

SalmonberryTrail



Caroline Fitchett

Executive Director

Salmonberry Trail Foundation

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Feb 18, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Caroline Fitchett, and I am writing on behalf of the Salmonberry Trail Foundation in strong support of Senate Bill 179. As an organization dedicated to expanding access to Oregon's trail networks, we recognize recreational immunity protections' critical role in keeping trails open and accessible to the public.

The Salmonberry Trail is a planned 82-mile multi-use trail connecting urban and rural communities from Banks to Tillamook. This trail will provide significant economic, environmental, and recreational benefits, linking Oregonians to nature and history while promoting sustainable outdoor tourism. However, our work—and the efforts of countless other trail organizations—relies on ensuring that landowners, municipalities, and organizations that help maintain and develop trails are protected from undue liability.

We deeply appreciate the progress made since last session and commend the legislature for taking action to make permanent the existing recreational immunity protections. Removing the sunset provision is a crucial step toward providing long-term certainty for trails across the state.

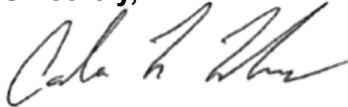
That said, we also recognize that further refinements to the law would strengthen its impact. We encourage the committee to consider future improvements, including:

- Extending the increased level of immunity to private landowners who open their land to the public free of charge, ensuring that more land can be made available for trails without excessive legal risk.
- Clarifying that trails serving both recreational and transportation purposes are covered under the law, addressing concerns around subjective intent.
- Incorporating broader language, such as “conveyance,” rather than listing specific trail activities, to ensure comprehensive coverage.

While SB 179 does not yet fully address these concerns, we are in full support of passing SB 179 as it stands and we are committed to working alongside legislators, landowners, and fellow trail advocates in future sessions to refine and expand these protections. Ensuring strong, lasting recreational immunity laws is a priority for our organization, and we believe it is essential to keeping Oregon's trails open and thriving for generations to come.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing work supporting outdoor recreation in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Caroline Fitchett".

Caroline Fitchett
Executive Director
Salmonberry Trail Foundation