



## Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

April 8, 2015

Trout Unlimited Opposes SB 544

Chair Edwards and committee members-

I am here today representing Trout Unlimited in opposing SB 544, a bill which would remove liability limitations for property owners who have stream restoration projects done on their property.

Trout Unlimited, the largest cold water conservation group in the nation, is composed of many members who volunteer their time to do stream restoration work. In Oregon, with 2800 members, Trout Unlimited has done many stream restoration projects across the state, often times working with private landowners to do these projects, which consist of tree plantings, log and boulder placements, culvert removals and other ways in which streams can be restored. Examples of some of these projects include working with ranchers on Wychus Creek in Deschutes basin, farmers in Upper Willamette watershed, dairy farm owners on the north coast and the Resort of the Mountain on Mt. Hood, where TU volunteers placed logs in a little stream called Wee Burns and now there are coho salmon returning to and spawning on this stream in the middle of the Resort's golf course. I have included the 2014 Oregon Council TU annual report which shows many of these projects we are working on across the state this last year.

This type of work forms the basis of the Oregon Salmon Plan and is the backbone of the 90+ watershed councils across the state which, composed of large variety of stakeholders, are involved in stream restoration projects, often on private land. SB 544 would remove limits on liability on state or federal funded restoration projects on private lands. In other words, this would mean that landowners could be liable for any damages caused if materials from project float downstream, for example, and cause damage on someone else's property.

SB 544 would make private landowners very reluctant to do necessary stream restoration projects on their land and harm the ability of groups such as Trout Unlimited and watershed councils to do restoration projects on private land to help in the recovery of our native trout and salmon.

Trout Unlimited urges your committee to vote "No" on SB 544 and not pass it out. It is a harmful bill that limits the abilities of groups, watershed councils and volunteers to do necessary work to recover the Oregon icon native species of trout and salmon, one of which, the Chinook salmon, is our state fish. This must not and should not happen.

Tom Wolf, Executive Director

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited