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# Oregon Department of State Lands Records Scope and Content

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By Gary D. Halvorson, 2008

The records of the Department of State Lands (DSL) consist of correspondence, mortgage records, maps, ledgers, minutes, and related documents. These records date from statehood in 1859 to 1989 and represent the activities of the Department of State Lands and its predecessors.

DSL is the administrative arm of the State Land Board (SLB) and as such, has many natural resource responsibilities. These are addressed in the Natural Heritage Advisory Council (NHAC), its predecessor Natural Area Preserves Advisory Committee (NAPAC), and Riparian Rights Advisory Committee records. Other natural resource management jobs were establishing the South Slough National Estuarine Sanctuary and the Elliott State Forest.

The Department of State Lands also oversees the management of state owned property and these activities are documented in several series. The State of Oregon gains ownership of land in many ways, some land was set aside at statehood for supporting common schools and is sometimes leased or sold for a profit. Some of the land set aside for the state was turned down and different land claimed for various reasons. These exchanges take place with the federal government and are documented in the series "In Lieu Lands Clear Lists." When state owned land is exchanged with privately held land it is documented in "Land Exchange Records." In some cases property is given to the state by individuals so that a trust account can be established in their names, in other cases land is just donated to the state. The State of Oregon may also claim lands that are held in probate at the county level.

The department has also raised money by lending money for the purchase of land. A special fund was established in 1917 to help populate the rural areas and the division was given the duties of overseeing the Rural Credit Loan Fund. Minutes from the Rural Credit Department and the mortgage satisfaction records are both series included in this record group.

The Department of State Lands was given the duties of establishing which rivers in the State of Oregon were navigable at the time of statehood. This is of key importance because the lands between the high water marks of navigable rivers are the property of the state. The findings of this research are found in the series "Publications." A related landmark court case resulted from a change in the course of the Willamette River. The "Corvallis Sand and Gravel Court Case Records" document litigation derived from the ongoing efforts of the division to receive royalties from Corvallis Sand and Gravel, which was mining the old riverbed.

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The records of the Department of State Lands reflect the advancing importance of natural resource management in the latter half of the twentieth century. With the establishment of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council and its predecessor, natural resource management was one of the primary areas of concern for this agency.

The records of the Department of State Lands were originally accessioned into the State Archives under accession number 89A-25, 88A-53, 88A-6, 87A-6, 85A-24, 82A-53, 81A-81, 81A-54, 80A-61, 80A-29, 80A-13, 72A-23, 72A-20, 71A-67, 71A-65, 68A-57, 68A-42, and 62A-82 and consisted of 251 cubic feet of records. Currently, they consist of over 70 cubic feet of boxed records and 43 volumes. Records are identified by accessions 91A-9 and 98A-011.

Note: Current Department of State Lands programs and records are described in a records retention schedule produced by the Oregon State Archives.

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