



**Testimony in opposition to SB1554 before the
Oregon State Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development**

**Presented by Diane Daggett, Oregon State Director of The Trust for Public Land
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Diane Daggett. I currently serve as the Oregon State Director for The Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Across the nation, the organization has been delivering on our mission for more than 42 years. Our history in Oregon is rich and includes the creation of important parks in urban areas, trails that provide access to nature, and conservation of iconic landscapes like the Columbia River Gorge. This was only possible because of deep relationships with private landowners, public agencies and supportive stakeholder organizations.

I appear before you today to provide testimony in opposition to SB 1554. That said I believe that our organization shares core values with the proponents of this proposed legislation. And we believe that the problems which led to the proposed legislation are real. However, this proposed legislation would not provide sufficient funds for the solution and the proposed legislation is not aligned with conservation values and the rights of private property owners.

I am a fourth generation rancher from Wallowa County and still own property there, although I currently reside in Portland. I raised four children on the family ranch while building our cattle herd. In addition, I worked with the local community to create the non-profit organization Wallowa Resources to provide leadership in this public lands county as the timber wars began in the early 1990's. Fifty-eight percent of Wallowa County is publically owned and managed by the USDA Forest Service. Reduced timber harvest meant less money for county schools and roads. My children were some of the first in the State to suffer from reduced education opportunities as rural schools began to operate four days a week and cut valuable elective courses as revenue-saving measures.

I assume the reasons underlying this proposed legislation are directly aligned with shrinking county budgets and insufficient revenues for education. And, if that's accurate, I'm here to say that The Trust for Public Land shares concerns for the health of rural Oregon; we, too, want to see abundant education opportunities and strong county government services. We also want rural Oregon to have healthy working lands, thriving economies, adequate access to health care, diverse economies with strong recreation opportunities as well as healthy ecosystems. In fact, that's our vision for Oregon in its entirety.

The provisions of SB 1554 are not aligned with the level of need for county government stability, rural prosperity and sufficient funds for education. In addition, if enacted, these provisions would constrain important conservation efforts and could preclude private property owners the right to use tax benefits that might enable them to maintain ownership of their lands. Our experience tells us that conservation is an important tool to assist landowners in maintaining ownership of their land. One project to highlight is the Zena Forest in Polk County. In partnership

with a local landowner and other stakeholders, The Trust for Public Land was successful in conserving important forest lands in family ownership.

The issues facing rural Oregon are real and they are important. Solutions must be aligned with real needs and not be counter to conservation or the private right of landowners. The Trust for Public Land would like to participate in pro-active conversations that stand to create solutions that more closely align with the needs of rural Oregon. I urge you to consider this testimony in opposition to SB 1554.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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