

# OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION BRIEFING

September 11, 2025

Yachats Commons  
441 Hwy 101 N,  
Yachats, OR 97498

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

## Welcome and Introductions

Chair Willitts opens the meeting at 2:30 p.m. and welcomes everyone to the September 11, 2025, Oregon Tourism Commission briefing.

Chair Willitts thanks everyone for being in Yachats, noting that today's meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental material can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair Willitts states that in holding a meeting, 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 Willitts and other Commissioners thank Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI) Chief Barrett and Joanne Kittel for the time to educate the Commissioners about the Amanda Trail and the reason for the memorial.

Chair Willitts states that the briefing provides us with some extended time to hear from and engage with staff regarding topics that have been a focus area for Travel Oregon and Oregon's tourism industry.

Todd welcomes the first presenters Kevin Wright, VP of Brand Stewardship, and Kate Sappell, Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP) Manager.

## Wheel the World Update

Kevin and Kate walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding an update to the Wheel the World assessments and promotion (Exhibit A):

- Wheel the World program
- What is Wheel the World (WTW)?
- WTW and Travel Oregon partnership

- Partnership – participating communities
- Regional Participation
- Welcome Centers
- Destination Benefits
- WTW.com – State Page
- Community Page
- Accessibility Verified Marketing Campaign
- Marketing Funnel
- Marketing launch and timeline
- Public Relations
- TravelOregon.com accessibility landing page
- Behind the Scenes photos
- Print Ad examples
- Next Steps
- Appreciation for staff and partners
- Umbrella/Anthem video
- Coast video

The presenters ask if there are any questions.

Chair Willitts asks if any modifications have been made to the businesses who received assessments and reports. Kate answers that a survey will be shared with the businesses and a report will be shared at a later date.

Commissioner Penilton asks if any other states or countries have the Accessibility Verified designation. Secondly, he asks if all the businesses assessed are tourism-facing or general consumer-facing. Kevin answers that a strong foundation was the goal to provide a uniform platform and the program can grow on its own organically. Kevin states that Tampa was the first city to be Accessibility Verified about one year ago. Oregon will be the first state. Kate answers that the business selection process included reviewing a holistic experience from transit options to outdoor recreation and more.

Commissioner Penilton shares that solid investment is recommended so the momentum continues. Kevin states that growth in the platform is expected and the current investment is for two years.

Commissioner Gremmels asks if there is a goal of site assessments and if the business survey will be administered by Wheel the World. Kate answers that the survey will be created internally by Travel Oregon and launch in November. Kevin states that the initial goal had to include a percentage of lodging properties to give the Accessibility Verified designation.

Commissioner Gremmels asks if audits of the assessed businesses will come from Wheel the World at a later date. Kate does not expect any audits to be done. Kevin states that the DMO can update businesses listings if reforms to businesses are done.

Commissioner Patel states that this work needs to be bragged about given the first state designation.

Commissioner DiNovo appreciates the leadership of OCVA (Oregon Coast Visitors Association) for their leadership in the accessibility space. She asks what percentage of lodging businesses were needed to receive the Accessibility Verified designation. Kevin states that he believes 7-10% of lodging businesses in each of the seven regions were needed to receive the designation.

Commissioner Youngblood shares appreciation for the alignment of this program with the 10-Year Strategic Vision and challenges other states to pull off a collaboration at this level.

Commissioner Roe states that the education sharing from Wheel the World was very helpful which opens up more businesses to offering their services to more people. Kevin shares that the educational resources provided helped the Welcome Center staff and will look to sharing more with the industry.

Todd thanks Kevin and Kate for the presentation.

Todd welcomes the next presenter, Staj Olson, Destination Services Manager.

### Destination Ready 2.0 Technical Assistance and Investments

Staj walks the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding an update to the Destination Ready program (Exhibit B).

- Destination Ready Background
- Destination Ready 2.0 Awardees
- Destination Ready 2.0 Projects
- Project Examples
  - Harney County Outdoor Recreation Map
    - Project Outcomes: Oregon Outdoor Recreation Maps
  - Dollar Mountain Trail System Development
    - Project Outcomes: Dollar Mountain Trail System Development
  - Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Accessibility Assessment
    - Project Outcomes: Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Accessibility Assessment
  - Panther Creek Mountain Bike Trail System Development
    - Project Outcomes: Momentum in Federal Dollars
  - Yamhill Rivers Access Strategy Analysis

- Project Outcomes: National Parks Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Todd thanks Staj for her presentation.

Commissioner DiNovo applauds Staj for her past work on the 10-Year Strategic Vision and the continuation of her collaborative work.

Commissioner Hill asks if there is an age demographic tied to the use of printed materials such as maps. Staj states that some information is in the Visitor Profile but she will need to ask colleagues for further clarification.

Commissioner Gremmels states the connection to regenerative travel and its alignment to the 10-Year Strategic Vision.

Commissioner Penilton asks if further tracking and measuring can be done throughout the life of the projects.

Chair Willitts appreciates the efforts to assist smaller communities where funding gaps often exist.

Staj states that a letter of intent process has launched for the Recreation Ready program that will similarly align with the Destination Ready program.

Commissioner DiNovo echoes Commissioner Penilton's statement to support further tracking of projects and how projects assist their communities economically.

Todd welcomes the next presenter, Lisa Itel, Director of Industry Relations.

### Building Inclusive Pathways: Engagement with Tribal Nations and LGBTQIA+ Communities

Lisa walks the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation recapping inclusive work with Oregon's Tribes and LGBTQIA communities (Exhibit C):

- Oregon's federally recognized nine Tribes
  - Tribal Tourism and Travel Oregon – Our History
  - Tribal Tourism Leadership Committee
  - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
  - Partnerships
  - AM Northwest News Segment
  - What's Next
- Celebrating PRIDE Across Oregon
  - PRIDE Partnership Overview
  - Community Partnerships and Impact

- o Looking Ahead

Todd thanks Lisa for the presentation.

Commissioner Penilton appreciates the inclusion of Bobbie Conner in the presentation as a passionate advocate for the industry. He continues to share a past example of tribal inclusion in a trade show to share their culture as a travel trade connection.

Commissioner DiNovo shares her pride in Travel Oregon's work to be a leader with tribal collaborations, including the MOUs.

Commissioner Gremmels shares the importance of being together on the Amanda Trail with Chief Barrett this morning. He encourages more work to include diversity in Travel Oregon's work.

Commissioner Hill thanks Lisa for her leadership amongst the tribes who have diverse perspectives and interests.

Commissioner DiNovo (jokingly) challenges Lisa to increase collaboration between other state agencies.

Commissioner Youngblood thanks Lisa for doing the challenging work.

Commissioner Roe thanks Lisa for being the conduit to these organizations and sovereign nations.

Commissioner Gremmels stresses the safety factor of PRIDE events and thanks Travel Oregon for placing importance on their safety.

Todd thanks Lisa for the presentation. Chair Willitts asks if there is any additional business.

Commissioner Gremmels thanks Chair Willitts for his first meeting as Chair.

Chair Willitts shares his recent experience with the Flat Fire and his appreciation of the firefighters that saved the Sisters community.

Chair Willitts thanks everyone for their time today.

Chair Willitts states the Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting will be Friday, September 12, held at the Yachats Commons in Yachats starting at 9:00am.

Chair Willitts adjourns the meeting at 4:31 p.m.