

Crater Lake Institute Opinion Editorial

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Get your facts first, then you can distort them as much as you please

--- Mark Twain

Before we get too giddy about the President's proposed 2008 budget, with regard to the Park Service's management of Crater Lake National Park, why don't we look at a few facts first.

Of the \$230 million "increase" in park operations, \$211 million is actually at the expense of other Park programs. The old "shell game" is done today with a spreadsheet. You may have three shells, but in the end, still only ONE pea! A closer look at this budget shows that maintenance and construction, historic preservation, state assistance and land acquisition will be reduced to MOVE money, not increase overall benefits.

Our second concern is a proposal that would match POTENTIAL private contributions with tax dollars, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$100 million a year for ten years. This drastically alters the way we have funded our national parks for over 100 years. This forces the Park Manager into a role of "panhandler".

With a mandate to reach the annual goal of \$100 million in donations, managers may seek donations from sources beyond the appropriate philanthropic ones. This could open the door to less altruistic "investors" in our National Parks. Over time, this could result in parks being far less public, and far more private.

Public Television now replaces vanishing government funding with commercials, so too might sponsors advertise themselves in the parks. These donors might also feel they have the right to dictate how parks are to be maintained and operated.

Philanthropy could quickly turn into philandering.

The long and proud tradition of true philanthropy in national parks should always be considered an "added value" above the necessary core level of publicly funded service and protection in our national parks. Volunteer contributions should never be construed as a replacement for federal support.

Requiring NPS to find private sector funds to support basic capital improvements/maintenance could also skew what projects get done. There will likely be greater emphasis on "show me" projects to honor private investors such as new visitor centers, or rehabilitation of prominent historic sites, rather than meeting dire park infrastructure needs such as utilities or roads.

In our analysis, the limited overall increase in "new" money is only 2% above 2006 levels. The 2007 cost of living adjustment for Social Security was 3.3%.

William Steel dedicated much of his life to getting Crater Lake established as a national

park, ensuring it was protected from special interests, and helping visitors to appreciate its extraordinary beauty. Many others have given much, educators, scientists, and concerned citizens following in his footsteps. Let us follow in their footsteps. Ensure Crater Lake remains our park for generations to come.

To learn more, visit the Crater Lake Institute's website at:

<http://www.craterlakeinstitute.com>

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