

Submitter: Katy Nesbitt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

SECTION 1. The Judicial Department shall study civil law matters in this state. The department shall submit a report in the manner provided by ORS 192.245, and may include recommendations for legislation, to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to the judiciary no later than September 15, 2025.

While a law correcting a recent court case's weakening of the state's recreational immunity was the preferred legislative step, the county supports the above referenced SB 1576 in the expectation that the legislature can eventually pass a law protecting municipalities, like Wallowa County, from lawsuits from people who injure themselves recreating, or accessing a recreational property. It took nearly 14 years and \$6.4 million dollars, raised from federal, state and private donations, for the county to acquire an 1,800-acre parcel of Wallowa Lake's East Moraine. Upon the property's acquisition in January, 2020, it was opened to the public. In 2022 two trailheads and a parking lot were developed to accommodate what we expect to be increased use in the coming years. We are now fundraising to install two vault toilets, one at each trailhead, to further accommodate recreationists. It would be an awful waste of time and money for us to have to close this property to recreation after all of the years of hard work and financial investment. While the county believes in keeping the property open for public use, it is also seriously considering the risks to recreational immunity due to a recent court case.

Outdoor recreation and access to public lands is part of an Oregonian's DNA. It's why we live here - to enjoy the natural beauty of our state. The Oregon legislature owes the good people of Oregon access to public and private land open for recreation and protection from lawsuits for the landowners. Wallowa County strongly urges the passage of SB 1576 and encourages the legislature to move quickly to protect landowners, like Wallowa County, from losing recreational immunity.