

HEADQUARTERS
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February 19, 2025

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Columbia Land Trust

RE: Support for Recreational Immunity Protections through S.B. 179

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Committee Members:

Columbia Land Trust writes to you today in strong support of S.B. 179, a bill that would provide continued recreational immunity protection for public and private lands open for recreational use. Columbia Land Trust is a non-profit organization that works with interested landowners who wish to voluntarily conserve land in the Lower Columbia River region in both Oregon and Washington.

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. In 2023, an Oregon Court of Appeals decision undermined the immunity guaranteed in the Act, threatening access to public and private land available to Oregonians for their recreational use and enjoyment.

In the 2024 legislative session, lawmakers passed S.B. 1576A to temporarily restore recreational immunity protections on public and private land. The legislation added “walking, biking, and running” to the list of recreational activities and extended liability protections through January 2, 2026.

Columbia Land Trust owns fee title to numerous properties in Oregon, and we have historically allowed public access to all of them. These include two preserves outside of The Dalles that are especially popular during the spring wildflower season; several miles along the lower Hood River just before it enters the City of Hood River, well-loved by residents and visitors alike; and numerous natural areas in the Portland area, all of which are popular with hikers and those seeking time in nature.

LAND TRUST ALLIANCE ACCREDITED | OFFICES IN ASTORIA AND WHITE SALMON

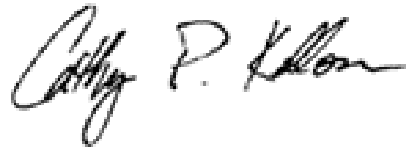
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Without S.B. 179, land trusts could face costly litigation and increased liability insurance premiums due to the decision in *Fields vs. City of Newport*. The passage of S.B. 179 would extend the safeguards needed for us to continue allowing public access to trails and recreational opportunities on our lands.

We ask that you please support the passage of S.B. 179 in the 2025 legislative session. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy P. Kellon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a distinct "P" and "K".

Cathy Kellon
Conservation Director
Columbia Land Trust