



February 26, 2024

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: Wild Rivers Land Trust

RE: Support for Recreational Immunity Protections through SB. 1576A

Good afternoon House Committee Members -

My name is Scott Fogarty and I am Executive Director for the Wild Rivers Land Trust (WRLT) . Our mission is to keep the irreplaceable water and working lands on the southern Oregon coast forever wild and abundant.

We write to you today in strong support of S. 1576A, a bill that would restore recreational immunity protections for public and private land open for recreational opportunities. This legislation is captured in the Senate Judiciary Omnibus bill, which passed the Senate 25-2 on Thursday, February 22nd.

As of 2023, there were 90 land trust properties open for public use in Oregon. The Oregon Public Use of Lands Act encourages public and private landowners to make their land available to the public for recreational purposes by providing landowners immunity from liability. However, a recent Oregon Court of Appeals decision undermined the immunity guaranteed in the Act, which would result in a severe reduction of land available for Oregonians to enjoy.

As nonprofits, land trusts could face costly litigation and increased liability insurance premiums due to the decision in *Fields vs. City of Newport*. The passage of SB. 1576A would provide important safeguards so we can continue to allow public access to trails and recreational opportunities on our lands over the summer season.

Please support the passage of SB. 1576A in the 2024 legislative session. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Scott Fogarty
Executive Director