

2011-12

### How Parks Achieved a Balanced Budget

It has been a tough few years for Parks in terms of budget constraints. We are doing our best to stay within our limits. We face a tough challenge with simply keeping up with requirements and repairs.

We have reduced our staff to the point that we are all doing the work of two or three, and that does take a toll. However, my dedicated staff is a hardworking team that performs miracles to keep our level of service to the community and our visitors at a high level. While the strain is showing, we will continue to persevere and do our best.

As to hoped for budget based outcomes, we have goals that for now must be deferred (reference Schedule F). We know that Whitehorse Park, for instance, needs to have electrical upgrades that will support the needs of newer RVs that require 50 amp service. We currently only provide 20 amp service. A few Yurts would go a long way to keeping that campground filled. Right now, our goal is to stay in the black while providing the highest quality outdoor recreational experiences we are capable of given our monetary constraints.

The real success story is one of partnership, both with other county departments that have stepped up along with amazing volunteer efforts from clubs and individuals.

- I would like to thank the **Board of County Commissioners** for approving some minor fee increases that are proving to provide substantial revenue increases. Also, with the citation authority we have been granted we have seen quite an upswing in the purchase of Annual Day Use Passes. In fact, at this time last year we had sold 1900, and we are over 3300 this year.
- Special thanks go to the **Finance Department for their amazing support and help with this year's budget process. Thanks to Rosemary, Arthur, Deana, Sara, and particularly to Chris Carlson.** I couldn't have done it without you.
- **Patty Wilbur from the Sheriff's Office has been handling our accounts payable processing and to whom I am eternally grateful. Thanks to Suzanne Watkins for allowing her staff to assist us during this difficult time.**
- Currently, **the Treasurer's Office** is now opening the envelopes we collect in the field and counting the money, a very time consuming task that has allowed my one support staff person time to handle the many phone calls, deal with picnic reservations, event contract oversight, public counter contacts for selling passes and dealing with Granite Hill Cemetery issues. ***It was the Treasurer's Office suggestion, and I believe our ISF fees cover this service. If there are to be fees incurred for the service they volunteered, we will happily take back those tasks.***
- Our **Human Resources Department** is extremely helpful in recruiting and helping us through the process of hiring and other personnel matters. **Public Health** assists at our large events. **Public Works** also lends a hand in a wide variety of ways.

- Planning, Building and Safety have been instrumental in guiding us through permitting processes.
- I have seen an improvement in services from BOM in recent months. Kudos to Ryan Johnson.
- The IT Department along with Communications respond to our needs as they are able and have been great to work with during the remodel.

**With this level of cooperation throughout the county, we are able to keep up with these and many behind the scenes tasks that keep the public happy and our Parks operation running. This speaks well to the quality of people who work hard in serving our community and who do not receive the recognition they deserve for a job well-done.**

Partnerships are and must be the model that is developed during these crushing economic days. We have developed and nurtured these relationships. However, let me be clear that it takes both time management and skill to keep these partnerships healthy. It is becoming more difficult on a daily basis to keep up with the tasks that a good manager needs to employ to see to the best possible outcome for their program. When the manager is performing the tasks of a clerk because no clerk is available or completely buried trying to keep up, these partnerships suffer. In a very real way, we are swatting at mosquitoes while the elephants fly by.

I fully realize that drastic times call for drastic measures, and that perseverance will be our salvation. We demonstrate the necessary strength to succeed. We cannot and will not be able to keep up this pace without the help of the following heroes;

- The **Grants Pass Kiwanis** have completed several projects for us, including installing ADA ramps and porches to our Yurts. They also put together the playground equipment at Whitehorse Park. This was a complicated project, and they are top shelf!
- The **Gateway Rotary** has been assisting our Indian Mary Rangers with cleanup, painting of picnic tables, weed removal, building repairs, and other improvements, as well.
- Each year, **SOASTIC** has the kids in their program volunteer in the Parks to paint benches, tables, and general cleaning that frees up my staff and makes the Parks look better. These at risk kids are learning valuable lessons and seem to thrive through the spirit of volunteerism. John Muir asserted that if are able to inspire our young people to volunteer in our Parks they will find that they love nature and will not destroy it. I saw the evidence to that philosophy in one of the young women painting picnic tables at Schroeder Park. She said, "I will never carve up another picnic table as long as I live".
- The **Parks Advisory Board** is an outstanding group of volunteers who look for ways for Parks to generate revenue and to survive the day to day vast demands of the job with a very small staff. They are responsible for achieving the approval for Day Use Fees since we are not funded by property tax dollars or the general fund. They then gave us the ability to collect lobbying the BCC for citation authority and the fee increases we have been granted.

- Individuals like **Andrew Margeson** wrote a successful grant for the Tom Pearce Bike Path. **Bob Chard, David Ross, Fred Borngasser and Dick Fowler** have contributed to the success of this trail. Andy and David Ross continue to clear weeds, pick up litter, find benches and create signs for this lovely trail.
- **Mike Cooley** wrote two successful boat ramp improvement grants. This past year Josephine County Parks received a **National Award** for the best small boat ramp project in the United States, nominated by the Oregon State Marine Board.

There are too many to name, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention **Josephine Soil and Water Conservation** who are making a tremendous difference to our Parks through fuels reduction work and invasive species removal. If you haven't seen the improvements to Granite Hill Cemetery, it is worth a look. They did an outstanding job there and are doing the same at many of our boat ramps and other Park facilities through SRS 2008 funding.

- **Others entities that make a difference for us are the Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon State Parks, the Oregon Parks Association, BLM through Rogue River Cleanup and other projects, Oregon Department of Forestry, the Forest Service, Josephine County Forestry, Josephine County Community Justice, the Grants Pass Disc Golf Club, the Sheriff's Office Volunteers, the Middle Rogue Steelheaders, Rogue Basin Watersheds, Forestry Action Committee, Stream Restoration Alliance, Siskiyou Institute and the Nature Conservancy, the Clean Forest Project, Oregon Department of Agriculture, different Scout Troops in the area, Berne Alles, Carl Wilson at KAJO has been a great supporter of our Parks,** and there are many more community volunteers. I'm sure I unwittingly left someone out and for that I do apologize.

Our Program is going to share office space with the County Forestry Department. We are currently doing a remodel to accommodate their administrative staff as well as sharing a FTE employee which will serve Parks one day a week. This employee will be taking care of APs and tracking our numbers. This solution will help us reduce our budget through our BOM fees at around \$5,000 a year and significant reduction to our previous years personal services line item to the tune of \$46,000.

We continue to make improvements to the Parks through creative thinking and hard work. Our Program wouldn't work without the **Park Hosts** in our Parks whose contributions are too many to name given the time.

We overcame a \$230,000 deficit in a very short time. This doesn't happen without critical management and doing without things we need. We have outdated and broken lawnmowers, leaf blowers, weed whackers and other tools that need to be replaced. In order for us to achieve a balanced budget we have not repaired or replaced the very tools we need to do our jobs.

Watching the bottom line and doing without, reducing hours, elbow grease and hope for a better tomorrow keep us keeping on. Without this generous community, our Parks would be in a sorry state, indeed. As it is, we have beautiful places in which to play and pray.

Parks see well over 200,000 people use our facilities each summer. Tracking the exact numbers takes a staff person which we do not have. Many tasks that we were once able to perform, such as tracking and reporting statistics, are no longer possible for us to keep up with as we strive to serve the demands that are immediate. Those tasks would be returning phone calls, emails, assisting the public by selling passes, picnic shelter reservations, dealing with burials and complex cemetery operations, handling the necessary flow of paperwork and information between the office, the field staff, the Park Hosts, the BCC, the PAB and many other organizations and government entities with which we communicate on a regular basis.

At any given time, full campgrounds bring the same demographics as a small city. Most of our Parks visitors are happy to be there and are good people. It is the minority that keep us hopping, those that have problems staying sober and observing our rules and regulations including but not limited to non-payment of fees, numerous incidents of malicious vandalism, theft, damaging Parks property, noise, fighting, homeless camps, accidents, dogs off leash, litter, dumping household garbage filling our receptacles, dumping furniture and appliances on our boat ramps, using fireworks and a wide range of other careless and ill advised activities.

We hold up to 12 events each year that require contract oversight and the presence of Parks staff to monitor and ensure compliance with State, Federal, and Local Government laws. This becomes difficult when our Parks are geographically so far removed from one another and there is only one FTE on duty.

At the risk of repeating myself, I want to give due high praise to my staff. They are asked to do far too much and willingly accept their responsibilities. I see a great team that is overworked, underpaid, and often belittled by the public who amazingly display grace under pressure on a daily basis. We care.

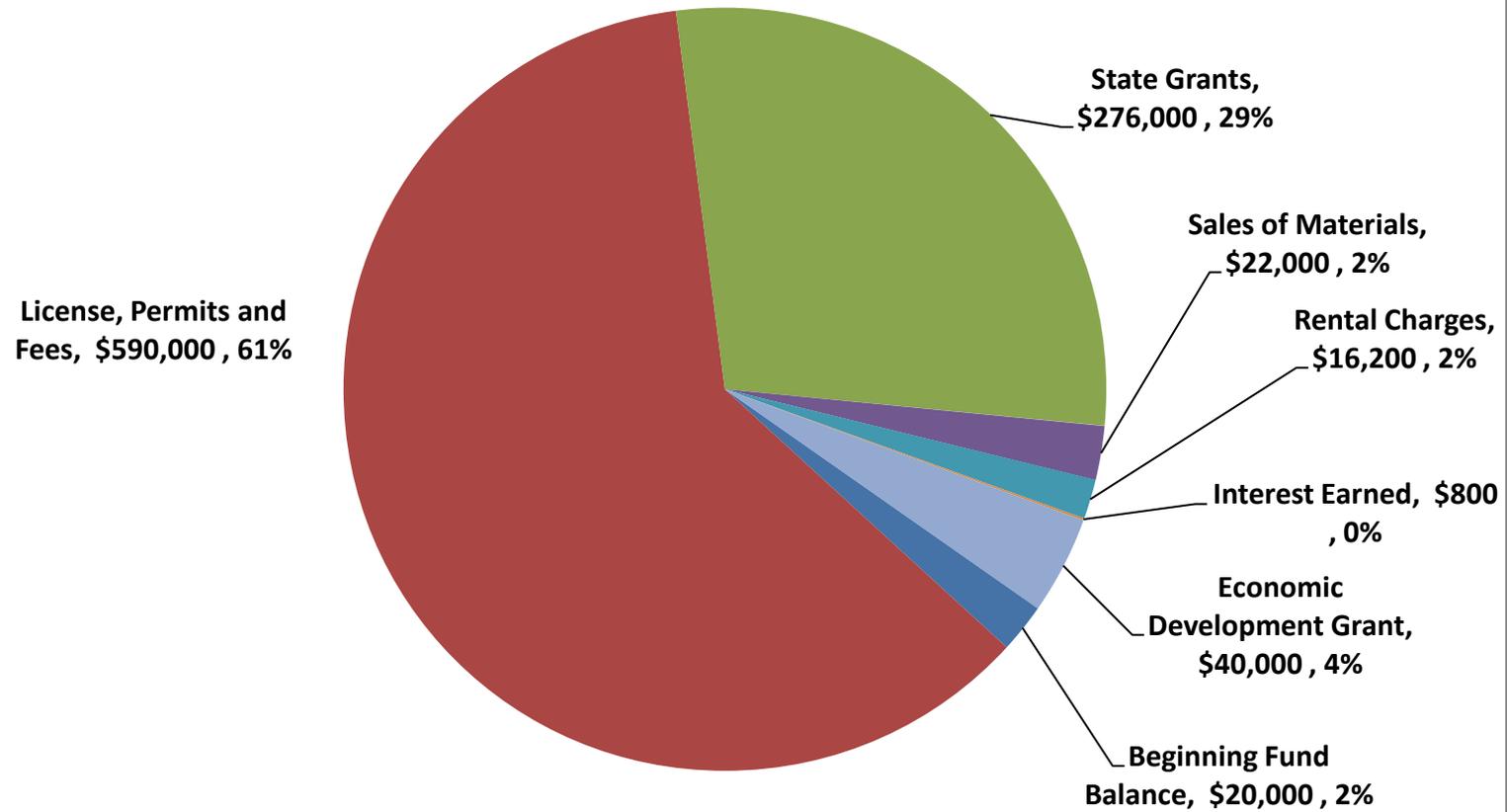
It is obvious to anyone who understands running a successful business takes people to perform the daunting challenges that Parks face. Our personnel line item is far too small, and we realize that it will likely not change any time soon. Our materials and services budget allowance does not come close to the needs of a failing infrastructure. We keep it going, nonetheless.

Forgive me if I sound negative and failed to demonstrate all the powerfully wonderful things Parks offer our community and the great public service they receive. Please take the time to visit your County Parks. They are simply fantastic, if not a bit worn around the edges.

It is my belief that Parks are the heart of a community. We must take care of our hearts if we want a healthy economy and a community that is able to unwind in an affordable and glorious setting.

Thank you for volunteering your time.

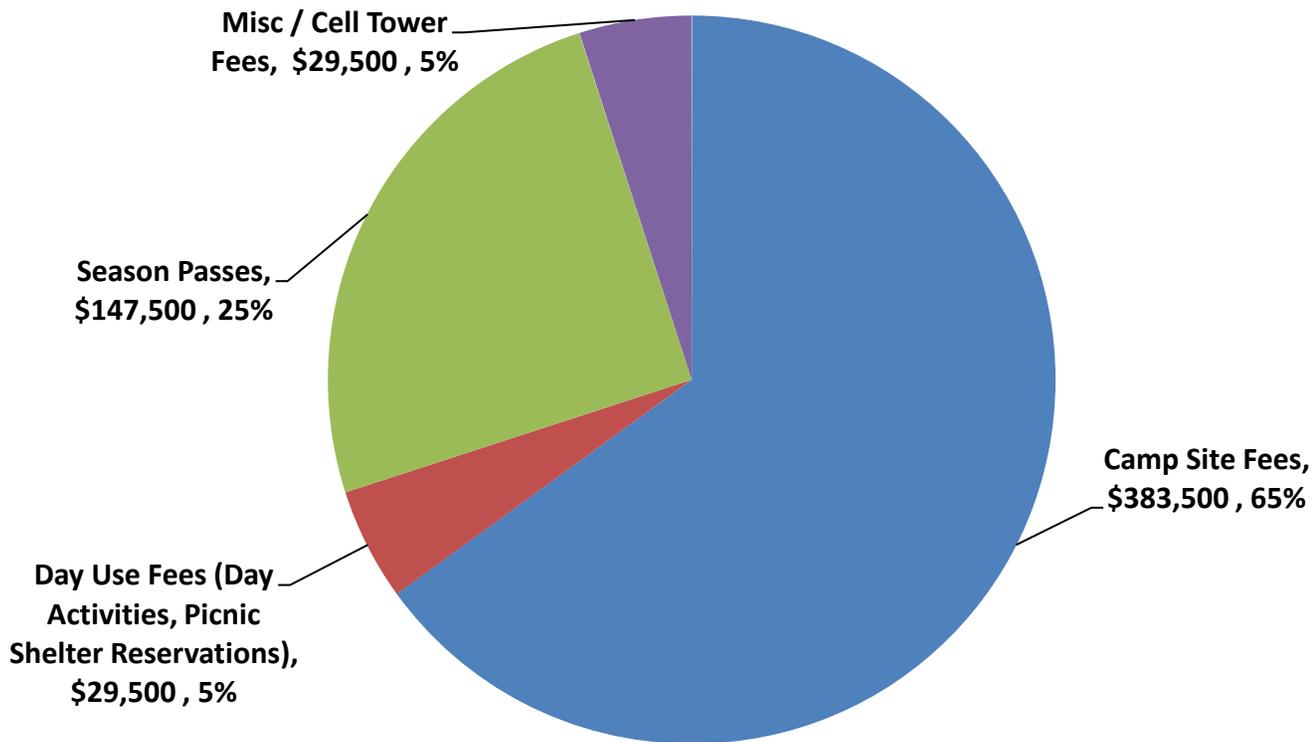
## Parks Revenue 2012-13 Proposed Budget



# License, Permits, Fees

## 2012-13 Proposed Budget

### What Makes Up \$590,000 Revenue?



## Parks Department Staffing History

