



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

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Chair Clem, Members of the Committee:

My name is MG Devereux, Deputy Director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). OPRD is the lead agency for the Willamette River Greenway program. The Greenway is one of the truly iconic elements of Oregon. The ribbon of green that connects the farm, forests, cities and towns of the Willamette Valley speaks to a legacy of great names such as Straub and McCall. The Greenway provides critical areas for fish and wildlife habitat, buffers for the rich agricultural resources of the valley, and great places to recreate. While the full vision of the greenway program has yet to be fully realized, Oregon is better for the forethought to tie recreation, natural resource protection, and farmland of the valley to the Willamette River together.

The discussion to create the Greenway program in the late 1960's and early 1970's was not easy one. Many of the same concerns that this committee deal with today were concerns then – the availability of productive farm land, protection of natural resources, and the protection of private property. In 1973, the legislature designated key areas of the greenway as so important that they changed the program to allow for acquisition through eminent domain. Even though OPRD was given this authority, it was not exercised for the greenway program.

The Department recognizes that eminent domain authority can be unsettling for neighbors surrounding a greenway parcel. We try, and usually are successful, in working with communities to find mutually agreeable ways to resolve those concerns. We recognize that House Bill 2034 makes a narrow adjustment to the program, and so the Department is neutral on the legislation. We hope this context is helpful to your deliberations about this bill and would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have about the Willamette River Greenway program and the important role it plays in protecting recreation and wildlife assets for Oregonians

Thank you.

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