

= Burnside Burn =

The " Burnside Burn " was an event held on the Burnside Bridge in Portland , Oregon , starting at midnight on July 1 , 2015 , the day recreational marijuana became legal in the U.S. state of Oregon . It was organized by Portland NORML , the local chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws , having originated from its executive director , who wanted to photograph himself in front of the White Stag sign in the moments after Oregon Ballot Measure 91 took effect . The crowd , larger than anticipated , numbered in the thousands and at times blocked traffic lanes on the bridge . Some attendees wanted to commemorate the moment , while others were motivated by announcements of free marijuana and seeds . No fines were issued for consumption in public . The event was covered by cannabis publications , local and national news outlets , and the HBO television series Vice .

= = Description = =

The " Burnside Burn " was organized by Portland NORML , the local chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws , in celebration of the legalization of recreational marijuana use in Oregon and to circumnavigate a temporary limit on recreational sales . According to Russ Belville , the chapter 's executive director , the event began with the idea of taking a photograph in front of the White Stag sign . He recalled : " It evolved from me saying that when legalization happens , I want to take a photo under the Portland , Oregon sign . Other people said , ' Can we give marijuana away ? ' [ and ] I said , ' I can 't stop you ! ' " .

On the evening of June 30 , beginning as early as 8pm , and into the morning of July 1 , 2015 , between a few hundred and a few thousand people gathered on the Burnside Bridge 's north sidewalk for the free event . The crowd sometimes spilled into the road and blocked multiple traffic lanes , resulting at one point in the complete blockage of west @-@ bound traffic . Activists chanted " Free the weed " and " Fuck the DEA " . Cannabis was shared and consumed openly .

The crowd was larger than anticipated and spanned the entire length of the 1 @, @ 400 @-@ foot ( 430 m ) Burnside Bridge . Belville had initially expected " between 50 and 5 @, @ 000 people " , but details of the event spread online and through word of mouth , and ultimately it was estimated that " thousands " had turned out . Some attendees said they were there to commemorate an historic moment , while others admitted having come for free marijuana and cannabis seeds . One man , known as " Pork Chop " ( or " Porkchop " ) , reportedly announced over a megaphone that he had 420 pounds of marijuana to distribute , though his claim was not supported by news outlets . Two women with Ideal Farms , who wished to " share the love " , distributed joints to attendees who could prove that they were of legal age . One man distributed drops of hash oil , and Belville himself shared an ounce of marijuana ( the maximum allowed under Oregon Ballot Measure 91 ) . Some participants did receive free marijuana , seeds , and / or starter plants , but many did not , due to the larger than expected crowd . Coupons were also distributed for later redemption .

Participants smoked openly and without fear . No fines were issued for consumption in public . Patrol vehicles drove by the scene a few times but did not stop . Prior to the event , police urged residents to avoid calling 9 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 to report public consumption , which they did not consider an emergency .

= = Commentary = =

The event was covered by cannabis publications , local and national media outlets , and the HBO documentary television series Vice . The Oregonian described the event as " loud and energetic " , attracting a diverse and " eclectic " crowd of activists , marijuana enthusiasts , and first @-@ time consumers , some from as far away as Canada and San Diego . According to Willamette Week , attendees ranged from octogenarians to " tweens with rainbow hair " and the crowd was " generally happy " . The newspaper summarized , " All and all , the mood was celebratory as befit such an historic occasion . "

NORML 's Kaliko Castille told The Huffington Post he was " happy to see a community able to come together ? peacefully ? over something positive . It 's great to see people from all walks of life out here , handing out joints to each other and getting to know their neighbors . " The Huffington Post 's Andy Campbell called the event a " smoke @-@ out with a message " and opined , " Legalization is so much more than being able to smoke a joint in your home without being a criminal . It 's a health care issue ; it 's a tax revenue issue ; it saves states millions in the court system ; and it ends the hidden costs of prosecution , which emerge when someone can 't get a job because there 's a possession charge on their record . " The Washington Post called the " Burnside Burn " an opportunity for marijuana enthusiasts to " celebrate their new freedom together " .