



March 4, 2025

Re: HB 5026 (Support)

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Frederick & Rep. Levy, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Surfrider Foundation's Oregon Chapters, we urge your support for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) budget proposed under HB 5026. We also recommend the consideration of a budget note to further evaluate and report back on potential revenue strategies to address gaps for the 2027-2029 biennium. Current strategies to increase user fees and provide greater flexibility to the agency in operations (i.e. SB 838) we support and will help; but, these efforts alone will not be enough to meet future budget gaps for the agency.

Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves, and beaches, for all people. Our Oregon network actively engages in stewardship, advocacy, and partnerships that enhance coastal access, protect water quality, and support the long-term sustainability of Oregon's beaches. OPRD plays a critical role in managing and protecting these special places, ensuring that our beaches remain clean, accessible, and ecologically sound. Oregon's parks and beaches not only provide recreational and cultural benefits but also serve as economic drivers for coastal communities. Outdoor recreation generates billions of dollars annually in Oregon, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

As Oregon's population grows and visitation to our parks and beaches increases, it is essential to invest in OPRD's capacity to manage and sustain these resources. The agency continues to face significant funding challenges, with revenue largely reliant on user fees and state lottery funds, mechanisms that disproportionately impact lower-income and marginalized communities. We encourage the legislature to pursue equitable and sustainable funding strategies that diversify revenue streams while ensuring that access to Oregon's natural spaces remains open to all. Expanding general fund support, exploring new conservation funding models, statewide revenue sources and leveraging industry partnerships can provide a more resilient financial foundation for OPRD.

Continued investment in OPRD is necessary to protect Oregon's treasured landscapes, restore critical habitats, and maintain safe, sustainable access for all visitors. With increasing visitation pressures, climate impacts, and aging infrastructure, we must prioritize the preservation of these special places for future generations. We urge the legislature to support funding that allows OPRD to restore infrastructure, enhance ecological restoration efforts, sustain wildlife populations, and develop forward-thinking revenue solutions for the 2027-2029 biennium. By investing in OPRD, we ensure that

Oregon's coastal and park resources remain a cornerstone of our state's environmental, economic, and cultural identity. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to protecting Oregon's natural heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Plybon". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Charlie Plybon
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