

Personal Testimony from Al LePage, Long-Distance Backpacker, 400-Mile Oregon Coast Trail “Thru-hiker”

February 16, 2023

Senate Committee On Natural Resources
Capitol Building, Salem, Oregon

RE: SB 679 “Appropriates moneys for Oregon Coast Trail”

Chair Golden, Committee Members:

Let me address you, with respect and gratitude, as **“all my relations,”** for we are all connected, in relationship as you listen to my words. And my words today are a deeply personal sharing of the significance of connection itself, and how the Oregon Coast Trail forever changed my life in that regard. And I sincerely acknowledge, among so much more, my salutation here and few last closing words, with Great Respect and Deep Gratitude, to the wisdom of the elders and ancestors of indigenous peoples of the vast continent where we all live today.

And so, I offer this poem . . .

Connecting with “Ultimate Place”

Accepting the Call to Adventure
I began the Odyssey of a lifetime
hiking along the sandy edge of Infinity
with heart and eyes open wide

Embracing the Solitude,
the Gift of Quiet
let me listen to myself,
my thoughts, my feelings

I connected deeply within myself

After sleeping upon Earth for so many days,
I felt a connection for the very first time,
one unlike I had ever felt in my life,
with Earth.

It felt . . . like She was my mother,
And She became important to me
like the day we wake up to know
how important our own mothers are to us

I was connecting deeply with Earth

A new relationship with Earth began
deeply caring about Her,
for she was my Mother,
for she IS my Home in the Universe.



Al LePage, 20 years after first thru-hike, for his second in 2008

And on the Blackest of nights,
looking up into the Infinity of Space,
the Stars, the Moon, the FLASH of a meteor!
they too were my "friends," in the Great Darkness

I was connecting deeply with the Universe.

Earth, a living being all Her own,
and connected to the Universe, Home to all beings,
each one having their own ultimate place
in the Infinity of Space, in the Eternal Now

I AM deeply connected, WE ARE all deeply connected,
and to finally know this in your heart, in your gut
this IS the Beginning of finding . . . discovering . . .
your own :Ultimate Place: in the Universe.

In essence, of connecting with YOUR Destiny,
of finding *your very Soul*.



This is what happened to me along the Oregon Coast Trail, this is the potential and power of the path to transform you, through connection within your self, with all beings, Earth and the Universe itself . . . and perhaps **by the Grace of the "Great Mysterious,"** to find your soul for the very first time.

To conclude my testimony, this is why, for me, on a very personal level, **the Oregon Coast Trail needs to be completed, and why this bill needs to become law**, because if it can touch my life as it has, it could also touch other's lives in this way, too. And what more could anyone ask for, than to discover their own soul?



Again, with Deep Respect and Gratitude, **"we are all related"** . . .

Al LePage ☺

Al LePage, discovering more of my "Soul," my own "Ultimate Place" in the Universe, everyday . . . Amen.