

February 5th, 2025
Support for SB 929: Oregon Coast Trail



TRAILKEEPERS OF OREGON

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 929. Trailkeepers of Oregon (TKO) is a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and enhancing Oregon's hiking experience through stewardship, advocacy, and education. TKO staff and volunteers have logged thousands of hours maintaining trails across the state, including key sections of the Oregon Coast Trail (OCT), where we have firsthand experience with the maintenance challenges and safety concerns when hikers are forced onto dangerous sections of U.S. 101.

TKO staff and volunteers have built up a small fraction of the capacity necessary to care for Oregon Coast Trail sections, but our ability to make lasting impacts on woefully, deferred maintenance priorities and new trail, gap slotuions has been undermined by the lack of funding support for OPRD to keep up with our requests to help due to staffing capacit and lack of funding to prioritize the OCT. Help OPRD help TKO!

The Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan, completed in 2024, outlines the key steps needed to close gaps and improve safety, but without funding, this plan will remain unrealized. SB 929 would provide \$1 million in general fund dollars to advance trail development and direct Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to allocate up to \$1 million from agency lottery revenue toward OCT improvements.

This \$1 million investment would provide critical match funding for larger grants that could help address major trail gaps over the next biennium. However, we also recognize that OPRD has many competing priorities. Maintaining flexibility in Section 2 of the bill to allocate lottery dollars where they are most needed will allow for strategic investments across the entire parks and trails system.

With additional funding, OPRD could:

- Build new trail segments along highway right-of-way for safer routes;
- Acquire property to reroute the trail away from hazardous areas;
- Develop new trail connections to close existing gaps;
- Improve signage to enhance navigation;
- Add primitive campsites for long-distance hikers; and
- Hire an OCT Project Manager to oversee these vital efforts.

The modest investment in SB 929 is essential to ensuring that years of planning and community engagement result in real improvements, rather than leaving the OCT as an incomplete, unsafe trail. Trailkeepers of Oregon urges your support for this bill to advance a safer, more accessible Oregon Coast Trail for residents and visitors alike.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Oregon's trails,

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