



National Headquarters

1130 17th Street, N.W. | Washington, D.C. 20036-4604 | tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331
www.defenders.org

Testimony in Support of SB 1545 - Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Joseph Vaile, and I live in southwest Oregon. I am the Northwest Senior Representative for Defenders of Wildlife. I am testifying today in strong support of SB 1545.

I live, work, and recreate in southwest Oregon, where checkerboard ownership is a fact of life. Large areas of our public lands are interwoven with private parcels, especially land managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Earlier in my career, I worked for BLM. I've also spent decades hiking, viewing wildlife, and working in the field throughout this region. I've experienced firsthand how difficult it can be to lawfully access public land when parcels meet only at a corner.

SB 1545 provides something we badly need: clarity.

It offers common-sense guidance for landowners, law enforcement, and members of the public who are trying to do the right thing. It affirms that stepping carefully from one public parcel to another at a shared corner is not a crime when it's done respectfully and without damaging private property.

This bill does not create new rights, establish an easement, allow shortcuts or weaken private property rights. It simply affirms that lawful corner crossing, done precisely and responsibly, is not trespass.

In southwest Oregon, this matters. Without the ability to corner cross, thousands of acres that belong to all Oregonians are functionally inaccessible. This can make wildlife surveys difficult and even impossible.

Right now, landowners, recreationists, hunters and law enforcement are stuck in a legal gray area. That uncertainty leads to conflict. Nobody benefits from that.

As someone who has worked on public lands and alongside landowners, I want to emphasize that respect for private property and access to public lands are not competing.

Public lands are part of our heritage, our economy, and our way of life. They support hunting, hiking, tourism, conservation, and rural communities. SB 1545 helps ensure those lands remain accessible while fully respecting private ownership.

I urge you to support SB 1545.

Thank you for your time and for your service.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph Vaile

Joseph Vaile

Senior Representative, Northwest Program

Defenders of Wildlife