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**Oregon State Fair Announces Big Gains for the 2015 Edition**  
*Strong results on multiple fronts in the Fair's first full season  
of operation as a public corporation*

SALEM, Ore. — This was a year of multifaceted transition for the Oregon State Fair, and the results are now in for the 150<sup>th</sup> edition of this enduring 11-day event in Salem. Chief among the Fair's metrics is confirmation that paid attendance—so-called unique visits—increased by 18.8% over 2014.

“The leadership of the Oregon State Fair decided in 2014 to use actual paid attendance, otherwise known as unique visits, as the only reliable way to measure the gate,” said fair manager Don Hillman. “We only count people who come to the fair on their volition, either by paying admission or receiving admission as part of a promotion. On the flip side, we don't count anyone who helps stage the fair—employees, vendors, contractors, exhibitors or volunteers.”

Paid attendance was 226,000 in 2014, and 268,500 in 2015. Other key measurements of 2015 performance had to do with revenue to the Fair:

- Food and beverage increased 18%
- Parking increased 22%
- Carnival increased 20%
- Sponsorship increased 29%

The Oregon State Fair was under the full control the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department from 2007 to 2013. The Oregon Legislature restructured the Fair as a public/private partnership in 2014 with the formation of a Governor-appointed State Fair Council. In 2015 the Fair completed its transition to a public corporation, which now operates under the sole authority of the State Fair Council and the newly hired chief executive officer, Mike Paluszak.



“For the 150<sup>th</sup> fair we opted to keep the things that clicked in 2014,” said Hillman. “But the list of new strategies for 2015 made some people gulp. For example, we shuffled the locations of major departments and attractions on the fairgrounds. We offered some very daring admission price promotions. We dramatically upgraded our adult beverage offerings. We even brought back nightly fireworks, and that's just scratching the surface.”

Every major public event has its challenges, and the 2015 Oregon State Fair was no exception. For instance, the pre-fair summer heat wave and an invasion of worms wreaked havoc on lawns, requiring many to be painted green at the last minute. A summer-ending windstorm hit the fairgrounds in the morning hours of the fair's second day of operation. Portland Public Schools opened a week earlier than normal, posing a threat to attendance from the Portland metro area. Also, the concert starring classic rocker Pat Benatar was cancelled due to family medical issues just days before the fair opened.



“With 150 years under our collective belt, our rich history certainly served as a springboard for this Fair’s future,” said Mike Paluszak. “No matter where they ventured, fairgoers found happy evidence of this fair’s freshness and vitality and relevance as a family entertainment centerpiece for the state.”

“We knew it was a strong year even before the numbers were in,” said Hillman. “The grounds felt crowded like in the old days.”

Eight-year-old Emerson Karl of Tigard had this to say to her father, Fred Karl, after spending a full day exploring the fair: “Dad, I think I had more fun at the fair than I did at Disneyland.”

Commercial exhibitors like Rick Zedan also had good things to say. “It was one of our best years at the fair, and I’ve been selling here since 1982,” said Zedan. “Sales were up at all four of our booths.”

“Being a sponsor at the fair this year gave us a leg up with the exposure we needed for not only our local area but for our entire state,” said Corey Benson on behalf of Farmers Insurance. “This was a great venue to share what we have to offer.”

### ***About the Oregon State Fair***

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, located in Salem, Oregon, the Oregon State Fair has attracted thousands as a yearly tradition of family-fun oriented games, concerts, rides and agricultural exhibits. Throughout the years the fair has showcased Oregon crops and livestock, art, and culture. In 2016 this fair will stage its 151<sup>st</sup> edition August 26 through September 5. For more information, please visit [oregonstatefair.org](http://oregonstatefair.org).

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(fireworks photo courtesy of Lynda Bell)