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Oregon celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2009.  
 Visit [www.oregon150.org](http://www.oregon150.org) for more information.



# Protecting Oregon's Natural and Fiscal Resources

*Ensuring a legacy for Oregonians  
 and their public schools  
 through sound stewardship of lands,  
 wetlands, waterways, unclaimed property,  
 estates and the Common School Fund.*



## AN HISTORIC AGENCY

The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) is the administrative arm of the State Land Board, Oregon's oldest board. Established by the Oregon Constitution in 1859, the Land Board has been composed of the Governor, Secretary of State and State Treasurer throughout its history.

At statehood in 1859, the federal government granted Oregon 3.4 million acres of land to finance schools. The "land-rich, cash-poor" state quickly sold many school lands, as state officials felt private ownership of these lands would yield more for schools through property taxes and other economic benefits.

Only about a fifth of Oregon's original acreage – 770,900 acres – now remains in state ownership. In 1991, a federal court determined that Oregon was entitled to additional land not obtained at statehood. DSL has been working with the federal government to obtain the remaining land, with a goal of securing the remaining 2,600 acres by 2009, Oregon's 150th birthday.

## WHAT WE DO

DSL protects natural and fiscal resources in three ways:

- **Managing lands and navigable and tidally influenced waterways** granted to Oregon at statehood by the federal government with revenues dedicated to the Common School Fund.
- **Protecting the state's waterways and wetlands** – and their functions and services – through the removal-fill permit program.
- **Acting as trustee** for unclaimed property, and for estates with no will and no known heir.

DSL handles the Land Board's day-to-day work managing resources dedicated to the Common School Fund:

**Land:** Nearly 637,000 acres of rangeland and agricultural land; approximately 105,800 acres of working forest, including the Elliott State Forest, and about 24,000 acres of forestland designated for special stewardship uses; and 4,100 acres of industrial, commercial and residential land.

**Waterways:** 800,000 acres of land under navigable and tidal waters and the Territorial Sea held in trust for public navigation, recreation, fisheries and commerce.



**Unclaimed Property:** Abandoned assets such as bank accounts, unclaimed checks and safe deposit box contents.

**Escheat property:** Assets from estates with no will and no known heir.

## DSL MANAGES LAND

At statehood, the federal government granted Oregon roughly six percent of the new state's land to finance schools. The Oregon Constitution dedicates the mineral, timber and other resource rights of school lands to the Common School Fund.

The Constitution also establishes the State Land Board as trustee of the fund, and requires the board to manage lands under its care to obtain the greatest benefit for Oregonians, consistent with resource conservation under sound techniques of land management.

DSL's 2006-2016 Asset Management Plan provides the policy direction and management principles to guide short- and long-term management of Common School Fund lands.



The agency leases range and agricultural land and waterways for a variety of business and recreational activities. The Oregon Department of Forestry manages Common School Fund forestland under contract with the Land Board.

## DSL ACTS AS TRUSTEE

### Unclaimed Property

Under Oregon's Unclaimed Property Act, DSL holds in trust abandoned funds, such as bank accounts, lost securities and uncashed checks. Holders of these funds must remit them to DSL a few years (three years for most items) after efforts to contact the owner have failed. Agency staff search for the owners, who may claim the funds at any time.

In recent years, DSL received an average of \$38 million in unclaimed property annually, and returned about \$9 million per year to rightful owners. Unclaimed funds are held in trust in the Common School Fund.



DSL holds annual auctions of contents of unclaimed safe deposit boxes.

**Check the DSL Web site ([www.oregonstatelands.us](http://www.oregonstatelands.us)) to see if we are holding money for you. We have money for one in four Oregonians!**

### Estate Administration

DSL administers estates for people who die without a will and without known heirs. Agency staff search for heirs, inventory and protect estate assets, pay claims against the estate and file with the probate court. If no heirs are found after 10 years, the assets are deposited permanently in the Common School Fund.

## DSL PROTECTS WATERWAYS AND WETLANDS

### Removal-Fill Law

DSL protects the state's waterways and wetlands through administration of Oregon's removal-fill law, enacted in 1967. The law requires most activities that affect more than 50 cubic yards of material in streams, lakes, estuaries and wetlands to have a permit from DSL. Almost all activities, regardless of size, need a permit in Oregon Scenic Waterways and in streams designated "essential salmon habitat."

The permit review process involves coordination with the applicant, adjacent landowners, natural resource agencies and local governments. DSL is working with public agencies, permittees and other interested parties to improve and simplify the removal-fill permit application process.

### Wetlands

DSL's wetlands staff provides technical assistance to local governments on wetland planning, and works with property owners, consultants and DSL resource coordinators to determine if removal-fill permits are needed for specific projects.

The agency also provides wetland delineation expertise (guidance and report review), conducts research to improve the removal-fill permit program, and works with property owners to voluntarily restore wetlands.



Oregon Benchmarks call for a "net gain" of tidal wetlands and "no net loss" of freshwater wetlands.

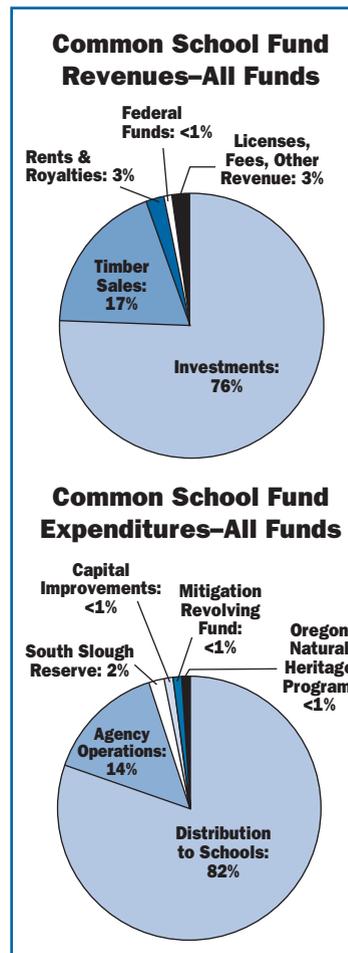


## Funds Distributed to Schools

Revenues from all agency activities are deposited in the Common School Fund, whose market value surpassed the billion-dollar mark in 2006. DSL program revenues, combined with unclaimed property held in trust, comprise the principal of the common school fund. The State Treasurer and Oregon Investment Council manage the fund.

Twice a year, earnings from investments are distributed to all of Oregon's 198 K-12 public school districts. The Land Board establishes the distribution formula. By law, fund distributions cannot benefit current students at the disadvantage of future students, or vice-versa.

The Oregon Department of Education sends the biannual distributions to the districts, based on each county's population of individuals aged 4-20. Recent annual distributions have ranged from \$35.2 million in 2000 to nearly \$50 million in 2007.



## South Slough Reserve

DSL serves as the state administrative partner for the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, one of 27 reserves established throughout the country in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



Several trails originating at the South Slough Interpretive Center lead visitors through upland forest to the estuary below.

Located in Charleston near Coos Bay, South Slough became the first national estuarine reserve in 1974. It comprises 1,000 acres of open water and tidelands, plus 3,800 acres of uplands needed to protect the watershed. The area is managed for research, public education and interpretation on estuarine ecosystems and their restoration.

## Oregon Natural Heritage Advisory Council

DSL oversees the Oregon Natural Heritage Advisory Council, which advises the State Land Board. The council, composed of scientists, citizens and state agency representatives, sets policy for the Natural Heritage Program.

This voluntary program identifies and establishes a registry for representative examples of the state's natural plant and landscape resources. Ninety natural areas are currently registered, most of which are on state lands, but include voluntarily listed sites on private, municipal and federal lands.