



March 3, 2015

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

The Honorable Richard Devlin, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Brian Clem  
The Honorable David Gomberg

The Honorable Jodi Hack  
The Honorable Julie Parrish  
The Honorable Michael Dembrow  
The Honorable Bill Hansell

Re: Support of SB 5528

On behalf of nearly 1,000 members of the Oregon Recreation and Park Association (ORPA), including park and recreation agencies, professionals, and volunteers, I am writing to encourage the Subcommittee's support and passage of SB 5528 to fund the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) for the 2015 biennium.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is one of the most admired and respected state parks and recreation departments in the country. The agency and its staff are outstanding stewards of Oregon's parks, natural areas, and historic resources. Oregon's system is the envy of many – even with the budget limitations under which the agency operates.

In addition to being excellent stewards of state resources, OPRD is also a strong partner to local park and recreation agencies, including municipalities, counties, and park and recreation districts. OPRD's Local Government Grants represent the hallmark of this partnership, enabling communities in every corner of Oregon to leverage their own limited resources to develop and even rehabilitate local park and recreation facilities and properties that benefit children, families, seniors, and residents and visitors of virtually every socio-economic category. Without this financial support from this well-administered program, Oregon's park and recreation facilities landscape would be significantly less robust than it is and Oregonians would have considerably fewer recreation facilities available to them.

While OPRD's funding for local park and recreation projects is always valued and appreciated, the department's expertise is also a significant benefit to our municipal, regional, county, and district park and recreation agencies as well. OPRD personnel have always willingly shared information and knowledge with our local agencies, through both formal and informal educational opportunities. The Regional Recreation Coalitions started last fall by OPRD also have opened dialog and relationships among park and recreation providers; these initial meetings have allowed local park and recreation professionals to build stronger connections, share knowledge, and consider future collaborations within the defined regions. In these ways and more OPRD is an essential part of the success of local park and recreation agencies as well.

While we would wish for more resources to support additional maintenance and expansion of state parks and recreation facilities and historic preservation resources, we strongly encourage passage of SB 5528 to ensure adequate funding for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. OPRD is a vital part of what makes Oregon the remarkable place that it is, and we encourage full funding for the department as outlined in SB 5528.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me or Cindy Robert, ORPA's lobbyist, if we may offer any additional information to the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Redman, Executive Director

c: Don Horton and Justin Cutler, Co-Chairs, ORPA Legislative Committee  
Cindy Robert, ORPA Lobbyist (503.260.3431)