

To: Oregon State Legislators

From: Rescue Professionals and Responsible Outdoor Recreation Advocates

Date: March 7th, 2025

RE: Support for House Bill 3140 to Enhance Public Safety and Promote Professional Guiding

We, the undersigned rescue professionals and responsible outdoor recreation advocates in Oregon, strongly support House Bill 3140 and urge you to advocate for its passage. Our collective experience as rescue professionals and first responders provides firsthand insight into both the beauty and inherent risks of Oregon's wild landscapes. House Bill 3140 is a critical step toward enhancing public safety and ensuring the long-term viability of Oregon's professional guiding industry.

Oregon's world-class landscapes and waterways attract countless residents and visitors to participate in outdoor recreation in our state. As the participation in outdoor recreation grows, so does the need for highly trained professionals who can manage risks, educate the public, and respond to emergencies. Search and Rescue professionals and first responders see the serious consequences when individuals enter the outdoors without adequate skills, knowledge, or equipment. These incidents increase rescue operations, impose financial burdens on counties and the state, and, most tragically, result in preventable loss of life.

Professionally guided outdoor recreation enhances public safety in several important ways:

House Bill 3140 will help ensure that well-trained guides and outfitters are encouraged to operate in Oregon. Professional guides undergo rigorous training to assess and manage risks in unpredictable environments, offering a critical layer of safety and education across guiding disciplines, from whitewater rafting to mountaineering.

1. **Risk Assessment and Management:** Guides are trained to identify and mitigate hazards, including rough terrain, turbulent whitewater, wildlife, weather changes, and other environmental risks.
2. **Emergency Preparedness:** Many guides possess advanced training (WFA/WFR/WEMT) and are equipped with rescue techniques, emergency equipment, and protocols for accidents or medical emergencies.
3. **Public Education:** Guides teach participants about safety practices, proper equipment use, water safety, avalanche awareness, and "Leave No Trace" principles, promoting responsible recreation.
4. **Leadership and Supervision:** Guides provide structure and oversight, promoting adherence to safety protocols and sound decision-making within groups.
5. **Navigation and Route Planning:** Experienced guides help prevent groups from getting lost or injured, reducing the need for search and rescue interventions.
6. **Emergency Communication:** Guides carry communication devices such as satellite phones or radios to quickly alert emergency services if needed, implementing internal safety protocols for remote area incidents.

The current liability climate in Oregon discourages qualified and highly trained outfitters and guides from operating in the state. This limits the availability of trained professionals in outdoor recreation. Passing HB 3140 would support guiding businesses and enhance public safety by ensuring more experts are present to educate, assist, and respond when needed. Without this legislation, Oregon's guiding, outfitting, and outdoor recreation and rescue instruction industry will continue to struggle, increasing demands on search and rescue teams and emergency service providers.

House Bill 3140 is not just about protecting guides and outfitters but about fostering a safer, more informed outdoor recreation community in Oregon. By passing this bill, the state would make be investing in public safety, professional integrity, and the sustainable future of outdoor recreation.

We respectfully urge your support for this important and overdue legislation and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further, offering our expertise to provide additional insights. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Caleb Burns
Guide/ SAR Volunteer/ Rescue Instructor
Jackson and Douglas County

Willie Levinson
Executive Director
Human Access Project

Scott Heesacker
Fire Battalion Chief - Water Rescue
Portland Fire and Rescue - Retired

Michael Jensen
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Eric Weisinger
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Scott Harvey & Jared Linkhart
Oregon Whitewater Association

Sam Drevo
ACA/ Rescue 3 Instructor Trainer

Jerry King
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John Jonesburg
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Tim Brink
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Matthew Adams
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Brian Christopher
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