

Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept // News release // FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission gives preliminary approval to two property projects**

Corvallis OR – The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission voted to give two property projects a preliminary green light at its business meeting Wednesday, November 20 in Corvallis, Oregon and asked staff to return to a future meeting with information for a final vote.

The first approval affected the potential acquisition of property in Grant County, known as Grouse Mountain Ranch. The property, north of Mount Vernon along Highway 395, is 6,300 acres of hills, forest, grasslands, river bottomlands that would eventually include trails, camping, hunting and other outdoor recreation after a public planning effort. The property includes several residential structures that would be looked at for re-use as community meeting spaces and educational facilities. Grouse Mountain Ranch is one of the commission's property acquisition priorities <<http://tinyurl.com/ogbgbpt>>. The entire purchase could cost \$4.5 million, though an exact price and timetable for the acquisition have not been set.

The second approval affects a series of exchanges of property and money with Bandon Biota, a private land holding entity owned by Michael Keiser, owner of Bandon Dunes and other golf courses. Bandon Biota proposed to receive 280 acres of the 878-acre Bandon State Natural Area to help create a new walk-in golf course. According to state rules, when an outside party initiates a land exchange, the proposal as a whole must provide overwhelming benefit to Oregon's state park system. In return for receiving 280 acres of the Bandon property, the state park system would receive 208 acres of private property in the Bandon area, \$300,000 worth of help controlling gorse — an invasive plant affecting parts of Bandon State Natural Area and other south coast parks — and \$2.95 million to fund two other state park purchases. Of that amount, \$450,000 would be used to match a federal grant for a governmental entity to acquire 10 oceanfront acres at Whales' Cove in Lincoln County, and \$2.5 million would be used to fund a portion of the Grouse Mountain Ranch acquisition.

While it approved these two proposals in principle, the commission has asked for additional information from staff and will not issue its final decision on either project until staff return at a future meeting with proposed final orders on both proposals. For Grant County, the commission has directed staff to work on an understanding with local government to address local concerns over taxes, fire protection, water rights, agricultural uses, hunting and other issues, and to provide more information about the main residence on the property and its potential use. For the

coastal properties, the commission has directed staff to provide more information about a recent change in the exchange parcel boundary, potential impacts on endangered western snowy plover, and natural resource conditions on all the involved properties. For both sites the commission has directed staff to produce more documentation such as appraisals and environmental reports.

The exact text of the commission's actions:

Motion 1: the Commission finds that the contemplated Bandon Biota exchange meets the "overwhelming public benefit" standard of OAR 736-019-0070(4) and instruct the department to prepare a proposed final order for Commission approval.

Motion 2: the Commission finds that the acquisition of Grouse Mountain Ranch meets the acquisition standards in OAR 736-019-0060 and instruct the department to prepare a proposed final order for Commission approval.

Motion 3: the Commission directs the Department to continue good faith efforts to address local community concerns as reflected in the Governor's letter dated November 19, 2013.

Motion 4: the department will accept additional written testimony until December 6, 2013, regarding the proposed exchange or the proposed Grouse Mountain Ranch acquisition to afford the department the opportunity to consider the comments in preparing the proposed final orders.

The commission actions and audio of the public testimony are now online at <http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/pages/commission-bandon.aspx>. Public comment on these recent motions will be taken until December 6. The next public commission business meeting is February 5 in the Salem area.

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