

## Support for HB 5026: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Budget

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

As the author of three Oregon hiking guidebooks ([bonniehendersonwrites.com](http://bonniehendersonwrites.com)), I am very familiar with many Oregon State Parks, having hiked the entire Oregon Coast Trail and slept in every campground on the coast (and many elsewhere in the state). I've seen the condition of the parks and trails come and go, and I've volunteered for many years to promote use of the OCT, to expand it and to improve its condition, and to justify its world-class reputation as a unique and memorable recreational activity

I am writing to express my support for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department budget (HB 5026). I particularly appreciate inclusion in the budget of the Office of Outdoor Recreation position. And I hope that the legislature will address some critical needs in our parks and trail system that are not met in this budget.

I urge you to extend funding for the State Trails Coordinator position, which is not currently part of the proposed budget. Many significant trails are in need of restoration or, in the case of the Oregon Coast Trail, completion. Such efforts require often complex collaboration with public and private partners. I have watched as improvements have been made only because this position was filled and funded. This position is how funding gets stretched and shared. Please apply additional funding to extend this position.

In 2024 the legislature-mandated Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan was completed, drawing a road map for how to complete this exceptional trail, which—even in its incomplete condition—is drawing hikers from around the world. However OPRD doesn't have the funding to even start to take the plan's recommendations. SB 929 would dedicate \$1 million in general funds to develop the OCT. Meanwhile advocates of the Salmonberry Trail, promoted by a broad coalition of recreation and economic development advocates—are seeking \$8 million for development of this visionary trail in this legislative session as well. Like the Oregon Coast Trail, this trail is a model of sustainable tourism.

Thank you for your leadership and your support for recreation-focused staffing, to protect, develop, and make the most of the natural treasures we have.

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