

From: The desk of Rep. Betty Komp

Oregon Conservationists Urge a Yes Vote in Support of SB 439

In a society that is becoming more environmentally conscious, Oregon education needs the infrastructure to better teach how involved people can be with nature around us.

SB 439 Directs Oregon State University Extension Service to assist school districts and education service districts in providing outdoor school programs. The outdoor school programs give students a six-day, hands-on educational experience that reflects local community needs. Also students receive field study opportunities to learn about:

- Soil, water, plants, and animals and how they interconnect to form an ecosystem
- The role of timber, agriculture and other natural resources in the economy of Oregon
- How nature, resources, the environment, and human development and life are all interconnected
- The important roles of both rural and urban areas and how they are interdependent.

The program's value does not end after the six days. The education is integrated with local school curricula in a way that assists in meeting state (and even international) standards in science as well as technology, engineering and mathematics.

In addition, the bill's language recognizes the inequity of outdoor educational opportunities for children in Oregon and the importance of the issue. The program aims to be part of the solution by assisting schools with state funds.

The UK's National Trust's Natural Childhood inquiry released a report called Reconnecting Children with Nature. The report recounts the benefits of children's interaction with nature and the barriers to nature that these children face. The report asks policy makers to remove barriers to a child's access to the environment around them. Senate Bill 439 wants to do this by creating programs that would increase accessibility to the outdoors.

We conservationists ask you, to help us, give a precious gift to our children. We want the future generation to enjoy and covet the environment our state has provided to us. Senate Bill 439 gives schools the ability to show how special the natural world is and even better how humans are very much a part of it. Please pass Senate Bill 439.



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