

Protecting Oregon's Natural and Fiscal Resources

Oregon Department of State Lands



Agency Mission:

Ensuring a Common School Fund legacy through sound management of our trust responsibilities and the protection of waters of the state.

DSL Manages Land

The agency's Real Estate Asset Management Plan and Strategic Plan provide policy direction and management principles to guide short- and long-term management of Common School Fund land assets. DSL's real property portfolio is structured into six land classes: Agricultural Lands, Forestlands, Industrial/Commercial/Residential (ICR) Lands, Mineral and Energy Resources, Rangelands and Special Stewardship Lands. A seventh class – State-owned Waterways – is managed by the agency's Aquatic Resource Management Program.

DSL leases rangelands, agricultural lands and waterways for a variety of business and recreational activities. ICR assets generate revenue from tenants.

DSL Protects Waterways and Wetlands

The agency implements Oregon's removal-fill and wetlands conservation laws, and manages the state's navigable waterways for the "public trust" uses of recreation, fishing, navigation and commerce. Four core functions are carried out by department staff: 1) removal-fill permitting; 2) managing mitigation banking and in-lieu-fee programs; 3) aquatic resource planning; and 4) waterway leasing.

Staff provides public information about conserving wetlands, regulatory standards, and proprietary waterways, and planning assistance for local governments.

DSL Acts as Trustee

Unclaimed Property

The Oregon Unclaimed Property Act directs DSL to hold in trust abandoned funds such as bank accounts, lost securities and unclaimed checks. Holders of these funds must remit them to DSL a few years (three for most items) after efforts to contact owners have failed. Agency staff search for owners, who may claim the funds in perpetuity.

Unclaimed funds are held in trust in the Common School Fund until claimed by owners or their heirs. In recent years, DSL has received more than \$50 million in unclaimed property annually, and returned about \$25 million per year to rightful owners.

Escheat Estates

DSL administers estates of people who die without a will and without known heirs. Agency staff search for heirs, and if none are identified, perform the duties of a personal representative to settle the estates in accordance with probate laws. If no heirs come forward within 10 years, the assets become a permanent part of the Common School Fund.



Land: About 630,000 acres of state-owned rangeland and agricultural land; 120,000 acres of forestland; 13,000 acres of special stewardship land; 7,000 acres of industrial, commercial and residential land; and 767,000 acres of mineral and energy resources.

Waterways: 1.3 million acres of state-owned land under navigable and tidal waters and the territorial sea held in trust for public navigation, recreation, fisheries and commerce.



Wetlands: Oregon's removal-fill law protects wetlands and waterways for their important functions: controlling floodwater, cleaning and storing water, providing natural habitats for fish and wildlife, and offering scenic and recreational opportunities.



Unclaimed Property: More than half a billion dollars in unclaimed funds are currently held in the Common School Fund for more than four million owners. Check for your name now: www.oregon.gov/dsl

Funds Distributed to Schools

Net revenues from all agency activities are deposited in the Common School Fund, whose market value is currently about \$1.5 billion. DSL program revenues accumulated over time, combined with unclaimed property held in trust, comprise the principal of the fund. The State Treasurer and Oregon Investment Council manage the fund's investments.

Twice a year, earnings from investments are distributed to Oregon's 197 K-12 public school districts. The Land Board establishes the distribution formula (currently 4 percent of the three-year rolling average of the fund's value). By law, fund distributions cannot benefit current students at the disadvantage of future students, or vice-versa.



The Oregon Department of Education sends Common School Fund distributions to every K-12 public school district, based on each county's population of individuals aged 4-20. Recent annual distributions have ranged from \$35.2 million in 2000 to \$70 million in 2017.

South Slough Reserve

DSL serves as the state administrative partner for the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, the first of 28 reserves throughout the country. Located in Charleston near Coos Bay, it is managed for research and public education about estuaries (where fresh and salt water meet), and their importance to Pacific Northwest ecosystems.

The Reserve includes 1,000 acres of open water and tidelands, plus 4,000 acres of uplands needed to protect the watershed. An adjoining 1,000 acres are state-owned lands which are managed for conservation by the Reserve.



Each year the South Slough Interpretive Center welcomes more than 4,500 visitors, and Reserve staff conduct about 200 educational programs and 30 research projects.

An Agency Rich in History

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, the federal government granted Oregon 3.4 million acres – about six percent – of the new state's land to finance public education. The Constitution declares the mineral, timber and other resource rights of school lands to the Common School Fund. The State Land Board is trustee of the fund.

The "land-rich, cash-poor" state 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 trust land acreage – 738,000 acres – now remains in state ownership.

Over time, the Oregon Legislature assigned other responsibilities to DSL, including administration of Oregon's Unclaimed Property Act (1957), Removal-Fill Law (1967) and Wetlands Conservation Act (1989). In partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the agency oversees the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve on the southern coast (1974).



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