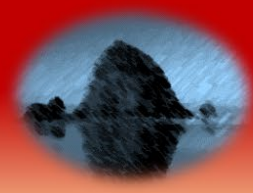




# Cannon Beach

## Rural Fire Protection District

188 SUNSET BLVD · PO BOX 24 · CANNON BEACH OR 97110  
(503) 436-2949 · EMERGENCY DIAL 9-1-1



May 8, 2025

House Committee On Revenue  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

### RE: Support HB 3962-2 – Ensuring Sustainable Tourism and Community Safety

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee,

#### Tourism Grows—So Do Emergency Demands

Tourism is vital to Oregon's coastal economy, supporting local jobs and small businesses. The same visitors who drive economic activity also rely on local public safety services to stay safe while they recreate—services funded primarily by local property taxes, not tourism revenue. In places like Clatsop County, where the year-round population is about 40,000, the number of people in the community can swell to more than 120,000 during peak tourism months. Places like Cannon Beach and Seaside, tourism is the economy that supports those communities. There needs to be a balance between TLT funds supporting tourism and supporting public safety. I do not believe the current system does that anymore; but I am also not in favor of eliminating the requirement for money to be earmarked for things like DMO and visitor centers, but there needs to be a balance.

In Clatsop County alone, 11 volunteer-supported fire agencies are expected to serve both residents and tens of thousands of visitors—despite limited funding, staffing, and infrastructure. These agencies were never designed or resourced to handle a threefold population increase, yet that's the reality they face every year. It is the rural fire districts that are extremely left out in the tourism, they receive no revenue from lodging tax, but are burdened with providing the serviced. Places like Elsie, Hamlet and Knappa Fire Districts are tasked with the extreme influx of traffic on US Hwy 26 and 30, and the influx of people visiting natural areas and getting hurt, but receive no help in finding these services, as only cities and counties receive TLT funds. Clatsop County has proposed, with the change to how TLT funds can be used, to distribute funds to these rural fire districts.

#### The Revenue is There—But We Can't Use It

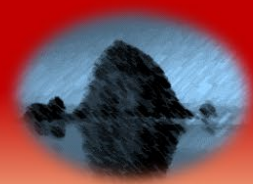
State law (ORS 320.350) mandates that 70% of any new or increased local Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenue must go toward tourism promotion or tourism-related facilities. That leaves only 30% for other local needs—even when tourism significantly drives up the cost of essential services. As a result, cities and counties are left with rising public safety demands and few financial tools to address them. Seaside and Cannon Beach both fund ocean lifeguards. Cannon Beach spends \$265,000 to have lifeguards on the beach April through October, this is a tourism driven activity, but under current rules, TLT funds can not be used to support this. Hamlet Fire District calls have increased from 70 calls a year prior to 2020 to over 200 in the last couple years. This is directly an effect of increased traffic on US 26, but there is not increased revenue to support Hamlet Fire District. Cannon Beach Fire provides technical rescue



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services such as surf rescue and high angle rope rescue due to the natural areas the district serves, all state parks, but receives no revenue from TLT or state parks to fund these.

In response to these challenges, Clatsop County allocated \$250,000 of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for investments in rural fire services. Using these ARPA dollars, [agency name] was able to [insert specific use, e.g., purchase new equipment, hire seasonal staff, or upgrade facilities]. This support enabled us to [insert specific impact, e.g., improve response times, expand coverage during peak season, or enhance firefighter safety]. Even this relatively modest allocation had a meaningful impact—but the growing, tourism-driven strain on our resources demands a more reliable, long-term solution.

### **Needs to be a balance**

I spent several years on the Chamber of Commerce board, I understand the need for DMO and visitor centers, as well as other marketing activities. I do not support limiting these activities and would only support this bill with the assurances in it that cities and counties could not strip away funding from current activities. Reducing funding to these marketing activities would have a negative effect on the economy of these areas. However, many cities and counties are receiving more marketing money than they can spend, such as Seaside that has a \$11 million reserve of TLT funds. These funds should be able to be used to support public safety (police, fire, and dispatch).

**I respectfully urge you to examine HB 3962-2, modify if needed, and support a balanced approach to fund tourism marketing while providing for public safety to ensure that communities can continue to welcome visitors safely and responsibly.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marc Reckmann, Fire Chief  
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District