

OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

June 10, 2025

Fishtrap, Inc.
107 W. Main Street
Enterprise, Oregon 97828

Tourism Commissioners present included: Chair DiNovo, Vice Chair Willitts and Commissioners Travis Hill, Harish Patel, Jenifer Roe, David Penilton, and Scott Youngblood. David Gremmels joined virtually.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair DiNovo opens the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and welcomes everyone to the June 10, 2025, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair DiNovo thanks everyone for being in Enterprise, noting that the meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental materials can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair DiNovo states that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements required by state law were met.

The Oregon Tourism Commissioners and Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, introduce themselves.

Chair DiNovo states that there will be an opportunity to hear comments from partners. Those who plan to share remarks shall use the sign-in sheet.

Chair Remarks

Chair DiNovo acknowledges Pride Month and Travel Oregon's sponsorship of 18 Pride events throughout the state. She thanks local people and businesses Dan and Autumn Zieman at Z's BBQ in Lostine, Sugar Time Bakery in Enterprise, Garrett and Beth Lowe at Timber Bronze in Wallowa, The Litch Hotel, and the Best Western Enterprise for hosting our attendees, and to Fishtrap for hosting our meetings in Enterprise.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges that today's meeting marks her final meeting as Chair of the Oregon Tourism Commission. She continues to share the work of the Commission since 2022 including adoption of the 10-Year Strategic Vision, 2023-25 Strategic Plan and Budget, and various governance documents which have added to the rigor of accountability and transparency of the Commission and Travel Oregon.

Local Welcome

Chair DiNovo welcomes Alana Carollo, Executive Director at the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, and Jennifer Piper, the Executive Director at the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, to join us today.



Alana and Jennifer walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation for the local welcome (Exhibit A):

- Eastern Oregon – Getting Oriented
 - Southeast Oregon
 - John Day River Territory
 - Rugged Country
 - Northeast
- Wallowa County – Worth It video
- Regional Update from EOVA
- Expanding the Story: “Woven” Video Series
- Boosting Impact through Local Food
- Increasing Access
- Stewarding Land and Communities via a Scenic Byway
- Hells Canyon Outdoor Recreation Map
- Leveraging Resources: A Little Goes a Long Way
- Local Update from Wallowa County Chamber
- Wallowa County – Worth It
- Wallowa County – Rural Regional Main Street Program in Wallowa, Enterprise, and Joseph
 - Over \$1.1 million awarded to 14 projects across 3 towns

Chair DiNovo thanks the presenters for sharing their challenges, including cuts from federal administration dollars, but believes deeply in the tenacity of Oregonians to continue to do good work.

Commissioner Penilton acknowledges the beauty of the area and the lack of visitor traffic in the area. He continues to share about local business support especially of those who grew up in Wallowa County, left and returned to run businesses.

Vice Chair Willitts shares appreciation for the leadership and ingenuity of the region.

Partners and Public Statements

Chair DiNovo states that on Thursday, May 22, the Commission meeting notice was posted to the Commission Meetings webpage, notice was sent through Industry Communications and a link to the meeting agendas was posted.

Chair DiNovo reminds the group that the public comment period is an invitation to the industry to inform the Commission of updates, information, and constructive thoughts about Oregon’s tourism industry. She reminds attendees that a comment form lives continuously on the industry website.

The Commission received one comment in advance from David DeRienzo of Community Television of Lane County regarding a film festival in Eugene in 2026 which has been passed on to staff for consideration.

Chair DiNovo states that we have the opportunity for attendees to sign up in-person to speak with us. She requests that remarks remain respectful and professional and ask that comments be limited to 3 minutes.

Bob Hackett, Executive Director at Travel Southern Oregon, shares comments thanking Chair DiNovo for her leadership as well as sharing support for raising the RDMO funding floor for the Eastern Oregon and the Mt. Hood & Columbia Gorge regions.

Tori Middelstadt, Executive Director at Willamette Valley Visitors Association, shares comments thanking Chair DiNovo for her leadership as well as sharing support for raising the RDMO funding floor for Eastern Oregon and the Mt. Hood & Columbia Gorge regions. Tori asks for RCTP guidelines to include guidance on how funding increase requests can be handled.

Commission Business

Review of Commission Packet

Chair DiNovo asks if all Commissioners have received and had a chance to review their Commission packet – including the financials. All commissioners answer affirmatively.

Financial Update

Chair DiNovo thanks Vice Chair Willitts, Todd, Edward Van Buren and Kathleen Stewart for reviewing the financials prior to this meeting.

Vice Chair Willitts shares the financials including the May TLT deposit. With the May deposit, we have received \$37.7M in TLT revenue which represents 85.4% of budgeted \$44.1M. Fiscal year to date TLT is down -0.2% compared to FY24; this is behind pace of our budget of \$44.1M. All departments have been preparing for the reduction in TLT revenue, now forecasted to be \$42M, with the budgeted amendment to be presented today. We continue to closely monitor TLT as the fiscal year closes; noting that we will have final TLT at the end of July when the Department of Revenue posts end of fiscal year accruals.

Commission Action

Approval of Minutes (April and May 2025)

Chair DiNovo shares that Commissioners were sent the draft April and May 2025 Commission meeting minutes via email on May 29 and asks if there are any questions or comments regarding these documents.

Chair DiNovo takes a motion for approval.

- Commissioner Patel moves to approve and Vice Chair Willitts seconds the motion.
- Chair DiNovo asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Youngblood, Roe, Gremmels, Patel, Penilton, Vice Chair Willitts, and Chair DiNovo say 'aye'.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any opposition.
- Hearing none, the motion carries.

The April and May 2025 Commission meeting minutes are approved and will be posted to the Commission Section of the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Commission Nominating Committee Report

Chair DiNovo previously asked Commissioners Hill and Gremmels to serve on the Nominating Committee to elect the Chair and Vice Chair for FY26.

Commissioner Hill announces that Vice Chair Willitts and Commissioner Patel are nominated as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

Commissioner Gremmels thanks the Commissioners for their time and commitment, especially Chair DiNovo in her leadership role.

Chair DiNovo asks those who are nominated to recuse themselves and takes a motion to approve the Chair and Vice Chair for FY26.

- Commissioner Penilton moves to approve and Commissioner Hill seconds the motion.
- Chair DiNovo asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Youngblood, Roe, Gremmels, Penilton, and Chair DiNovo say 'aye'.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any opposition.
- Hearing none, the motion carries.

Vice Chair Willitts is approved as Chair and Commissioner Patel is approved as Vice Chair for FY26.

Consideration of CEO retention and succession planning

Chair DiNovo shares that CEO Todd Davidson recently announced his retirement after more than 30 years in the Oregon tourism industry and that the Commission has asked Todd to stay on as CEO to ensure a smooth transition, preparing archives, and oversee initial execution of the 2025-27 Strategic Plan.

Vice Chair Willitts details the motion:

1. Acknowledge and accept Todd Davidson's notice to retire as Chief Executive Officer of the Oregon Tourism Commission;
2. Retain Mr. Davidson as CEO until his replacement has been secured and onboarded to the satisfaction of the Commission; and
3. Approve the offer letter dated June 10, 2025, until his retirement date.

Chair DiNovo takes a motion as detailed above.

- Vice Chair Willitts moves to approve and Commissioner Hill seconds the motion.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any discussion. Commissioner Penilton asks to further define the scope of work before the offer letter goes into effect on July 1, 2025. Commissioner Patel agrees with Commissioner Penilton's comments.
- Chair DiNovo asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Youngblood, Roe, Gremmels, Vice Chair Willitts and Chair DiNovo say 'aye'.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any opposition. Commissioners Patel and Penilton oppose.
- The motion carries.

Chair DiNovo states that this motion affirms the Commission's intent to accept Mr. Davidson's decision while ensuring stable leadership during the search for a new CEO. It authorizes his continued service through the transition and affirms the Commission's approval of the prepared offer letter.

Chair DiNovo thanks Todd for his leadership for 30+ years.

Commissioner Penilton shares his appreciation for Todd's leadership and friendship as exemplified during a trip to Japan years prior that included celebrating a deceased colleague.

Commissioner Patel thanks Todd for his leadership.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges the open line of communication to further the Commission's goals.

CEO Search Committee

Citing ORS284.142 (1), and ORS 284.142 (2), Chair DiNovo appoints a CEO Search Committee to lead the work recruiting the next CEO and has asked Commissioners Patel, Penilton, Vice Chair Willitts to join her on the committee. She continues to share that the Committee will undertake a market rate compensation analysis, finalize the CEO job description and identify an executive search firm.

Final Review & Adoption of the Travel Oregon 2025-2027 Strategic Plan and Budget

Chair DiNovo details the work to release the draft 2025-2027 Strategic Plan and Budget including sharing with the Governor, Business Oregon and tourism industry association, Oregon Destination Association and the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association. In addition, the Plan was shared with 11 leaders of the Legislative Assembly, 39 industry and agency partners, seven Regional Destination Management Organizations, nine federally recognized tribes and the larger state tourism industry. Public comment was available from April 16 to May 16 and featured a public hearing on May 7.

Chair DiNovo asks Todd to detail the comments received.

Todd shares that one comment regarded heritage concepts and including them in future research studies. After review, staff determined that future research will include heritage concepts and KPIs, but no narrative edits to the Strategic Plan are recommended to the Commission.

Todd walks the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation outlining the 2023-2025 budget, 2025-2027 Revenue Forecast and 2025-2027 Strategic Plan and Budget (Exhibit B):

- Tourism Economics' TLT Revenue Forecast
 - 1.8% growth in FY26 and 3.2% growth in FY27 as discussed with the Finance Committee
- 2023-2025 and 2025-2027 TLT Revenue Forecast
- 2023-2025 Current and Proposed Budget
 - Current budget: \$84,540,000
 - Proposed budget modification: \$83,360,954
- Outcome Based Budgeting – Updated: 10-Year Strategic Vision Objectives
- 2023-25 Biennial Budget – LFO format (State Budget classification codes): \$86,332,582
- 2025-2027 Strategic Plan Proposed Budget: \$90,494,170
- 2025-2027 Biennial Budget – LFO format (State Budget classification codes)
- 2025-2027 Proposed Budget for Wine Country License Plates Program ORS 805.274

Todd shares comments on the RDMO funding floor and proposes increasing the floor for Eastern Oregon and Mt. Hood & Columbia River Gorge regions from \$400,000 per year to \$500,000 per year and undertake a review of the funding formula during the 2025-27 biennium.

Todd recommends opening the Large Competitive Grant cycle in FY26 with \$2.5 million per year with a minimum funding request of \$500,000. Todd recommends Commission participation in reviewing the Large Grant Guidelines with the Destination Stewardship department before bringing the guidelines back to the full Commission.

Commissioner Penilton agrees to raising the RDMO funding floor and supports opening the Large Competitive Grant.

Chair DiNovo appreciates the conservative outlook of the Finance Committee and revenue proposal. She reminds the Commission that a supplemental budget can be proposed at a later date should revenues increase.

Commissioner Youngblood supports raising the RDMO funding floor and the bold action to open the Large Competitive Grant cycle.

Commissioner Gremmels echoes Commissioner Penilton's comments. He suggests adding 'diversity' under the Travel Oregon values subcategory of "Community" in the 2025-27 Strategic Plan. He suggests greater alignment of the Travel Oregon People & Culture department with the state's Chief Human Resources description which would add another Vice President role within the Travel Oregon leadership structure.

Commissioner Penilton agrees with Commissioner Gremmels comments.

Todd clarifies that the 2025-27 Strategic Plan can be adopted as amended with the addition of 'diversity' under the "Community" value of Travel Oregon.

Chair DiNovo takes a motion to 1) approve the 2023-2025 budget as amended at \$86,332,582, 2) adopt the 2025-27 Strategic Plan and Budget at \$90,494,170 as presented and 3) opening the Large Competitive Grant cycle in FY26 as presented.

- Commissioner Youngblood moves to approve and Commissioner Patel seconds the motion.
- Chair DiNovo asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Youngblood, Roe, Gremmels, Penilton, Patel, Vice Chair Willitts and Chair DiNovo say 'aye'.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any opposition.
- Hearing no opposition, the motion carries.

The 2023-2025 budget of \$86,332,582 is approved, the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan and Budget of \$90,494,170 is adopted, and the opening of the Large Competitive Grant cycle is approved. The final 2025-2027 Strategic Plan and Budget will be posted to the Travel Oregon industry website. The 2023-2025 and 2025-2027 budgets as well as the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan will be shared with the Legislative Fiscal Office per budget processes.

Chair DiNovo thanks Todd and the Travel Oregon team to align the biennial plan with the 10-Year Strategic Vision.

Chair DiNovo recesses the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Chair DiNovo reconvenes the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

Tourism Industry Partner Survey Results & RCTP Plans

Todd states that the first report today comes from Harry Dalgaard, Director of Regional Based Services, and Javier Parada Torres, Interim Research Manager.

Harry and Javier walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Tourism Industry Partner Survey and how it impacts RCTP plans (Exhibit C) including:

- What is TIPS? – Tourism Industry Partner Survey
 - Responses by region
- TIPS – Statewide Results
 - Statewide satisfaction
 - Long-term planning areas
 - Strengths and areas for improvement
- Regional Priorities
 - Eastern Oregon
 - Eastern Oregon Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Central Oregon
 - Central Oregon Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Mt. Hood & Columbia River Gorge
 - Mt. Hood & Columbia River Gorge Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Oregon Coast
 - Oregon Coast Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Portland Region
 - Portland Region Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Southern Oregon
 - Southern Oregon Programs/Investments 2025-26
 - Willamette Valley
 - Willamette Valley Programs/Investments 2025-26

Todd asks if there are any questions for the presenters.

Commissioner Patel asks if perceptions of frontline workers may influence their answer to the satisfaction of the direction of tourism rather than them actually knowing about the work of Travel Oregon and the direction of tourism. Javier acknowledges that perception is the goal of the specific question regardless of role or position.

Commissioner Patel asks if printing the Eastern Oregon visitor guides will continue. Harry answers that guide production and distribution will continue as it is a fairly minimal investment given the sponsorship opportunities.

Vice Chair Willitts thanks the presenters and acknowledges respondent satisfaction in the direction of destination development in Oregon.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges the direction and execution of the survey and its path to informing RCTP plans. Harry states that the alignment is due to the RDMO's work.

Commissioner Hill acknowledges the overcrowding of visitors in summer in certain regions and asks how regions can work to disperse visitors. Harry answers that Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge provides an example by using a marketing product such as the Infinity Loop Map to disperse visitors throughout the region and other RDMO use investment tactics to serve that outcome.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges that the winter season promotion is also needed on the southern Oregon Coast.

Commissioner Youngblood appreciates the analytical approach of the presenters to develop, execute and utilize the survey to create substantive data.

Commissioner Patel acknowledges that more visitation in shoulder season is always desired but the reality may be limited to weather and school availability.

Commissioner Roe asks if data can be analyzed by removing the destination or region before digesting the data. Javier answers that the team has done this in the past on the Resident Sentiment Survey and does look to do this, but it was not done on this specific survey.

Commissioner Roe asks how we can increase participation in surveys. Javier answers that incentives working closer with our partners to increase outreach are possible ideas. For the resident sentiment survey, the Research team sent out postcards via mail which proved effective in rural counties with fewer than 32,000 people.

Commissioner Penilton urges restraint when considering incentives for survey completion. Javier agrees that stronger partnerships are the goal before incentives.

Todd thanks the presenters.

Willamette Valley Visitors Association RDMO Update

Todd states that the next update will come from Harry Dalgaard, Tori Middelstadt, Executive Director of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association, and Stephen Hoshaw, Chair of the WVVA Board.

Harry, Tori and Stephen provide the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation sharing an update to the Willamette Valley Visitors Association RDMO (Exhibit D) including:

- Recap of WVVA RDMO status following June 2024 Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting designation
- FY24-25: Rebuilding

- WVVA Strategic Plan 2025-2031
- Definitions
- Elevate Community Engagement, Education and Advocacy
- Support Community-Focused/Lead Tourism Development
- Collaborative Regional Brand Awareness and Marketing Integration
- Strengthen the Organization
- Fiscal 2025-2027 Budget
- Strategies
 - Destination Stewardship
 - Brand Stewardship
 - Insights & Impacts
 - Staff & Admin
- Oregon Wine Country License Plate – Region 2
- Wine Region Needs
- Oregon Wine Country License Plate – Region 2: \$92,160

Todd thanks the presenters and asks if there are any questions.

Commissioner Penilton asks if data exists from the impact of Canadian visitors. Tori states that the wine industry has experienced deep impacts from lack of wine purchases in Canada and that Canadian land crossings have decreased more than air crossings.

Vice Chair Willitts appreciates the time and dedication of Tori to lead the organization.

Todd thanks the presenters.

Legislative Session, NTTW and DCH Overview

Todd states that the final update will come from Kate Baumgartner, External and Public Affairs Strategist.

Kate shares a PowerPoint presentation outlining Legislative session, National Travel and Tourism Week and Destination Capitol Hill updates and recaps (Exhibit E):

- Travel Oregon's role in state legislative process
- Legislative Process
- Statewide TLT Bills
- Local TLT Bills
- Recreation Legislation
- What Else Do We Know?
- Destination Capitol Hill (DCH)
- Senator Ron Wyden Letter to Department of State and Department of Homeland Security to restore travelers' rights
- National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW)

Todd asks if there are any questions.

Vice Chair Willitts acknowledges the efforts to keep the Commissioners informed throughout the legislative session and Kate's organization at Destination Capitol Hill.

Commissioner Youngblood appreciates Kate's attention and leadership throughout the legislative session and the reminder of Travel Oregon's role in that process. He asks the definition of a "gut and stuff bill". Kate acknowledges that while she did not use that term, it often means a study bill that gets amendments added throughout the legislative process.

Commissioner Penilton supports more Commissioner engagement in advocating for travel policy in Washington D.C.

Chair DiNovo asks if there has been discussion in the legislature of occupancy on the northern Oregon coast. Kate answers that Travel Oregon data has been used in legislature presentations to show a leveling off in occupancy, but not specifically speaking to the northern Oregon coast.

Chair DiNovo appreciates the work of Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association (ORLA), Oregon Destination Association (ODA) and to Kate for their collaboration to keep the Commissioners informed.

Todd thanks Kate for the presentation.

Other Business

Chair DiNovo thanks the local hosts for their hospitality.

Chair DiNovo asks if there is any additional business or announcements from Commissioners.

The next Oregon Tourism Commission meeting will be September 11 and 12 in Yachats. More information will be posted to the industry website as soon as it's available.

Chair DiNovo adjourns the meeting at 12:20 p.m.