

Submitter: Stephanie Noll
On Behalf Of: Oregon Trails Coalition
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources
Measure: SB5527

February 9th, 2023

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Pham and Members of the Committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in support of SB 5527 relating to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department budget on behalf of the Oregon Trails Coalition.

The Oregon Trails Coalition is a coalition of broad-based, statewide partners dedicated to the preservation, development, and stewardship of a statewide network of sustainable trails that provide access to outdoor recreation and active transportation for all.

Our advisory council includes representatives from more than twenty-five federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, conservation advocates, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

Access to nature and outdoor recreation is deeply valued by Oregonians. For instance, we know from the most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that 74% of Oregonians report using local trails and more than half of Oregonians travel outside of their communities to access trails. We also know that since that data was collected interest in outdoor recreation exploded in our state, and many of our parks, trails and natural areas have received unprecedented visitation.

Our current system of funding the development, operation, and maintenance of our state parks system primarily through lottery funds and user fees is woefully inadequate for meeting the needs and desires of Oregonians for access to nature and outdoor recreation.

We hope members of the legislature will partner with the many community coalitions in Oregon who care about effectively stewarding our parks and trails for the safety and enjoyment of the public to explore new funding mechanisms for this critical community infrastructure as detailed in the Governor's Task Force on the Outdoors: 2020 Framework for Action Outdoor Recreation Investment Strategy.

Meanwhile, we ask for full funding for SB 5527 so that the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department can continue to care for and operate our parks, make community grants to partners connecting the public to these resources, and forward key collaborative initiatives for outdoor recreation through the Department's Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Thank you for your leadership,

Stephanie Noll,
Coalition Director,
Oregon Trails Coalition