coast, for example has 5,000 campers moving in and out most nights—more than the nearby community of Warrenton.

Our park staff are responsible for ensuring the water and sewer systems are running, electricity is on, and visitors can access park facilities. With a park system that is over 100 years old and over 51 million visits a year statewide- things break. The state procurement system often results in more expensive and slower responses to emerging issues. Exemptions would allow quicker solutions to infrastructure issues like repairing broken water/sewer systems that need to happen timely as our campgrounds are full and visitors are relying on the water and sewer to be fully functioning during their stay. The need for an immediate or emergent vendor repair or part replacement is a reality on any given day.

Printing

OPRD has a range of printing needs which are used to communicate with visitors and recreation enthusiasts across the state and beyond. These printed materials include die-cast stickers to denote grant-funded infrastructure, gift shop souvenirs, promotion of Oregon Main Street locations, and park trail maps. SB 838 would provide OPRD the authority to seek the product quality and service level it needs to continue to provide world class recreational experiences to park visitors outside of currently required DAS Printing & Distribution processes.

DAS Printing & Distribution provides a great service for many printed items; however, the unique needs of our agency are often not within the scope of their services. When that happens, the agency secures a printer but is still required to pay a fee to DAS for printing. SB 838 would allow the agency the flexibility to utilize the most cost effective, printing services for the products needed while still complying with ORS 282.210-282.230 as required of all public agencies.

Oregonians love their parks, so much so, that they voted twice to constitutionally dedicate lottery funds to support the park system, and although they provide nearly 49% of our budget, park user fees cannot be the only tool we have to increase revenue. Visitors expect more from us as a state agency. They want more modern-day amenities and improved park services, and we simply are not agile enough to meet the needs.

The vision for Oregon State Parks is a financially resilient, visitor-focused system that operates with the agility of a modern economical organization while maintaining our commitment to our mission, conservation, and public service.

We understand that we are a government agency, but we need support to make better business decisions that create future financial stability for the state parks system for generations to come and not become a burden on the state general fund. SB 838 is an important step in moving the state park system toward this vision. I ask for your support.