

March 4, 2025
Support for HB 5026:
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Budget



TRAILKEEPERS OF OREGON

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and Members of the Committee,

Trailkeepers of Oregon (TKO) is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the Oregon hiking experience through stewardship, advocacy, outreach, and education - representing nearly 9000 volunteers and supporters from communities across the state. We work closely with public land managers and partner organizations to welcome visitors and maintain trails, ensuring safe and sustainable access for all. We are writing today to express our support for HB 5026, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) budget, while also highlighting critical funding gaps in the parks and trails system that need legislative attention beyond this budget.

OPRD has proven to be a strong leader and steward of Oregon's parks and outdoor recreation opportunities. In 2023, Oregon's state park system recorded over 52.2 million day-use visitors and 2.9 million camper nights, ranking it among the top 10 most visited state park systems in the U.S. Beyond campgrounds, OPRD manages Oregon's public ocean shore, scenic waterways, and bikeways while also supporting local parks through its Local Government Grants program. Since 2013, OPRD has provided \$169.7 million in recreation grants to over 150 communities, ensuring equitable access to outdoor spaces.

OPRD's budget does not include funding for extension of the State Trails Coordinator position, which plays a valuable role in supporting trail projects across jurisdictions, identifying funding opportunities, and fostering collaboration among agencies and partners. This position helps implement the Oregon Coast Trail (OCT) Action Plan and contributes to the development of Oregon's Signature Trails. We urge the legislature to dedicate additional funding to this critical position.

Oregon's Signature Trails are a collection of iconic hiking routes showcasing the state's diverse landscapes, from coastal cliffs to high desert and alpine peaks. Two of which, the Oregon Coast Trail and Salmonberry Trail, present opportunities for continued development. SB 929 proposes \$1 million in General Funds to support the OCT. Meanwhile, the Salmonberry Trail partners seek \$8 million for ongoing development. Investments in these trails will enhance outdoor recreation, attract visitors, and contribute to local economies.

As a field staff person for 10 years with OPRD prior to my work with TKO, the staff, partners, and volunteers who serve these iconic places deserve our support. Our State Parks are an essential part of Oregon's outdoor experience, providing benefits to residents and visitors alike. We appreciate your leadership and consideration of these priorities as we work together to support and enhance Oregon's parks and trails.

Sincerely,

TKO Executive Director
steve.kruger@trailkeepersoforegon.org | 503-575-6280