

Submitter: Nelson Kline

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5026

Support for HB 5026: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Budget

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

As a native Oregonian, volunteer trail crew leader, and OTC advisory council member, I am writing today to share my support for HB 5026, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department budget, while also bringing attention to critical shortfalls in parks and trails system funding we would like to see the legislature address beyond the budget before you today.

The Oregon Trails Coalition (OTC) advisory council includes representatives from more than thirty federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

The OPRD budget does not include funding for extension of the State Trails Coordinator position. Beyond the State Trails Plan update currently underway, this staff position is critical for forwarding multi-jurisdictional trail projects, seeking grant funds to support critical trails restoration, improvement, and development projects beyond the capacity of the OPRD budget, and serving as a liaison between the agency and trails stewardship partners around the state. Stewardship partnerships with community organizations are especially critical in this constrained funding environment. We urge the legislature to dedicate additional funding to this critical position.

The agency budget also does not include funding to continue development of the Oregon Coast Trail and Salmonberry Trail, two Oregon Signature Trails existing on a mix of mostly state and local lands, that have gone through robust planning efforts. In 2017, the legislature directed OPRD to complete an action plan to address gaps in the Oregon Coast Trail. The Action Plan is complete, but OPRD does not have the funding to address the gaps without displacing funds from other critical park maintenance and improvement priorities. SB 929 would dedicate \$1 M in General Funds to development of the Oregon Coast Trail. Salmonberry Trail partners are seeking \$8 M for development of the trail this session as well. Oregon Trails Coalition supports investments in both of these Oregon Signature Trails that will provide access to nature and healthy recreation for Oregonians and pride and prosperity for Oregon communities.

Lastly, we are thankful the budget includes the Office of Outdoor Recreation position. We invite legislators who deeply care about outdoor recreation in our state to join us in encouraging OPRD to expedite the hiring for this critical position. Funding stewardship of public lands and trails is crucial to the health of all Oregonians and the

environment of the state.

Thank you for your leadership,
Nelson Kline – Salem, Oregon