



4/1/15

Representative Caddy McKeown,  
Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

Re: HB 2459, Public Hearing 4/1/2015, 3:00 PM

Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) has long been a valued partner of local governments in the State of Oregon. Through a long and treasured history, the OSMB and parks and recreation providers have successfully constructed, maintained, improved, and operated boating access facilities on over 225 waterbodies spanning across Oregon's thirty six counties. State boaters have directly benefitted from the multitude of partnerships receiving facility improvements, many of which would not be possible without the high quality services and grant funding provided by the Facilities section of the OSMB. The funds provided by the OSMB to local governments for maintenance and operations, as well as capital improvements to boating facilities (over \$6 million in 13/15 biennium) are matched by recipients at a rate of nearly three to one, providing a high rate of return to boaters on the fees they pay. These fees, through the services provided by the OSMB, produce direct benefits to boaters, ensuring safe, enjoyable boating facilities in your local communities. As local governments across the state are faced with decreased funding, these partnerships are irreplaceable.

Oregonians have repeatedly expressed their desire for safe access to statewide water bodies for recreation purposes, most recently shown in the 2013 – 2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. In this plan, Oregonians were asked to prioritize statewide recreational services that recreation providers should invest in, of which the second highest ranking item was access to public waterways. As local governments are currently facing unprecedented budgetary challenges, we appreciate the collaborative approach that the OSMB promotes in working with local park agencies to ensure this public need is met. The agency provides a multilevel service to local entities with the outstanding Facilities Program team they have on board. By actively engaging early in projects with local governments to provide expertise maneuvering through complicated environmental permitting processes, to providing high quality engineering and construction specifications as the project develops, the program is dedicated to ensuring that boating facilities are designed following a sustainable approach to reduce the maintenance needs of operators, while protecting the resources that boaters are seeking to enjoy. As many local entities do not have the

specialized knowledge to perform these services at the local level, the partnership with the OSMB is a key aspect of the ongoing effort to provide the facilities Oregonian's expect. Boaters across the state have grown accustomed to expect a service level that has been set through this cooperative approach to funding boating access sites. HB 2459 will ensure that this expected level is maintained into the future. The agency has been forced to deplete ending fund balances to maintain levels of service in past years. As such, if HB 2459 is not approved, it will result in cuts to the above mentioned cooperative programs with local governments and a highly reduced level of service at boating access sites, further harming already distressed local governments.

OPA believes that fees for outdoor recreation services should always be maintained at reasonable levels, to allow access to our environment to as many Oregonians as possible. However, it is time for the OSMB fees to be adjusted to a fair and sustainable level, as it has been far too long since the last adjustment (over twelve years) and during this time the agency has done all that it could to maintain a high level of service. The agency has endured staffing reductions that effect their internal operations and has cut grant funds to local governments, effecting operations at a local level in many of your communities. It cannot be argued that the lack of adequate funding for the agency has a negative effect on Oregon's boating access system.

The OSMB is an exceptional model for other statewide agencies looking to maximize effectiveness for the public good and they are responsible stewards of boater dollars. The **OSMB staff exhibit the true meaning of a service based program**, in which their goal is to continue providing safe, high quality boating access sites, designed and constructed in a manner that most responsibly uses boater dollars.

It is OPA's hope that your committee will consider the benefits that the OSMB provides to local governments and Oregon boaters. OPA strongly recommends that the Chairs and the members of the committee pass House Bill 2459 to ensure the continued success of a model state agency.

Sincerely,

Steve Lambert  
Legislative Chair  
Oregon Parks Association