

February 10, 2024

Regarding: Support for SB 1576-3 restoring recreational immunity for public and private landowners for both improved and unimproved trails

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

I am the board chair for the Salmonberry Trail Foundation. Our mission is to build Oregon's 82-mile Salmonberry Trail, connecting us to our history, nature, and each other. Our trail is railbanked and will follow the old POTB railroad from Banks to Tillamook.

I've been associated with the project for six years, working alongside hundreds of other volunteers to clear the tracks of overgrowth, remove invasive species, and pick up trash. We've made significant progress and have recently salvaged the first 7.2 miles of track from Banks up to Stub Stewart Park. We are close to opening the first segment of the trail, and eager to push on towards the coast.

The Salmonberry Trail runs along the Salmonberry and Nehalem Rivers. In addition to providing a world-class opportunity for hikers, bikers, and equestrian users to get from the Portland metropolitan area to the coast, the trail is also used by fishermen to get to fishing locations for salmon and trout and by hunters to get to hunting grounds. The trail is used for recreation and as a conveyance.

As you might expect, nature creates ever-present dangers, including landslides, slippery trail conditions, downed trees, washouts, and other hazards. Try as we might to keep the trail clear of all hazards, the reality is individuals must assume and manage these risks. This is part of the trail experience.

Without Recreational Immunity protection, we, as the trail owner, will be liable for trail user injury. This is a risk we cannot take. We do not charge or require passes for use of the trail. The trail is a free resource. There are multiple ingress/egress locations. We cannot get signatures on waivers or control the use of the trail. Without a fix to the Recreational Immunity law, we may be unable to open the Salmonberry Trail. I urge in the strongest terms to fix this law and provide protection for the Salmonberry Trail and all trails like ours in the State of Oregon.

I express my gratitude for your consideration of this matter and your leadership in restoring Recreational Immunity.



John Vogler
Salmonberry Trail Foundation
Board Chair

