

Cuts may close county parks

By **DAWN GARCIA**
Of the Emerald

Fewer county parks will be open next year if additional funding doesn't come through, county parks superintendent Charles Schrader told Lane County Commissioners last week.

The Parks and Open Space Division is counting on a portion of a proposed special levy — \$121,990 of a total \$1.6 million — to continue base level service to parks. The proposed parks budget has been cut severely.

Voters will decide June 30 whether to approve the levy package that also includes extra funds for the sheriff's department, district attorney, judicial administration and juvenile department.

Schrader said he wished the general levy were broken down so voters could vote for specific programs.

"I'd be more comfortable if it was a menu-type levy," Schrader said. "This way you pay your money and you take your chances."

Currently, no one in the parks division is comfortable. The parks system is in an "emergency situation," Schrader said, unable to handle the growing number of park visitors with the current level of funding and a dwindling number of workers.

"Right now I've got eight people covering 59 parks," Schrader said. "And we have had an 18-percent increase in visitors per year for the last five years."

People are using county parks "as an extension of their backyards," Schrader said.

Another cause for the increase in park visitors is that parks are now thought of as an inexpensive form of recreation.

"As unemployment goes up, park usage goes up," Schrader explained. "At Alton Baker park, we're having up to 10,000 people per day."

The increased usage has not been reflected in increased funds in the 1981-82 proposed budget. This year's budget barely kept the parks system alive, parks officials said.

The maintenance level of most parks has been evaluated as acceptable by the County Commissioners, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee. Seventeen of the 59 county parks are maintained at an "E" level, the lowest level of upkeep designated by the parks department this year.

If the levy is not passed, the parks will continue operating at that level or be shut down, Schrader said.

Some of the deletions under the new budget will be 14 seasonal labor positions, the operations supervisor and the landscape architect positions, six fee collectors and two ticket booths.

"Without those positions, it'll just be me and the secretary, and she handles thousands of phone calls a day. There just wouldn't be anybody here," Schrader said.

The commissioners have said they un-

derstand the financial difficulties the parks are faced with, yet a divided board passed the motion to put the one-year levy on the ballot. Not all agree that a levy is the solution.

"Parks are probably in the worst shape of any program in the county, but you know my feelings about the levy," commissioner Scott Lieuallen said.

Lieuallen said he opposes any tax increase.

"The county needs to limit growth so we'll be in better shape in the future. What we need to do is raise the tax base next year, and we have to program in a reasonable response to park maintenance," Lieuallen said.

To combat the closure of many of the parks if the levy fails, the parks department is planning programs in which the public and service groups could volunteer their time and labor to keep the parks clean, repair trails and paint park buildings.

Any organization wanting to help in any of the "Adopt-A-Park" or "Adopt-A-Project" programs should contact the Parks and Open Space Division at 687-4231.

Such programs may be the only thing that will keep the parks open, Schrader said.

Lieuallen maintains that a special levy to beef up the budget isn't the answer, but not having it pass also would be detrimental to the county, he said.

"I frankly don't think it will pass, and if it doesn't, it'll just be another 'black eye,'" Lieuallen said.

Bill would revamp state ethics panel

SALEM (AP) — Overshadowed by investigations of alleged public corruption, 10 bills to revamp Oregon ethics and lobbying laws are fading quietly into the legislative graveyard.

"Frankly, with all the turmoil, I don't think it's the time," said Sen. L.B. Day, R-Salem.

Day organized an informal committee before the start of this session to study the Oregon Government Ethics Commission and recommend changes. The result was a bill (SB389) that would shift many of the panel's functions to the secretary of state.

The commission opposes Day's bill and introduced its own (HB2369) which strengthens the panel and requires that public officials who fail to file required disclosure statements be removed from office.

No hearing has been held on Day's measure or the other ethics proposals and none is scheduled. The executive director of the Ethics Commission plans to meet with a committee chairman Monday to push for a hearing on the commission's bill, but the chairman doubts he can do it before the end of the 1981 Legislature.

"I really think it's too late and I don't see a lot of interest in it," said Rep. Drew Davis, D-Portland, whose House State and Federal Affairs Committee has tabled the commission's bill under a time rule.

Day's bill was sent to the Senate Rules Committee. Sen. E.D. Potts, D-Grants Pass, the committee chairman, said no hearing is planned on that measure or seven other ethics proposals referred to his committee.


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