

WELCOME TO  
VALLEY OF THE ROGUE

CAMP RATES

FULL HOOKUP SITE	\$17
ELECTRICAL SITE	\$16
TENT SITE	\$15
EXTRA VEHICLE	\$5

ERRED  
 ERS  
 RECEIPT  
 NDOW  
 NEW ARRIVALS  
 AND VISITORS  
 CHECK IN  
 AT WINDOW

PLEASE REMAIN WITH VEHICLE

Valley of the Rogue, 1990's

## CHAPTER 6

### *Rising to the Challenge:* **Desperate Measures and the Search for Stable Funding**

On the morning of August 2, 1989, the new and independent Oregon Parks and Recreation Department was born. A picnic bench was brought from Champoege to Salem for the signing of the bill that made it so, and a crowd of 500 feasted on a purportedly 250-pound cake shaped like the state of Oregon—“hyped as Oregon’s largest birthday cake.” Similar festivities at a smaller scale were arranged at parks across the state. Celebrating the 60-year anniversary of Sam Boardman’s appointment as Parks Engineer as well as impending independence, many hoped more distance from the Department of Transportation would help turn the corner after two decades under siege. The new Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) officially became an independent state agency on Jan 1, 1990. But the search for stable funding that had consumed the 1980s would continue.<sup>256</sup>

Public opinion shaped Oregon parks in the 1990s even more than it had in previous decades. Building public engagement and support had always been a priority. But in this new decade, public ballot measures shaped how the parks would be run, how they would be funded, and at times even threatened their ability to operate. The decade opened with catastrophic losses, with funding for government slashed in 1990 and move to fund parks through new gas taxes decisively rejected in 1992. Unprecedented layoffs, innovations in funding, new volunteer initiatives, and more troubling labor practices followed. But the period closed with measured success. In 1998, Oregonians definitively demonstrated their support for parks by mandating for them a dedicated portion of lottery funding. In the 1990s, then, parks turned around an almost three-decade drought and found funding through popular demand. But the search for stability, in funding as in so many other park matters, was still ceaseless.<sup>257</sup>

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256 Via: *Oregon Department Transportation* 14:9 (Sept, 1989), p. 4; Via: *Oregon Department Transportation* 14:8 (August 1989), p. 1; Monte Turner to Parks 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, “Proposals from Brainstorming Sessions Celebration of Parks 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” [e-mail], June 1, 1989, Folder: Folder: Tracing the Origins of OPRD 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observed 1989, Box: Park Histories, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Salem, OR. Accounts of the weight of the cake vary wildly, in part because the plans for its size kept getting bigger and bigger. Neil Goldschmidt, the governor of Oregon from 1987 – 1991, later confessed to having committed third degree rape over a period of years. Because of this history, and relatively peripheral position Goldschmidt has in the narrative of this book, we have chosen not to name him in the text. See Nigel Jaquiss, “The 30-Year Secret: A Crime, a Cover-Up, and the Way It Shaped Oregon,” *Willamette Week* May 12, 2004.

257 William M. Lunch, “Budgeting by Initiative: An Oxymoron,” *Willamette Law Review* 34:663 (1998): pp. 663-674.

## *It's Not a Divorce:* **Parks and Highways Split Up**

In truth, Parks and Highways had only stayed together so long because of the money. When the relationship began in the 1910s and 20s, parks had been seen as an outgrowth of movement for beautiful roadways (see Chapter 1). But almost from the beginning, the main reason to keep the two together was funding. Sharing a department could mean sharing costs, with engineers, scientists, and lumbermen able to work for parks and highways alike. And it could mean keeping parks away from the worst of the budget cuts. Highways got a lion's share of the gas tax, and the scraps left for state parks had still been enough to fund basic operations even in the leanest of times. This sense of security had sunk Boardman's dream of his own department, hovered over the committee decisions to keep parks with highways in the 1950s, and blunted Talbot's early efforts at independence (see Chapters 2, 3, and 5). But, as Kathryn Straton proclaimed in 1985, the "Highways/Parks relationship ended in 1980 when Oregonians voted to restrict gas taxes to highway purposes only."

With the main reason to stay together gone, all that was needed was a push. Asked if an independent department would help bring park goals to fruition, Talbot said yes. In 1989, with relatively little debate or resistance, independence was achieved. Boardman's appointment in 1929 was elevated to the "official" start of the department, in part to make the year 1989 an important anniversary, news media was contacted to make new independence part of the story of a (hopefully) rising parks department, and it was off to the races. With fanfare and cake, the new Oregon Parks and Recreation Department was celebrated in the capital, in newspapers, and in parks across the state.<sup>258</sup>

"It's not a divorce," Talbot proclaimed to park and highway employees alike shortly before the split in 1989. "We're not pulling away from our ODOT relationship," he promised highway personnel just after the new Division was formed in 1990. And it *was* a relatively amiable separation, with ODOT and OPRD continuing to work closely together through the 1990s and beyond, as they figured who would get assets, and where OPRD would have to begin spending independently for services they once shared with ODOT. But the die was cast. Later executives were less starry-eyed. "It's taken 13 years to finalize the divorce," Assistant Director Jana Tindall would announce in 2003, as the last of the shared administrative mechanisms fell away. The severance may have been friendly, but it was fundamental.<sup>259</sup>

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258 Kathryn Straton, "Amended Speech Draft," Nov. 27, 1985, pp. 3, Folder: Governor's Conference on State Parks, 1985, Box: Meetings and Events, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection; Folder: Richard D. Dunlap, "Economic Benefits: State Parks Relation to State Highway Dept.," Box: Legislation and Statutes, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection.

259 *Via: Oregon Department Transportation* 14:8 (Aug 1989), p. 3; *Via: Oregon Department of Transportation* 15:1 (Jan 1990), p. 5; Robert L. Meinen, "Interview Transcription," Interview with Elisabeth Walton Potter, Apr 28, 2000, p. 22, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Archive. Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, March 25, 1993, pp. 7 – 8, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013], unfiled, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Digital Collection; *FYI* 489 (May 31, 2003).

The new Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) was not much different from the old Division. The lines of authority were simpler. Superintendent Talbot had reported to both a Transportation Commission and a Parks Advisory Committee. Newly minted Director Talbot reported solely to the new State Parks Commission. But in practice, life on the ground in Parks remained the same. A few key members of the old Committee, like Loran Stewart and Lynn Newbry, stayed on to assist the new Commission. And though they had more power in theory, in practice they still left the day-to-day business of Parks largely in the hands of the Director and the Department.<sup>260</sup>

The first months of independence in 1990 seemed encouraging. Parks might not have been viewed as essential infrastructure in the same way highways were, but state parks remained generally popular on both sides of the still-growing urban/rural divide in Oregon. General Fund support for the ambitious goals of the 2010 Plan was still only a dream, and no separate source of funding had gained sufficient political momentum. But OPRD was at least set to get enough money for basic operations in this first year. Urban economies in Oregon had recovered, there was a plan in place for sustainable growth, and there was more measurable political and popular support for parks than there had been in years.<sup>261</sup>

Dave Talbot was at the apex of his career in 1990, seemingly preparing for golden years ahead. Twenty-six years into his 28-year career, he was at the time the longest-serving state park head in the country. He sat down for extended interviews about the past, present, and future of Oregon State Parks, which would shape every history of the institution to follow. And (like Boardman before him) Talbot was awarded the prestigious Pugsley medal, a recognition for outstanding accomplishments in U.S. parks and conservation. But he was too busy to travel across the country to receive this award in person. Trouble on the horizon was brewing.<sup>262</sup>

## *Foundations Seem to Be Eroding Beneath You:* **Measure 5 Slashes State Funding**

Passed in 1990, Measure 5 gutted state government. The state constitutional amendment capped property taxes throughout Oregon, reducing by tens of millions the amount of money that would be in the General Fund. Voted in primarily by residents of the greater Portland area dismayed at the effect rising housing costs might have on their tax burden, Measure 5 achieved a long-standing goal of the same anti-tax movement that had kicked Parks out of the gas

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260 Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, Feb 20, 1990, esp. 3, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013].

261 Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, Feb 20, 1990; Josh Leshner, "Oregon's Great Recession Update," *Oregon Office of Economic Analysis*, June 29, 2015.

262 Folder: Administrative History – Oral History – David G. Talbot, Director, 1964 – 1992 [entire], Box: Staff Biographies and Oral Histories, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection; John Crompton, David G. Talbot Pugsley Award Bio, ~1992?, <https://aapra.org/pugsley-bios/david-g-talbot>.

<b>Measure No. 5</b> STATE OF OREGON	
Proposed by initiative petition to be voted on at the general election, November 6, 1990.	
<b>BALLOT TITLE</b>	
<p><b>5</b> STATE CONSTITUTIONAL LIMIT ON PROPERTY TAXES FOR SCHOOLS, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS</p> <p><b>QUESTION</b> Shall constitution set limits on property taxes, and dedicate them to fund public schools and non-school government operations?</p> <p><b>SUMMARY</b> Amends constitution. Limits 1991-1992 property taxes for public schools to \$15, and property taxes for non-school government operations to \$10 per \$1000 of market value. Schools limit gradually decreases to \$5 per \$1000 in 1995-1996 and after. Government operations limit remains same. Limits do not apply to government assessments, service charges, taxes to pay certain government bonds. Assessments, service charges shall not exceed cost of making improvements, providing services. General Fund to replace, until 1996, school funds lost due to school limits.</p> <p><b>ESTIMATE OF FINANCIAL EFFECT</b>—</p>	<p><b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>NO</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>AN ACT</b>	
Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:	
PARAGRAPH 1. The Constitution of the State of Oregon is amended by creating a new section to be added to and made a part of Article XI and to read:	
SECTION 11b. (1) During and after the fiscal year 1991-92, taxes imposed upon any property shall be separated into two	

1990's Measure 5 "gutted state government," including the shoestring Parks budget. Anti-tax sentiment seemed firmly ensconced in Oregon politics.

tax in 1980. Tapping into deep wells of local discontent, bankrolled by wealthy interests within and beyond the state, anti-tax ballot measures were a crowning achievement of a broader anti-government political revolution in 1990s Oregon. Although a majority of Oregonians\* saw little to no tax relief from Measure 5, it did sharply cut the tax burden on businesses and wealthier homeowners. The measure sent shockwaves through the state and sharply reduced the amount of tax income available for government services. The whole of government, not just parks, would now have to "learn how to live with less."<sup>263</sup>

The main focus of debates on Measure 5 was school funding, a huge portion of the state budget and the main reason repeated efforts at the same sort of measure in the 1980s had failed. Mechanisms that purportedly protected school funding were built into Measure 5. Nonetheless, school funding per capita did decrease for most K – 12 districts (and all state colleges) over the course of the 1990s—but

263 Richard J. Ellis, *Democratic Delusions: The Initiative Process in America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), esp. 2 – 24; Lawrence M. Lipin and William Lurch, "Moralistic Direct Democracy: Political Insurgents, Religion, and the State in Twentieth-Century Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110:4 (2009): pp. 514 – 545; Richard A. Clucas, Brent S. Steel, and Mark Henkels, *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives versus Conservative Populists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), chap. 18. "Determining who has received tax relief from a particular measure is difficult and contentious. Based on the gross homeownership rate and adjusting for second homes, non-dependent cohabitants, prisoners, etc., a little over half of all Oregonians were homeowners in 1990. Most saw little to no property tax relief until 1997, and even then many homeowners in populous Multnomah County saw none. U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Statistics Division, "Historical Census of Housing Tables [1940 – 2010]," (Oct 2011); Jed Kolko, "Why the Homeownership Rate Is Misleading," *New York Times* Jan 30, 2014; Robyn L. Cohen, "Prisoners In 1990," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin* (U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1991); Tom Linhares, *Recent History of Oregon's Property Tax System, with an Emphasis On Its Impact On Multnomah County Local Governments*, ed. Elizabeth Provost (Self-published, 2011). It is true that overall Oregonian tax burdens went down significantly because of Measure 5, but only a (sizable) minority of wealthier Oregonians have enjoyed those reductions. Much of the coverage of the pros and cons of Measure 5 elides this distinction, and ignores all non-homeowning Oregonians: see for example the editorials written by wealthy Oregonian Mark Zusman, "Nov. 6, 1990: Voters approve Measure 5...", *Willamette Week* Nov 4, 2014 AND June 2, 2017.

then, funding for almost every department decreased. Parks were a tiny part of the budget compared to schools, but parks were like schools in that they were broadly popular. Anti-government advocates in the 90s thus tended to argue that OPRD should somehow be more efficient rather than arguing that they should reduce or change their services. Or advocates would bring up the much-feared power of eminent domain, which had stoked so much backlash against the Willamette Greenway—and which had not been used by parks since at least the 1970s.<sup>264</sup>

This was not the first time Oregon State Parks had run into anti-government sentiment. Within and beyond the department, from the “party bus” to the political committees, from boots on the ground to Talbot on the tables, park employees, managers, Commission members, and outside boosters had built support for state parks across many conventional political lines. Heading toward his retirement in 1992, Talbot thought that much of the anti-government sentiment could be countered through outreach:

*Much of the negativism of many intelligent people who felt this way reflected their ignorance of the process. Most could not identify their elected representative, had no understanding of how they were taxed, how their taxes were spent, or how laws were made.*<sup>265</sup>

Whatever the truth (or condescension) of this assertion, it summed up the approach Oregon Parks and Recreation took under Talbot. This had been a central premise of the 2010 Plan. The solutions proposed there were not internal changes but external funding, with support built through outreach and education. Talbot and the other people at parks had reason to believe that outreach was working. Every survey they had taken indicated broad support for parks. The visitor surveys, particularly, indicated strong support for new taxes to keep and improve Oregon State Parks.

Faced with a gaping new hole blown in an already tight budget, parks supporters scrambling to find new money to fill the gap. In 1992, friends in the Oregon Legislature put forward two measures to fund parks for the present and (hopefully) support for the future that had been sketched out at the end of the 1980s. One measure proposed bonds for state park improvements, allowing infrastructure repair and creation through borrowing. The other proposed a potential restoration of the gas tax that had been lost in 1977 and severed

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264 Rob Manning, “Oregon School Funding Still a Challenge, 25 Years After Measure 5,” *OPB* Apr 15/19, 2016; Nancy McCarthy, “Ballot Measures Seek Funds for State Parks,” *Oregonian* Sept 23, 1992, p. C07. By the 1990s, eminent domain was by unofficial parks policy a never-used tool. See Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, Feb 20, 1990, p. 6, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013]. The quotation at the head of this section comes from Gregory Smith, “Living with Oregon’s Measure 5: The Costs of Property Tax Relief in Two Suburban Elementary Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 76:6 (1995): pp. 4452 – 4461. Measure 5 increased state control of local school districts, reduced the money available for schools per capita, and equalized unstable funding between urban and rural districts. This meant funding increased for some rural districts, decreased for others, and decreased substantially for most urban districts. Dee Lane and Erin Hoover, “School District’s Cuts Nick Everyone,” *Oregonian* March 20, 1994, p. A01.

265 John Crompton, David G. Talbot Pugsley Award Bio, ~1992?, <https://aapra.org/pugsley-bios/david-g-talbot>.

permanently in 1980: an additional 2 cents per gallon charge on gas. Either would have kept parks afloat. Both would have allowed them to move forward.

“[U]nlike most new government proposals, this one’s already worked once,” the *Oregonian* said in an editorial arguing in favor of the potential gas tax increase for parks. And it was “about the only state government contribution [tourists] make.” Monte Turner, Oregon State Parks spokesman, warned that increased fees and/or closed parks would be inevitable without some increase of funding. But unlike the Good Roads organizations of the 1910s and 1920s, the Oregonians for Good Roads in 1992 campaigned against park funding through gas taxes. And the anti-tax forces seemed to be the driving force of the political moment.<sup>266</sup>

The proposed parks tax was shellacked. Almost three in four Oregonians voted against a fuel tax increase for parks. By a narrower but still clear margin, the bond measure was voted down too. Visitor surveys had shown strong support for both—but the enthusiasm of park visitors was not, in 1992, a match for the anti-tax instincts of Oregonians generally. Talbot had retired in June 1992, but he was far from gone. As the budget crunch increased and the costs of deferred maintenance towered ever larger, Talbot would be working outside of the department as a private citizen to help marshal the “army for parks” he’d hoped for as Director. His immediate successor was Nancy Rockwell, who had just transferred from the Department of Energy and took over as first Acting Director and then Deputy Director.<sup>267</sup>

Talbot’s permanent replacement was Robert “Bob” Meinen, who had managed state park systems in Idaho and Kansas before coming to Oregon. He had been a young Business major drawn to Natural Resources (and then state parks) by his love of the outdoors. Perhaps it was that start in business that inflected Meinen’s focus on partnership, public relations, and above all the bottom line. The need for a “stable, long-term funding source” had been his mantra when in Idaho and Kansas, and the search for stable funding would be at the core of Meinen’s mission throughout his time at Oregon Parks and Recreation.<sup>268</sup>

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266 “Yes on Measure 2,” *Oregonian* Oct 17, 1992, p. B06; McCarthy, “Ballot Measures Seek Funds for State Parks.”

267 Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Conference Call Meeting Minutes, July 1, 1992, p. 1, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013]; Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1991, p. 8, *ibid.* Judging by some internal documents, many parks staff struggled with the disconnect between the desires of self-selecting survey respondents and those of the average Oregon voter. See especially the description of the 1992 proposed gas tax in “Long-Term Stable Funding Options” [internal memo, 1996], Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Resolution, Box: Park Issues – Park Closures and Funding Crisis, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection.

268 Meinen, “Interview Transcription,” 20 – 21; “Local Man Shares Story of Saving Mesa Falls,” *Rexburg Standard Journal* Aug 25, 2017; United States Senate, *City of Rocks National Reserve Act of 1987: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks, and Forests of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources...*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), pp. 17 – 19; Rick Just, “Robert Meinen and Idaho State Parks,” Interview with Marc James Carpenter [phone], July 15, 2020, unfiled, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Collection; Mary Kay Spanbauer, “Kansas & The President’s Commission On Americans Outdoors,” *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* 45:6 (Nov/Dec 1988): pp. 39 – 43, quote on 40.

## *A More Business-Driven Organization:* **Turning Visitors into Customers**

Bob Meinen was the most divisive leader Oregon Parks and Recreation had in a hundred years. He took over a dilapidated, demoralized, and defunded department late in 1992. When Meinen left under a cloud of controversy in 2000 (see Chapter 7), the department was on firmer financial footing than it had been since the 1970s. The years in between marked existential crises for Oregon state parks. The economic crises that had plagued parks intensified. In the lowest points of 1996 it appeared that much of the system might simply shut down. And within and between economic shocks, there was a cultural crisis. Meinen and his leadership team ran Oregon state parks more like a business, and with that pivot came tectonic cultural and economic shifts.

The shift toward business didn't come out of nowhere. The calls from the 1900s and 1910s on to recognize the extent to which parks brought tourist dollars to the state had been a business-minded strategy. Armstrong had highlighted business potential in the 1950s. The Citizen Committee that created the 2010 Plan in 1988 had paid significant heed to business trends, including the creation of a mission statement. Like those of the corporate world it emulated, this statement was more comprehensive than catchy. State parks would, they declared:

*provide, protect and enhance sites and areas of outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic or recreational value for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations of Oregonians and their visitors.*<sup>269</sup>

Meinen—and the executive team he quickly assembled—rebranded “visitors” to “customers,” and parks to products. “Customer service” was now the watchword in communications with staff, and “put[ting] out a better product” the preoccupation of management. The reverence for nature Boardman had preached would be still be maintained—at precisely the level customers and the “brand identity” of Oregon state parks demanded.<sup>270</sup>

This new focus on business-mindedness was a form of (re)branding in and of itself. A master goal of Meinen's management team in their first few years was to “[d]evelop a lean, well-managed agency that is mission-drive[n] *and is viewed as such* by the public and the Legislature” [emphasis added]. The popularity of parks had not been enough to spur new funding in part because opponents had

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269 2010 Citizen Advisory Committee, “Oregon State Parks 2010 Plan” (Salem: Oregon Parks and Recreation Division, Department of Transportation, 1988), p. 4, Box: Strategic Plans 1956 – 2012, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection.

270 *FYI* 56 (1994); *FYI* 103 (July 21, 1995); Robert L. Meinen, “Interview Transcription,” Interview with Elisabeth Walton Potter, Apr 28, 2000, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Archive. Meinen and his team referred to “customers” rather than “visitors” practically from the start, but for the updated mission statement they eliminated “Oregonians and their visitors” altogether (along with the goal of “enhancement”).



painted the department as too bureaucratic or too spendthrift. Under Meinen, the department intended to show that it meant business.<sup>271</sup>

The cultural pivot to a more business-oriented atmosphere was vivid in the minds of those who lived through it. Talbot had mourned the loss of family feeling in parks when interviewed in 1990. But survey respondents in 2013, including those who had been with parks since the 1970s, nearly all identified the Meinen era, rather than the times of Talbot, as when the culture shifted away from a parks family and toward a parks business. They might disagree on the effects of the change, but not on the substance. For many personnel, like the three quoted below, the sense of a “parks family” was irrevocably altered:

*[Department culture] was more family oriented, but tightly dictated/control[l]ed in the early years... It has turned more [into a] business driven organization with the guidance being left to the individual, but more freedom in that work.*

*It used to be a big family, Dave Talbot knew everyone's name, and your kids['] names... Now everyone is too busy to even make a trip out to the field from Salem [Headquarters]... We have employees that haven't been to hardly any parks, they sit in their cube and work on putting stuff from the in basket to the out basket, go home and don't visit parks on their time off.*

*The culture[e] was a “family” when I started[,] with lo[n]g-term employees and a closely held executive level. Transitioned to less of a family and more to a team and partnership of internal and external members.<sup>272</sup>*

And those were the opinions of park workers who *didn't* lose their jobs amidst the cutbacks of the 90s.

There had been significant job losses under Talbot. Under Meinen, layoffs went from last resort to logistical routine. He and his team framed the elimination of positions as an advance rather than a failure. Under euphemisms like “salary savings” and “reorganization,” OPRD put forward the perhaps-unavoidable staff reductions as proof that they were a “lean, well-managed agency” that could not afford further cutbacks.<sup>273</sup>

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271 Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013]. The “lean, well-managed agency” was mentioned as a carried-over goal, one that went back to at least 1994 and perhaps earlier.

272 Because of the sensitivity of the data and the method of collection, identifiers for the 2013 survey of parks employees are not used here. “Draft OPRD History Questionnaire, 1990 – Present [2013],” p. 29, Folder: Kate Schutt Records – More Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Archive.

273 Davan Maharaj, “In The 1990s, Layoffs Become A Business Strategy,” *L.A. Times* Dec 13, 1998; Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, esp. 4, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013].

The most dramatic set of layoffs came in May of 1994. A reorganization had been underway since January. Facing a formidable budget gap, park managers were summoned to the Silver Falls conference center, a building that was beginning to crumble from years of deferred maintenance. They took part in a three-day workshop and brainstorming session, discussing how to reorganize, reinvent, and reinvigorate Oregon state parks using business principles.

*Then they were all fired.*

Meinen and his team eliminated a layer of management, and created a smaller number of jobs managing multiple parks that the original managers could now reapply for. Interviews were “like the Spanish Inquisition,” one of the managers who survived recalled. “It was just short of waterboarding,” another reflected. Most people were not rehired for management positions. Many retired, or quit. These and other reorganizations (with smaller but still significant layoffs) shook the whole department throughout 1994 to 1996—“They were all scared they were next,” as one senior parks person put it a decade later. These staff shake ups were perhaps always part of the plan. Meinen had overseen a similar series of reorganizations and layoffs when he was in charge at Kansas State Parks back in the late 1980s.<sup>274</sup>

Brian Booth, Chairman of the Parks Commission, voiced concern at the beginning of 1995. Given “all of the changes over the past year,” how did Meinen “perceive... staff morale”? According to the minutes of the meeting:

*Meinen said he believes morale is good within the department and that there seems to be a sense of excitement within the new management team created out of the reorganization. He reported at an all-managers meeting held in December, managers welcomed the idea of entrepreneurial budgeting with enthusiasm.*

*Meinen said it was also necessary at this time to advise the Commission of the potential strike in the early summer.*<sup>275</sup>

The two-week strike, part of a broader statewide labor issue, suggested that perhaps morale wasn’t *universally* “good within the department.” But Meinen was no doubt correct about the “sense of excitement” expressed by the new management team. Those who might still have hesitated or expressed reluctance about “entrepreneurial budgeting” had already been purged before 1995. Back in the

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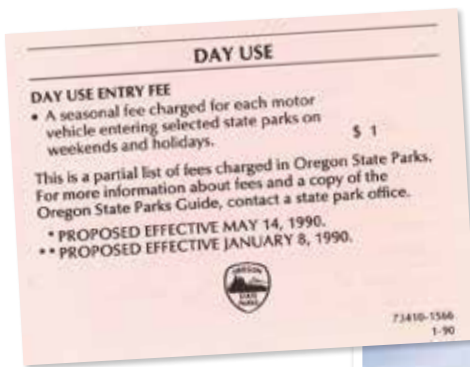
274 Annual [OPRD] Chronology 1990 – 2013, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Archive; “OPERATIONS DIVISION/AREA MANAGER MEETING Silver Falls May 17 – 19,” FYI 42 (May 1994); FYI 43 (1994), pp. 3 – 5; “OPRD History Panel Discussion,” Interviewer - Kathy Schutt, pp. 3 - 4, December 2012, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Collection. *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* 45:5 (Sept/Oct 1988), p. 23. This pattern may have held in Idaho as well. One of Meinen’s first acts after moving from Deputy Director to Director of Idaho State Parks in 1984 was to eliminate the deputy director position he had ascended from entirely. Just, “Robert Meinen and Idaho State Parks.”

275 Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, p. 4, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013].

1960s, Talbot had wrestled with a culture clash between the opinions of old guard and the new direction in which he wanted to take the department, slowly integrating the new and the old over a couple of decades. Meinen fired anyone not on board, transforming the management of the department in the course of only a few years. It was just business.

## *Revenues... Are Everyone's Burden!:* **New Fees and New Ideas**

With General Fund contributions sputtering out and no dedicated source of funding available, OPRD under Meinen imposed new fees and searched for new revenue streams. Day use parking fees, long perceived as poisonous by park backers, were rolled out in many parks by 1993 and expanded in the years to follow. Camping fees increased, sometimes putting campsite costs above those of private campgrounds. Rangers were provided with brochures to hand out to anyone protesting these increases, explaining the loss of General Fund money and comparing park recreation costs to the price of dinner and a show. These were added to a suite of other promotional brochures, pointing out the many budget concerns and benefits of Oregon state parks. The push for parks to market themselves that had been suggested by the Citizen Committee in 1988 was now institutional. Such brochures, employees were told, had “been used by Disney Corp. and other companies to promote better customer service.” In the newly business-oriented parks, that was practically a benediction.<sup>276</sup>



*Finding new revenue became a drumbeat at Parks in the 1980s and 1990s. Day-use parking fees came first, a staid idea compared to bringing the circus to Willamette Mission.*

<sup>276</sup> Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Conference Call Meeting Minutes, July 1, 1992, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013]; FYI 98 (June 19, 1995); FYI 56 (1994).

Park staff at every level were asked to find cost savings and new ways of bringing in money. As Nancy Rockwell wrote in a typically chipper all-staff message:

*If we are going to operate more business-like then we have to take responsibility for both sides of the ledger – expenditures and revenues. Revenues have been the burden of a selected few in the past. Now they are everyone’s burden!*<sup>277</sup>

“It went,” as one participant later recalled, “from a rigid system to the Wild West.” A few parks opened espresso stands. One sold beanie babies.<sup>278</sup> There were implementations of modern conveniences once shunned by Boardman-esque park personnel—cable TV hookups, say.<sup>279</sup> And there were massive technological undertakings, like the move to a two-state phone reservation system that centralized reservations (see Chapter 7).

Many changes were minor efficiency improvements, ideas that might come from above or below to reduce redundancy or shave off unnecessary services. Messages from management tended to mix praise with menace. “[M]ost staff found they were well equipped to think like business people trying to squeeze the most from the least,” Rockwell announced in the intradepartmental newsletter *FYI* late in 1994. “In some cases we will need to evaluate staff skills and abilities in order to determine how we will alter staffing to meet these new needs,” Meinen menaced a few months later, in 1995. “One of the keys to the department’s financial survival,” Meinen wrote during the worst of the crisis in 1996, “will be our ability to take one dollar and turn it into two.” Jobs were on the line.<sup>280</sup>

This might have given Craig Tutor an extra thrill of relief when his zany notion to build Mongolia-inspired fixed-frame tents in parks turned out to be a marquee moneymaker for the department.

## *YURT ALERT!:* **Expansions in Camping**

The wordplay was almost irresistible. From the moment Craig Tutor first introduced yurts to Oregon state parks in 1994, visitors and staff alike had fun with the rhyme schemes. “YURT ALERT!” was the title of the first *FYI* article announcing the installation of new round tents in several state parks.<sup>281</sup>

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277 Nancy Rockwell, “Director’s Corner,” *FYI* 115 (Nov 2, 1995).

278 “OPRD History Panel Discussion,” Interviewer - Kathy Schutt, p. 6, December 2012, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Collection.

279 Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, Jan 12, 1995, p. 7; *FYI* 89 (Apr 7, 1995).

280 *FYI* 138 (Apr 6, 1996); *FYI* 73 (1994); Bob Meinen to All Salem Managers, March 20 1995, *FYI* 87 (March 24, 1995).

281 *FYI* 56 (1994). In later years more strained rhymes like “yurtin’ for certain” were suggested, only to be killed in the editorial stage. Jean Thompson, personal communication, July 24 2020.

As the new lodgings took off among visitors, so did the rhymes, include whole stanzas of doggerel verse:

*With your walls and ceiling, nature's wrath you avert;  
rendering wind and rain powerless, inert.  
I can roam around inside in my boxers and shirt;  
Oh, how I do love my warm little yurt.*<sup>282</sup>

After the success of Tutor's pilot program at Cape Lookout State Park, yurts became a symbol of Oregon State Parks in the 1990s. The park information booth at the Oregon State Fair in 1994 was a yurt. The roll-out of yurts in seven new state parks attracted enough attention that Honeyman State Park hosted an "open yurt" event that October, where press and the public could walk around the new structure. Attention went national, with a *New York Times* article on the Honeyman yurts inspiring people across the country to reserve a yurt in Oregon. Other press coverage, local and national, followed. Securing a loan through the newly-created Oregon State Parks Trust, the department put up fifty more yurts—and counting—by the spring of 1996. They filled too. Yurts became the success story of Oregon parks in the mid-90s, earning innovation awards, national attention, and (vitaly) bringing in profits at a time when park budgets were desperate for pennies.<sup>283</sup>

Why yurts? Charming design elements and the potential for wordplay undoubtedly played a role in news coverage, but the new lodgings also suited the needs of the moment. As state parks had to rely more and more on user fees in the 1990s, park officials and commission members agreed that camping needed to go year-round wherever possible. Discounted rates for off-season camping would both bring in more visitors and soften the blow of necessary fee hikes that came in the mid-90s. But the off-season was off for a reason; many tent campers were reluctant to go camping amidst sleet, rain, and snow. Yurts provided a possible answer. Originally engineered for the driving winds and cold winters of the Mongolian steppe, they provided a way for would-be campers to enjoy state parks at times when "nature's wrath"—or at least nature's distemper—might otherwise have prevented a visit. And once they were on the scene, they became even more popular in the summers, filling a niche between primitive camping and motorized recreational vehicles.<sup>284</sup>

Yurts unlocked a flood of alternative camping arrangements. Back when the 2010 Plan was first developed, the 1988 Citizens Committee had identified a need to "do some innovative testing of new ideas, such as tent cabins or other rustic facilities." The runaway success of yurts proved the potential effectiveness of

282 *FYI* 205 (Aug 8, 1997). The original poem has five stanzas, with another five in the sequel.

283 *FYI* 56 (1994); *FYI* 66 (1994); Susan G. Hauser, "A Bit of Mongolia In Oregon," Jan 1, 1995; *FYI* 72 (Jan 6, 1995); *FYI* 137 (March 29, 1996); *FYI* 317 (Nov 26, 1999).

284 *FYI* 90 (Feb 14, 1995); Helen Caple, "Playing with Words and Pictures: Intersemiosis In a New Genre," PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2009, chap. 4; *FYI* 62 (1994); Bob Meinen to All Salem Managers, March 20 1995, *FYI* 87 (March 24, 1995); Nancy Rockwell, "Deputy Director Comments," *FYI* 105 (Aug 4, 1995); "Yurts Make Winter Camping Easy in Oregon and Washington," *Seattle Times* Nov 16, 2008.



## *To Keep the System Alive:* **Free and Unfree Labor for Oregon State Parks**

Volunteers had been a vital part of Oregon state parks since before the beginning. Volunteers and donors had carried the system through the 1980s. As funding got even scarcer in the 1990s, parks people pushed for more assistance. In the 1990s, volunteer programs were expanded, new donor networks were built, and work-hours were solicited from other government-funded entities. One of the best ways to “turn one dollar into two” was to get work or land for no dollars at all.

Donor management had been a central part of the job for Boardman and Talbot alike. The shadow mission of the old Parks Committee had been fundraising and the cultivation of donors. The same held true for Meinen and the new Parks Commission. From the start, Meinen was aggressive about acquisition. Even in times of extraordinary financial stress, when layoffs seemed unavoidable and maintenance was turning critical, Meinen focused on continuing at least some level of acquisition, largely or entirely through donations of land and money.

Meinen had a tool that the Superintendents of years past did not. Talbot had retired from the job, but not the fight for funding. In 1995, the Oregon Parks Trust was formed with Talbot at the head. Meinen had facilitated a similar Idaho Heritage Trust for historic preservation in that state, and Talbot had long dreamed of an umbrella organization coordinating park boosters. A legally separate entity from OPRD, the Parks Trust acted as a fundraiser and advocate for park issues. They raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from organizations and individuals, some of which would have been unlikely to support a government agency directly. They bought land for parks, covered budget gaps, and purchased yurts. The Parks Trust also quarterbacked many of the fights for funding from 1996 to 1998 [see below]. At times the Parks Trust was too close to the department: a later audit found that their entanglement had bordered on illicit, citing in particular a sweetheart yurt leasing deal Meinen had brokered to provide the trust with much of its early operating capital. But whatever its initial indiscretions, the Parks Trust enabled a greater coordination of donor and supporters than had previously been possible.<sup>287</sup>

Existing volunteer programs continued and expanded. The budget crisis was getting worse, and the outcry against it getting organized. This new attention brought new volunteers and partnerships to parks. “In the face of ebbing financial support for state parks,” one new family of volunteers said, “all Oregonians

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287 Just, “Robert Meinen and Idaho State Parks”; It bears noting that the Audits division found “the courtesies and cooperation extended by the officials and staff... commendable and much appreciated.” No punitive action was recommended, and auditors agreed that none of the indiscretions had been in pursuit of personal gain. Oregon Audits Division, “State of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department: Review of the Department’s Relationship with the Oregon State Parks Trust,” John N. Lattimer, Director, No. 1999-27 (Aug 5, 1999), pp. viii, 16 – 17, 28.

need to become advocates for their public recreational areas.” More people than ever would be needed, another said, just “to keep the system alive.”<sup>288</sup>

In addition to expansions of scale, there were also expansions into new kinds of volunteering and workshares. In 1996, Safety Coordinator Mary Bachurin made official the program that placed Oregon State Police cadets in parks for on-the-job patrol training. OPRD also worked with the Oregon State Police to develop “an all-volunteer state park patrol program.” Citizen volunteers with official Parks jackets would patrol beaches along Highway 101 and “assist patrol officers in the detection of crimes,” while still doing much of the same work with the public as other volunteers.<sup>289</sup>

OPRD collaborated with many other government agencies to get parks work done without parks monies. One area of growth was with the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps (OYCC). Patterned after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s (see Chapter 2), the Youth Conservation Corps movements attempted to give young people (especially those deemed at-risk) temporary jobs in outdoor settings. The Oregon Youth Corps had done work in state parks practically since its inception in 1987. Indeed, there had been a similar and more troubling program as far back as 1951, when “delinquent boys from Woodburn Boy’s School” had been compelled to do park work for about one-sixth of the minimum wage for child laborers at the time.<sup>290</sup>

Unlike the “delinquent boys” of prior years, the young workers of all genders at the OYCC were paid a fair wage with government funds—but, importantly, not park funds. Using grants from other agencies and donations from the Parks Trust, Friends groups, and other organizations, Oregon youth worked in parks in many of the same ways the CCC had in years past. They built trails, crafted playgrounds, and took up small parts of the massive maintenance backlog. Some OYCC programs even delved into interpretation.<sup>291</sup>

The popularity of state parks made it easier to get help from other programs. The Oregon Youth Conservation Corps wasn’t the only body to make the leap. The dislocated farm workers who got relief and jobs from the Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC) also ended working in parks, particularly in disaster relief after flooding in 1996 wrecked parks along with much of the rest of the state. “We knew the parks were a mess,” OHDC director Jeanette Ewald said, “and when we called, OPRD seemed to jump with excitement.” And indeed, parks management jumped at any chance to get parks work done without

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288 Jackie Scott, “Volunteers Pitch in for the Gorge,” *Oregonian* May 15, 1997; Joyzelle Davis, “Trail’s End,” *Oregonian* Sept 15, 1996, p. D01.

289 *FYI* 136 (March 22, 1996); *FYI* 169 (Nov 15, 1996).

290 C.H. Armstrong, “The Oregon State Parks in 1951,” p. 1, Folder: Annual Report to NPS – Statistics, Acreage and Expenditures, Box: Chester H. Armstrong Papers; *Monthly Labor Review* 73:1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 687. It is unclear when the sub-minimum wage labor by incarcerated children in Oregon state parks ended.

291 *FYI* 86 (March 17, 1995); *FYI* 94 (May 19, 1995); *FYI* 239 (Apr 24, 1998). More recently the Oregon Youth Corps dropped “Conservation” from their title, to reflect the wider array of jobs now undertaken. We have kept the acronym here OYCC to reflect what the organization was called at the time.



blowing new holes in the smoldering crisis that was the budget. One of the bigger financial opportunities came in 1994, when Oregon voters demanded a vast expansion of the prison system in the state. Measure 11 introduced mandatory minimums, which rapidly increased the number of people incarcerated. Measure 17 attempted to turn this newly expanded pool of prisoners into a resource.<sup>292</sup>

Measure 17 required that prisoners in Oregon work full-time, and barred them from receiving pay for their labor. Compelling prisoners to work without pay in this manner was the only form of slavery specifically permitted by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is unclear how many of the 71% of Oregonians who voted in favor of the measure realized it mandated slavery. The debate around Measure 17, and the abbreviated text on the ballot, was only about making prisoners work, and how much it would cost—though proponents did use the language barring inmates from being paid as a positive feature when pressing for the measure in some media.

Measure 17 was one of many Oregon ballot initiatives amidst the national “tough on crime” movement, which rested on the theory that crime rates could be reduced and society improved by locking up those convicted of crimes for as long as possible in conditions as harsh as possible. In practice, Department of Corrections (DoC) officials quietly avoided the mandate to enforce slavery, which they viewed as infeasible. Instead, the DoC attempted to obey the voter mandate to force prisoners to work, but indirectly continued to give prisoners wages—equivalent to one-tenth or less of the Oregon minimum wage.<sup>293</sup>

Oregon Parks and Recreation was the first state agency to take advantage of this new source of labor. There had been prison labor in the parks in one form or another since at least 1966, but not at this scale or with this much of the cost covered. After a slow start Meinen directed all managers “to evaluate projects that might be suitable for inmates in the parks, such as roof repairs, trail maintenance and the like.... [as well as] at work projects that might be suitable for work inside the prisons such as, making signs, picnic tables, and fire rings.”<sup>294</sup> By 1996, prison work crews were taking care of long-neglected maintenance and

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292 FYI 136 (March 22, 1996); Phil Manzano, “Oregon Voters Solidly Back Crime Initiatives,” *Oregonian* Oct 13, 1994, p. B04. Measure 11 originally extended to juvenile offenders who were 15 years of age, amidst of a broader move in the 1990s to imprison children even for “relatively minor infractions” to “keeping budding criminals from blooming.” See Nena Baker, “Criminal Kids: Who Goes to Jail?,” *Oregonian* Dec 18, 1994, B01. See also Jaron Browne, “Rooted in Slavery: Prison Labor Exploitation,” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 17:1 (2020), pp. 78 – 80; Heather Ann Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History,” *Journal of American History* 97:3 (2010), pp. 703 – 734;

293 Dan Pens, “Oregon’s Prison Slavocracy,” *Prison Legal News*, May 15, 1998; Phil Manzano and Nena Baker, “Officials Await Fallout, Cost of Sentencing Measure,” *Oregonian* Nov 10, 1994, p. C09; Rick Bella, “Corrections Director Blasts Get-Tough-On-Crime Measures,” *Oregonian* Oct 25, 1994, p. D05; Phil Manzano and Ashbel Green, “Kitzhaber Accepts Resignation of State’s Corrections Director Mark Wilson,” *Oregonian* Jan 12, 1995; Michelle Roberts, “Fight Brews Over Inmate Work Program,” *Oregonian* Dec 22, 1998, p. D01; “Oregon Prison Industry Program Nets Record \$28.5 Million as Prisoners Earn \$1.25/Hour,” *Prison Legal News* Apr 2, 2019. This was not the first time enslaved felons had built parkland in Oregon—the early waysides along the Columbia River Highway were built by uncompensated compelled prison laborers. It bears mentioning that the “tough-on-crime” laws, in Oregon and nationally, had a disproportionate impact on people of color generally and Black people specifically. See also Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

294 FYI 118 (Nov 3, 1995).

repairs at several parks.<sup>295</sup> There was a backlash among some park employees on the ground, who feared an upcoming “replacement of parks staff with prisoners” that would mirror or exceed the replacement of paid labor with volunteers in the 1980s. Meinen denounced such speculation as unfounded rumor, and invited any employee with misgivings about the prison program to call him up if they “want[ed] the facts.”<sup>296</sup>

The largest and most lasting move toward acquiring prison monies for park purposes was the Parks and Prisons Partnership program. This program brought millions of dollars of prison-manufactured goods to a cash-strapped OPRD. “Foundations, furniture[,] and 8 x 8-foot decks for the yurts” were the first marquee delivery, since prison labor allowed for a much quicker expansion into the hot item of the 1990s. Prison workers also constructed new fire rings, picnic tables, and signs, just as had been suggested. In a budget crunch brought on by both tax cuts and unfunded mandates, it made sense to park leaders to try and use money earmarked for prisons to pursue park goals.<sup>297</sup>



*Fire rings and picnic tables made by prison labor rounded out the yurt package in the 1990s.*

295 FYI 120 (Nov 16, 1995); FYI 132 (Feb 23, 1996); FYI 135 (March 15, 1996).

296 Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, “Oregon State Parks in Peril: Public Forum 1996,” p. 5 (pamphlet, 1996), Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – News Articles, Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; Robert L. Meinen, “Director’s Column,” FYI 166 (Oct 25, 1996).

297 FYI 225 (Jan 16, 1998). Prison labor also built the bookshelves upon which the Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection sits.

Prison labor is a thorny issue. Critics stress the harsh working conditions, substandard wages, the class and race biases that shape who goes to prison for how long, and practices that stray near—or sometimes into—slavery. Advocates assert the value of work, preach the potential to gain job skills, and point to the testimony of many prisoners who prefer underpaid work to idleness. Prison labor for Oregon parks was one of the better jobs available to the incarcerated, with a higher-than-average one-tenth of Oregon minimum wage as pay and (sometimes) a chance to work outside. For OPRD management in the 1990s, it was never a debate, at least not in public. There was too much to be done for not enough money, and any source of unpaid labor, free or unfree, was pounced upon.<sup>298</sup>

### *“You Need to Show Some Blood”:* **The Threat of Park Closures**

“Things are going to get even more intense,” Bob Meinen warned in one of his messages to staff in 1995. “To survive, let alone flourish, in the years ahead, it will take each and every OPRD employee’s effort.” Acquisitions had been restarted with the help of the Oregon Parks Trust. The department had been rebranded with the help of yurts and business speak. But a “stable source of funding” seemed more remote than ever. In 1996, Oregon Parks and Recreation would turn to an option long contemplated but never enacted. Without more money, they warned, state parks would have to close. And this threat of closure would spark a sea change in the politics of parks.<sup>299</sup>

Park budgets in 1996 looked especially grim. The fee hikes of previous years had, as critics had warned, driven down visitor numbers. With the General Fund struggling to cover voter-mandated investments in schools and prisons, legislators had whittled away the money going to parks practically to nothing. And then there was the flood.<sup>300</sup>

In February of 1996, torrential downpours collided with historic snowpack to create the worst flooding in Oregon since at least the 1960s. Usually placid rivers raged, mudslides claimed whole neighborhoods, and flooding was everywhere. State parks were ravaged along with the rest. What remained of Rooster Rock State Park’s beaches was a “myriad of twisted debris and dead trees,” and many of the other parks with river frontage had issues just as severe. Millions of dollars of repairs were needed, with a budget already millions underwater. Park personnel managed to patch the system back together with FEMA funds, volunteer hours, and additional prison labor. But even with clean-up costs

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298 David Leonhardt, “As Prison Labor Grows, So Does the Debate,” *New York Times* March 19, 2000, p. A01; Chandra Bozelko and Ryan Lo, “The Real Reason Prisoners Are Striking,” *Reuters* Sept 6, 2018; Sarah Shemkus, “Beyond Cheap Labor: Can Prison Work Programs Benefit Inmates?,” *The Guardian* Dec 9, 2015; *FYI* 217 (Nov 7, 1997).

299 Robert L. Meinen, “Director’s Corner,” *FYI* 119 (Nov 9, 1995)

300 Bob Meinen to All Salem Managers, March 20 1995, *FYI* 87 (March 24, 1995).

(partially) covered, income from the flooded months of February and March was a total wash. Oregon Parks and Recreation entered the summer of 1996 an extra half million dollars in the hole.<sup>301</sup>

Parks leadership had been considering closures since the end of the gas tax. In December of 1981, the Parks Advisory Committee had contemplated park closures as a means of spurring the public into action. “You need to show some blood,” committee member George Bell had argued, to shock the public into recognizing the funding crisis. In end, though, a coalition led by Lu Beck voted down the possibility of park closures. Better, they said, to avoid “‘punishment cuts’ to the public” that might raise ire rather than money, and better instead to find ways of “shortening our stirrups.” Fifteen years of budget cuts, layoffs, and deferments followed.<sup>302</sup>

The new Parks Commission had also contemplated park closures. In Nancy Rockwell’s first meeting as Acting Director in July, 1992, the Commission accurately predicted that the funding measures for that year were going to fail. If that happened, it was agreed, the Commission would “have to raise fees or close down parks.” And “if the department threatens they intend to close parks based on budget decreases,” Chairman Booth had cautioned at a later meeting with Meinen, “it must follow through and not be left with the image of crying wolf for no real cause.”<sup>303</sup>

By June of 1996, the fees could go no higher, the stirrups could get no shorter, and the wolf was at the door. As Meinen and Rockwell put it in a letter to staff:

*We have feared this day... we [have] tried to impress on you the serious problems we face. No matter how we cut the deck we still come up short. There simply are no more rabbits to pull from the hat. The reservoir of quick fixes is empty.*

*Staff layoffs and park closures are the only way we can curb the deficit problems we face.*<sup>304</sup>

Facing a grim budget and a hostile legislature, Meinen, Rockwell, and the Parks Commission went nuclear. Closing down some parks to preserve the rest was a “last resort,” Commission member (and future chair) Betsy McCool insisted. But the last resort had, at last, arrived. The idea of closures

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301 Brian Meehan *et al*, “Too Much Rain, It’s Plain,” *Oregonian* Feb 7, 1996, p. A01; Dionne Peoples-Salah, “Little Left to Crow About at State Park,” *Oregonian* Feb 20, 1996, p. B01; Peter Farrell, “Torrent of Figures Tote Flood’s Costs and Keep On Rising,” March 2, 1996.

302 State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, Dec. 3 – 4, 1981, pp. 8 – 9, Folder: Advisory Committee Minutes & Actions 1981 – 1989, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection.

303 Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Conference Call Meeting Minutes, July 1, 1992, Folder: Commission Meeting Notes [1990 – 2013]; Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, p. 5, *ibid*.

304 Robert Meinen and Nancy Rockwell to All OPRD Staff, June 10, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Internal Communication, Box: Park Issues – Park Closures and Funding Crisis.

began to seem inevitable, with sad acceptance announced from Governor John Kitzhaber's office and cautious approval from Majority Leader Brady Adams in the state legislature.<sup>305</sup>

On June 19, 1996, the Parks Commission dropped the boom. No fewer than 60 parks across Oregon would close in September, with 11 more moving from year-long to seasonal service. And they warned that even more parks—between 17 and 30—were likely to close without further funding by the end of the year. “We have kind of done the easy one,” Meinen primly noted to the press following the announcement. “The next round will probably have to take some serious looks at some of the major parks.”<sup>306</sup>

Meinen and the Commission repeatedly asserted that they weren't “closing parks to outrage the public.” And they certainly did not want to be perceived as trying to “outrage the public.” Some in the Salem office were sure it was a “political strategy.... meant to force the public's hand.” Many in the field saw the closures as real, a prelude to another devastating round of layoffs. Whether they were meant to provoke outrage or not, the announced closures set off an immediate firestorm. To paraphrase Talbot: *everyone* could smell the toast burning now.<sup>307</sup>

By June 20, Governor Kitzhaber was convening emergency meetings with the legislature to find the money to keep parks open. Senator Adams, as one newspaper phrased it, “reversed his support of the closure once he saw the hit list.” And he wasn't alone. Once the threat of closures moved from abstract government cuts to the loss of specific parks, many state legislators were suddenly getting an earful from their constituents.<sup>308</sup> As one among the raft of editorials put it:

*Perhaps the announced closures will do what the prospective threat didn't: Give political leaders and the public the message that wishful thinking has failed and concrete steps are needed to put the parks system on a stable financial base. We need to regain the quality system we had and want to have again.*<sup>309</sup>

The gambit had worked. Editorials in newspapers across the state declared that “Oregonians should be outraged” and “[s]tate parks desperately

305 Ashbel S. Green, “State May Fold Tent on Some Parks,” *Oregonian* June 6, 1996.

306 Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, “Parks Placed on Future Closure List,” Press Release June 19, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – News Articles, Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; Ashbel S. Green, “State Closes 65 Parks, Eroding Beach Access,” *Oregonian* June 20, 1996, p. A01. Ashbel Green counted campgrounds within those parks that were closing as separate parks when enumerating for his headline, and excluded parks that would close without partnerships entirely.

307 “State Park Closures” [internal report] (Nov. 18, 1996), Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Internal Communication, Box: Park Issues – Park Closures and Funding Crisis; Suzanne Richards, “Parks and Piqued Public,” *Oregonian* June 21, 1996, p. C02. Meinen asserted throughout this period that if the threatened closures had been primarily political, he would have “picked some major parks” to close. He also, it must be noted, warned that the closure of major parks remained an inevitability if the department did not receive financial relief. Green, “State Closes 65 Parks, Eroding Beach Access”; “OPRD History Panel Discussion” Interviewer - Kathy Schutt, Dec. 2012, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Collection.

308 Richards, “Parks and Piqued Public”; “A Political Quick Fix,” *Redmond Spokesman* June 26, 1996.

309 “Don't Take Parks Apart,” June 21, 1996, p. C10.

need a new, long-term stable source of funding.” The “stable source of funding” that had been Meinen’s mantra and Talbot’s focus was now part of the political conversation.<sup>310</sup>

The stakes were high. Governor Kitzhaber wanted to use the pressure of the threatened closures to push for a long-term solution to state park funding. Senator Adams and the state legislature asked for time to work out a solution, and promised to bring forward emergency funding at the end of the year to cover any budget gap that keeping the threatened parks open would bring. OPRD and the Parks Commission fretted that leaving a budget hole in an election year might result in that promise evaporating once the election was concluded—especially if the legislature that had made the promise changed. On the other hand, closing parks even when future funding to keep them open had been proffered might turn the public outrage toward OPRD.

As they had throughout the year, Meinen and the rest of the executive team issued orders to everyone to hammer home the crisis. Area managers, still shaken from mass layoffs, had already been informed that outreach to legislators was part of their job. But parks people on every level were told to reach out in every possible way to communicate that “parks [were] in peril.” The summer of 1996 saw another set of tours like Talbot’s Burnt Toast tours a decade prior—though they were if anything even more scripted under Meinen. The main purpose was to inform concerned citizens of the dire state of park finances, and to gauge which funding schemes might be the most acceptable.<sup>311</sup>

Less than a month before the deadline, the Parks Commission took a gamble and announced that the threatened parks would stay open. “There’s plenty of risk, but I think we need to rely on the good-faith assurance of elected leaders and that we have their attention,” Chairman Booth said. “It’s a horrible thing for Oregon to close its parks — the parks and beaches are the soul of Oregon.” If the gamble failed, the budget gap would be even worse—possibly big enough to take down the whole park system.<sup>312</sup>

Meinen and Rockwell refused to let the pressure abate. Some staff worried that pushing the message of closure too hard might backfire. As Monte Turner put it, “I know we want to keep the pressure on, but I’m not ready for another tempest.” But the executive team wanted to keep the message of hazard ongoing.<sup>313</sup>

310 “Parks Are Wrong Target,” *Roseburg News-Review* June 21, 1996; “Parks Decline Is a Crime,” *Daily Astorian* July 23, 1996.

311 OPRD, “Oregon State Parks in Peril”; Monte R. Turner to OPRD Staff, “Guidelines for Answering Calls/Questions” [e-mail], Nov 20, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Internal Communication, Box: Park Issues – Park Closures and Funding Crisis Mabel Royce, “Parks Department Meeting Was a Sham,” *Bay Area Dispatch* n.d. (summer 1996?), Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – News Articles, Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis.

312 Matea Gold, “State Puts Off Park Closures,” *Oregonian* Aug 8, 1996; Tony Davis, “Parks Will Stay Open 3 Months,” *Statesman Journal* Aug 8, 1996.

313 Nancy L. Rockwell to Area Managers, “Closure Signs” [e-mail], Aug 9, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Internal Communication; Monte Turner to Frank Howard, Nancy L. Rockwell, and Craig L. Tutor, “Scheduled to Be Closed Signs” [e-mail], Aug 9, 1996, *ibid*.

*In an effort to keep financial problems in the consciousness of residents, visitors, and volunteers, signs will be installed... read[ing] “This property is scheduled to be closed this fall due to a lack of state funding.”<sup>314</sup>*

The risk and the outreach paid off. In the elections of 1996, state parks were part of the conversation in a way they hadn’t been for decades. Promising to protect a beloved local state park, as it turned out, was an easy political position. The state legislature followed through, pushing through the allocation of enough emergency funds to close the budget gap of 1996 and keep the state park system going. But a longer-term solution was harder. Parks were one among “[m]any... competing interests” that were “very attractive,” Senator Adams said. “But we just don’t have enough money for everything.”<sup>315</sup>



*June 24, 1996: ominous headlines and a map of 64 parks on the chopping block.*

314 Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, p. 8; Public Services Section, OPRD, “Parks in Peril,” *Co-Op Update* 3 (Aug 19, 1996), Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – News Articles, Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis.

315 Ashbel S. Green, “Legislators Say They Won’t Fold Parks’ Tent,” *Oregonian* Nov 14, 1996.

As 1997 began, Oregon state parks were in the public consciousness more than they had been for a generation. One of the policy priorities in Governor Kitzhaber’s “State of the State” address was, for the first time, a call to “rebuild and retain one of the nation’s great parks systems.” But though OPRD had political attention and enough money to survive the moment, emergency measures were not a source of stable funding. “We are gaining ground,” Meinen told staff, but “[w]e can not ease our relentless push forward. We must continue our efforts at the park and local levels that inform the public of our plight and what it will take to stabilize our condition.” In the next two years, parks boosters and personnel would have to use the hard lessons of the last two decades to push for a more permanent solution. Where *could* the money come from? At long last, could public support for parks once again extend to public funding?<sup>316</sup>

### *Fine Words Don’t Operate Parks:* **The Army for Parks Assembles**

Where could the money come from? Talbot’s “Burnt Toast” tours and the 1988 Citizens’ Committee had brainstormed all kinds of funding ideas. Some suggested taxes along the lines of those used to fund parks in other states, like a tax on real estate transfers or an (extra) tax on cigarettes. Some hoped to link taxes to those businesses state parks most benefitted—restaurant taxes, hotel taxes, or (additional) gas taxes. A few schemes would have opened whole new categories of product to taxation, like the quickly-squelched proposed taxes on sporting goods or video rentals.

But the proposals that got the most traction in the 1990s were those that extended existing government funding sources to parks. There were perennial calls for parks to get a greater proportion of the General Fund, especially as Oregon’s General Fund provided an unusually small percentage of the state park budget. Some pushed for parks to get a piece of state lottery revenues, either directly or through bonds. And there was, most of all, a push to fund parks through expansion of the Bottle Bill.<sup>317</sup>

Getting tax money from soda and beer had been long-time favorite for parks boosters. This was the option that had gotten the most support in the townhall meetings of the 1980s, and had been put forward as one of the best options by the 1988 committee. Oregon had passed the first Bottle Bill in the nation in 1971, requiring customers to pay a “deposit” on bottles that could be redeemed if they returned the emptied containers for recycling. Oregon customers who resisted sales taxes generally were thus already used to paying a little extra for bottled products. And this extra was already associated with nature, as the bill had initially been passed to reduce littering and was associated with

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316 John A. Kitzhaber, “The State of the State: Keeping Oregon’s Quality of Life,” (Salem, OR: Office of the Governor, Jan. 13, 1997); FYI 170 (Nov 22, 1996).

317 2010 Citizen Advisory Committee, “Oregon State Parks 2010 Plan,” 61 – 62, 73.



Oregon's image of livability. In 1988, the Citizens' Committee had found that the addition of a mere 1-cent bottle tax would be enough to pay for everything that state parks needed.<sup>318</sup>

In the early 1990s, bottle money seemed like the answer for parks problems. Other states passed laws giving over a portion of bottle deposits to environmental causes in 1989 and 1990. By 1991, Dave Talbot was working Governor Barbara Roberts's staff to get a beverage tax through committee. "[T]his is our designated winner in terms of a parks funding source," he informed the Parks Commission. But that bill died before reaching the floor of the legislature. And despite strong support from parks boosters and a common-sense argument for success, similar bills in 1996 and 1997 followed suit. Soda taxes remained what park publications groan-inducingly referred to as the "stable funding source... 'Pop'ular choice" among park boosters, but were unable to gain purchase with the legislature. Even with Governor Kitzhaber's support for a 3-cent fee in 1997, beverages taxes for parks couldn't even get on the agenda.<sup>319</sup>

There was some hope in 1997 of an even older parks budget idea: more money from the General Fund. This was always a part of what parks boosters were pushing, and now, with parks in the public conversation again, Talbot's long-dreamed-of army of park supporters was taking shape. The Oregon State Parks Trust, coordinating with OPRD, spurred the development of a new umbrella organization. "SOS Parks!" coordinated a rally for state parks (and especially parks funding) in Salem on March 17, 1997.<sup>320</sup>

*Promises to keep the keep the parks open and running well raised cheers from the 400 placard-carrying parks boosters, including heavily badged Girl Scouts, buckskin-clad mountain men, Eddie Bauer-garbed mountaineers, hikers and canoers, and even the lady RVers in fashion print rain-coats.*<sup>321</sup>

The parks rally was striking for its political breadth as much as its size. Buses brought in supporters from major population centers across the state, but folks from smaller communities also drove in to participate. It was, as newspapers at the time pointed out, a movement that sprang from popular demands

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318 "CHAPTER 745: AN ACT [HB 1036] Relating to beverage containers; and providing penalties," *Oregon Laws and Resolutions: Enacted and Adopted by the Regular Session of the Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly Beginning January 11 and Ending June 10 1971* (Salem, Oregon: Oregon Legislative Assembly, 1971); Richard J. Bacon, "Oregon's Bottle Bill: A Battle Between Conservation and Convenience," (Eugene: University of Oregon Scholars' Bank, 2005); 2010 Citizen Advisory Committee, "Oregon State Parks 2010 Plan," 62.

319 Brent Walth, "No Deposit, No Return: Richard Chambers, Tom McCall, and the Oregon Bottle Bill," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 95:3 (1994): 278 – 299; Anita Lanning, State Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1991; *FYI* 172 (Dec 13, 1996); Gail Kinsey Hill, "State Parks Could Be Rolling in Clover," *Oregonian* Jan 4, 1997, p. C01; Steve Suo and Gail Kinsey with Steven Carter and Nancy Mayer, "GOP Budget Cuts 280 Million," *Oregonian* March 6, 1997, p. A01.

320 *FYI* 183 (March 7, 1997); John Henrikson, "Oregon Park Lovers to Rally for More State Funding," *Statesman Journal* Aug 17, 1997. Some charged that the Oregon State Parks Trust and OPRD coordinated too closely. Oregon Audits Division, "State of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department: Review of the Department's Relationship with the Oregon State Parks Trust," John N. Lattimer, Director, No. 1999-27 (Aug 5, 1999).

321 Diane Dietz, "Politicians Take Parks Pledge," *Statesman Journal* March 18, 1997.

rather than business interests or political machinations. Speakers at the event crossed the political spectrum, with leaders from both sides of the political divide pledging to keep parks open. “It’s obvious that more legislative members are recognizing the problems that exist today as a result of increased usage and reduced budgets,” Dave Talbot said of the event and an ongoing letter-writing campaign that he helped coordinate. Talbot was gracious enough not to publicly dwell on the fact that he’d been saying as much for 20 years.<sup>322</sup>

All parties agreed on the merit of parks, but no single agreement on how to fund them emerged, at the rally or afterwards. “We’ve heard a lot of fine words,” Chairman Brian Booth said of the vague political promises made at the rally. “But fine words don’t operate parks.” With the urging of the Parks Trust, SOS Parks!, and many others on what was colloquially known internally as the “Stable Funding mailing list,” park people inside and outside of the program tried to keep the pressure on. The threat of closure had been delayed, not extinguished.<sup>323</sup>

Thousands of letters and petitions poured in from 1996 to 1998, to legislators across the state, to the governor, and to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Some came from visitors who had used the state parks for decades, others from new arrivals. Particularly piquant letters were saved, like this one to Governor Kitzhaber:

*This is my 5th year of girlscouts and almost every year I have gone to this campground which we call The Big Tree Campground [at LaPine State Recreation Area]. We have alot of fun with all the girlscouts that can come....*

*I'm asking is just please don't shut down the Big Tree Campground*

*If you do shut it down where do we all go? Will we all get to be together?*

*PLEASE!*

*We are willing to do anything to keep this Park open!!!*

*PLEASE*

*PLEASE Don't shut it down!!!<sup>324</sup>*

Most letters were answered, often by management figures. The message was always about the same: the legislature *must* “find a stable funding mechanism for the agency” to avoid a shutdown.<sup>325</sup>

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322 Ashbel S. Green, “It’s No Day at the Beach for Parks,” *Oregonian* March 23, 1997, p. C02; FYI 189 (Apr 18, 1997).

323 Green, “It’s No Day at the Beach for Parks;” Monte R. Turner to Nan E. Evans and Robert Meinen, “RE: Letter from Bob” [e-mail], Dec 5, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Internal Communication, Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis.

324 Savanna Marsala to Governor Kitzhaber, [received] Oct 31, 1996, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Visitor Letters [but see entire folder], Box: Park Issues – Closure and Funding Crisis. Spelling errors preserved to maintain the twee character of the original.

325 Quotation in Craig Tutor to William Burnett, Feb 20, 1997, Folder: Administrative – Park Issues – Park Closures – Visitor Letters [but see entire folder].

In 1997, they didn't. But it was still the best year for Oregon state parks in a generation. Confronted by the "army for parks," the legislature doubled the General Fund contribution for the year, closed a few loopholes, and allowed for infrastructure bonds to be taken out against the profits of the Oregon State Lottery. For the first time in a long time, OPRD could begin to pick at the edges of a two-decade maintenance backlog. But there were concerns that the budget successes of 1997 would fade in future years, when public pressure for parks inevitably began to ease. What the department did not yet have was a source of *stable* funding.<sup>326</sup>

And despite the successes, there were still budget shortfalls in 1997, and with them the looming threat of layoffs. "We may not be flush, but we have a history of rising to challenges like these," Meinen proclaimed to surviving staff in Salem. "We won a battle, but we did not win the war."<sup>327</sup>

*[T]he truth is, without an appreciable, stable funding source, our parks don't have a positive future. Their existence will continue to be hardscrabble, and our ability to keep a viable park system will be compromised....*

*Doing more with less will be our modus operandi for the next two years—some would say, "business as usual."*<sup>328</sup>

Public outcry might not have been enough to push the legislature to impose a new tax for parks—even the relatively popular bottle tax, which was not put before the voters themselves. But shifts in public opinion did make proposals for mass closure of parks political poison. A legislative move in May of 1997 to divest from or close non-profitable state parks lasted less than a day—the idea of closing that many state parks couldn't make it into committee, much less onto the floor of the legislature. Faced with the refusal of the legislature and governor to agree on a source of stable funding for the department, park boosters decided to pursue it through the same mechanism that had hamstrung parks in 1990 and 1994. Direct ballot measures had just taken another swipe at state budgets in 1997, further reducing the property taxes allocated for state programs. But park proponents had hope that the newly energized movement could convince the electorate to vote in a source of funds. The gas tax of 1992 had been a sharp failure. But the lottery bonds newly available for park infrastructure suggested a possible path forward.<sup>329</sup>

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326 Jeff Mapes, "Voters Willing to Use Their Green on Parks," *Oregonian* June 24, 1997, p. C05; Brian Meehan, "Legislature Comes to the Aid of State Parks," *Oregonian* July 12, 1997, p. A01.

327 "Budget Deficit Forces Reality Check," *FYI* 217 (Nov 7, 1997).

328 *FYI* 213 (Oct 10, 1997).

329 Ashbel S. Green, "GOP Plan: Privatize or Close Parks," *Oregonian* May 7, 1997, p. A01; Ashbel S. Green, "GOP Drops Park Closure Plan," *Oregonian* May 8, 1997, p. A01.

## *This Bite Is Minimal:* **Lottery Dollars for Parks**

The idea of dedicating Oregon Lottery funds for parks had been around longer than the lottery itself. As parks scrambled for funding in 1981, Chairman of the Parks Advisory Committee “Stub” Stewart had encouraged research and development into a “lottery for park and recreation purposes to be divided 75 percent to the State; 12 percent to the Counties and 12 percent to the Cities.”<sup>330</sup> Initial attempts by the 1983 legislature to create a state lottery bill directed the money “State Parks, tourism, and Economic Development.”<sup>331</sup> But by the time the lottery was voted in by direct ballot measure in 1984, funds were to be wholly devoted to economic development and job creation.<sup>332</sup> This did not necessarily have to exclude parks—after all, OPRD had half a century of data showing that state parks promoted both. And in practice, the lottery dollars for “economic development” were routed wherever legislators pleased. The push to put lottery funds into parks remained on the back burners through most of the budget brainstorming of the 1980s and 90s.<sup>333</sup>

In 1995, lottery dollars for schools went from a matter of custom to a matter of law. In practice, a significant portion of the profits from the state lottery already went to schools. But the legislature and the public made this a part of state law, by overwhelming margins. “Stub” Stewart continued to push for more park involvement in the lottery—including, he suggested, installing video poker machines at some of the more built-up facilities like Wolf Creek or Cove Palisades. “[I]t is important,” he said, “not to rule out any potential revenue source.”<sup>334</sup>

As parks boosters at the end of 1997 searched for a way to transform public sympathy into financial support, “Stub” Stewart and Brian Booth were among those who led the push for a lottery amendment. Seeing the success of the lottery bonds for infrastructure in 1997 AND the failure to get the same in 1996, they proposed that parks and waterways split a dedicated 15% cut of lottery dollars. The Campaign for Parks and Salmon, as the coalition in favor of the measure came to be known, included a spectrum of politicians (including multiple former governors), conservationists, recreation interests, and even

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330 State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, Dec. 3 – 4, 1981, p. 7, Folder: Advisory Committee Minutes & Actions 1981 – 1989, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection.

331 State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1983, p. 2, Advisory Committee Minutes & Actions 1981 – 1989, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection.

332 Office of the Secretary of State, *Oregon Blue Book: 1983 – 1984* (Salem: Oregon State Archives), pp. 395 – 396.

333 Don MacGillivray, “History of the Oregon Lottery,” *Southeast Examiner* Jan 1, 2014. Legislation dedicating state lottery funding to parks in Arizona (1990) and Colorado (1992) may also have influenced conversations about the possibilities of lottery funding for state parks in Oregon. Alia Beard Rau and Macaela J Bennett, “Where Does Arizona Lottery’s Revenue Go?,” *Arizona Republic* July 1, 2016; Colorado Lottery Board, “Colorado Lottery—Thirty Years of Play: FY13 Annual Report,” (Denver: Colorado Department of Revenue), 14 – 15.

334 Gail Kinsey Hill, “House Votes to Let Schools Hit State Lottery Jackpot,” *Oregonian* Feb 3, 1995, p. D01; Ashbel S. Green, “Oregon Has Shakes Over Dependency on Gambling Money,” *Oregonian* Dec 13, 1995, p. D01; Anita Lanning, Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission Workshop Minutes, Feb 23, 1995, p. 4.

timber consortiums (possibly due to Stewart's position in the forestry community). Measure 66, the Oregon Lottery Revenues for Parks and Conservation Act, would in concert with General Fund support bring in just enough money to pursue park goals.<sup>335</sup>

Passage of Measure 66 was a walk in the park. Boosters raised money and attention, supporters came out in droves, and there was little organized opposition from monied interests. Because the lottery was most closely associated with school funding, there were concerns among some education advocates that 15% for parks and salmon might end up eating into school budgets. Proponents of Measure 66 argued that the amount parks was asking for was miniscule compared to school funding—"this bite is minimal," as one editorial put it. Some organizations were tepid about adding yet another spending mandate, pointing to the raft of required spending that already bound the state legislature. Only a few voices brought up the issue of funding parks on the backs of gamblers. The one "Argument Opposed" that made the ballot was from an environmentalist in favor of parks spending, but unwilling to facilitate "preying on the weak to abdicate our moral responsibility to fund these very legitimate programs." But with the state lottery already an institution upon which state budgets relied, this argument fell on deaf ears.<sup>336</sup>

Chastened by criticisms of a too-close relationship with the Parks Trust in preceding years, Oregon Parks and Recreation avoided taking too direct an official role in the fight for lottery dollars. "While the initiative certainly would help our cause," Bob Meinen told staff, "the department is not, and cannot be, involved in campaigning for the proposal." says Director Bob Meinen. But that did not prevent them from passing on calls from the media or the public to those fighting for the initiative. Nor did it prevent individual parks personnel from campaigning for parks money. The department officially took no part in the campaign—but managers still felt pressure to spend hours each week working the phone banks to drum up support.<sup>337</sup>

Measure 66 passed easily, with over two-thirds of the vote. As Meinen said, "The significance of the election results was that Oregonians, with their votes, showed they support their parks, beaches, open spaces and natural resources." Indeed, this was most unequivocal show of support from Oregon voters in the

335 Jonathan Nicholas, "Your Last Chance to Save the Soul of Oregon," *Oregonian* Apr 22, 1998, p. B01; *FYI* 172 (Dec 13, 1996); Steve Mayes with Jeff Mapes, "Former Governors Want to Park a Proposal on Ballot," *Oregonian* July 2, 1998, p. B01; Steve Mayes, "Parks Seek Lottery Help to Dismay of Educators," *Oregonian* July 14, 1998, p. B01.

336 Steve Mayes, "Parks Seek Lottery Help to Dismay of Educators," *Oregonian* July 14, 1998, p. B01; "For Parks and Salmon[,] Measure 66 Would Give Much-Needed Help to Maintaining and Restoring Oregon Treasures," *Oregonian* Sept 24, 1998, p. B08; City Club of Portland, "Ballot Measure 66: Lottery Funds for Parks and Watersheds," *City Club of Portland Bulletin* 80:21 (Oct 23, 1998); Steve Mayes, "Schools Face Competition for Lottery Dollars in Vote to Support Parks, Salmon," *Oregonian* Oct 14, 1998, p. A11; Richard L. Lippke, "Should States Be in the Gambling Business?," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 11:1 (1997): pp. 57 – 73; Ramona DeNies, "Is Oregon Addicted to the Lottery?," *Portland Monthly* June 25, 2019.

337 *FYI* 233 (March 13, 1998); "OPRD History Panel Discussion," Interviewer - Kathy Schutt, p. 8, December 2012, Folder: Kate Schutt Records, Oregon Parks and Recreation Digital Collection.

history of the Oregon state parks. Notably, the measure did not increase taxes, as the rejected gas tax or the never-voted-upon-by-the-public bottle tax would have. Guaranteed lottery funds brought Oregon Parks and Recreation closer to a source of stable funding. Lottery dollars fluctuated, but they were less susceptible to conventional economic distress than many other forms of funding. By itself lottery funding was not enough for park priorities, but it was a lifeline that pulled parks out from underwater.

The “army for state parks” had at last succeeded in a campaign. Lottery funds might not have been a cure-all, but they were a nationally-recognized success for Oregon state parks. Never one to rest on laurels, Meinen compelled staff to “continue to keep the public aware of the financial problems that face state parks and the ways we are using our funds.” But as 1998 came to a close, even he was happy to proclaim that “[i]t was a very good year for state parks.”<sup>338</sup>

But as always, there was trouble on the horizon. OPRD had turned around the budget, but not without cost. Parks were now reliant on gambling and prison labor to stay afloat. Staff were still stretched from years of austerity. Department leadership was politically wounded by the clashes over closures. Approaching the new millennium, parks would have to try and hang on to stability amidst an avalanche of backfill, backhands, and backtracking from political figures still smarting from the bruising battles of the mid-90s.

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338 Just, “Robert Meinen and Idaho State Parks”; *FYI* 267 (Nov 20, 1998); *FYI* 272 (Jan 8, 1999).