

Submitter: Larry Basch
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

Dear Senators,

I am a hunter, fisherman, backpacker, horseman, and search and rescue responder in my late 60's. I live in Coos County and do volunteer work on numerous public lands throughout SW Oregon and adjacent Northern California backcountry areas. As an individual and as an active member and volunteer of the Siskiyou Mountain Club (SMC) and other organizations statewide, in partnership with state and federal land management and natural resource agencies, we have taken up the many serious backlogs in wilderness, state parks and other backcountry deferred maintenance including trail clearing and building, and those backlogs caused more recently by large government budget cuts.

I have done this volunteer work since age 12 because these trails and backcountry areas provide key or sole access for our American heritage of public use of the outdoors, as well as safe, critical access for wildland firefighters, SAR, first responder teams and resource and land management agency staff and contractors. The majority of these trail work groups are volunteer efforts and in the case of SMC provide rigorous training, experience and modest yet key financial help to young Americans for their vocational or academic school work through community based funding.

Frankly I am very concerned that lack of safe access via trails will increasingly impose highly unacceptable legal liability to the state of Oregon and federal government if safe entry or egress for citizen users, emergency responders and agency staff are put at increased risk of life and limb as a result of government (in)action causing limitation to backcountry access.

As a supporter and participant of outdoor recreation and stewardship, I urge you to move SB 1517 forward only with the -A11 or -A15 amendments.

These amendments would provide balanced liability protections for conservation and stewardship organizations while preserving accountability for gross negligence or intentional misconduct.

Bottom line: Oregon nonprofits and volunteer leaders need clear and workable protections so we can continue maintaining trails and expanding safe access to the outdoors. SB 1517 with the amendments above will allow us to continue our legacy work and our American rights to public access to and enjoyment of America's public

lands.

Respectfully,

Larry Basch