

NATIONAL COAST TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Keeping The Coast For Everyone!
through advocacy, education and action
for trails, public access and coastal preservation



Oregon Coast Trail stretches south to infinity from Cape Blanco, our westernmost point!

February 9th, 2024

Senate Committee On Judiciary
Capitol Building, Salem, Oregon
Re: Testimony, SB 1576, "Relating to civil matters."



**OREGON
COAST TRAIL**

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, Committee Members:

The Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan bill became law in 2017, essentially by unanimous vote of legislators, and signed by the governor. Thank you to those legislators in moving the process along towards realizing the vision of a completed Oregon Coast Trail.

SB 1576, which I chose to call, the "**Let's Make Sure the Oregon Coast Trail Stays Open and Gets Done!**" bill, is potentially not only necessary to keep open existing trail sections and public access to the beach, but also most likely absolutely crucial to complete the remaining gaps to truly provide a quality recreational trail experience.

Why? Without the kind of landowner liability protection strong recreational use statutes offer, it most likely will not only be hard to work with willing landowners to negotiate public access for trail connections, but also potentially impossible to fill in crucial gaps. In short, without this important tool, **without strong recreational use statutes, you can probably forget about making a connected world-class Oregon Coast Trail a reality.**

"In most states, recreational use statutes (RUS) have been enacted to encourage private landowners to open their land, free of charge, for public recreational use." James C. Kozlowski, J.D., Ph.D.

Source: 'Hold Harmless' Incentive in Recreational Use Statute, *National Parks & Recreation Association*

Given you probably **can't make a trail plan happen without a strong landowner liability protection tool**, the next most urgent priority is to get **an immediate and permanent fix to the current recreational use statutes**,

SB 1576 is an opportunity to do just that, right here, right now, and just after the Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan was finalized last Fall 2023, too! And for members of this committee, this is YOUR moment to keep things moving forward.

Finally, therefore, **our organization strongly supports SB 1576**, and encourages everyone, for each and every legislator, to keep moving the bill forward, "and for the love of trails," make it happen in the 2024 legislative session.

"Let's Make Sure the Oregon Coast Trail Stays Open and Gets Done!"

Al LePage, Executive Director
Eugene, OR / OregonCoastTrail.info

cc: National Coast Trail Association Board of Directors