



March 20, 2017

Re: Support for SB 847

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the committee:

My name is Robin Meacher and I am the Wildlands Campaign Director for Cascadia Wildlands. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 847, relating to state trust lands. Cascadia Wildlands is a Eugene-based conservation organization that represents approximately 15,000 members and supporters throughout the region. Our work is focused on efforts to safeguard our natural environment and the outstanding values that it offers us: clean water, pure air, recreation opportunities, salmon and wildlife habitat, and our quality of life.

I encourage you to support SB 847 as introduced by Senator Arnie Roblan, which would create a trust land transfer mechanism to address under-performing Common School Fund trust lands throughout Oregon. The process would allow for the State Land Board, the Department of State Lands and the Legislative Assembly to transfer trust lands that have limited performance as assets for the fund to other public agencies to be managed for public benefits. This program will allow for special lands with outstanding public values to be retained in public ownership while maintaining and improving economic returns to the Common School Fund.

This is not a new approach. Washington state has had a similar program since 1989 and has moved nearly 120,000 acres of encumbered trust lands out of the trust to benefit school kids and the environment. Viewed as a highly successful program, the Washington program provides a precedent for the value and the success of a trust land transfer program in Oregon.

As an organization we strive to find listing solutions for difficult policy challenges and that is why we offer our support for SB 847. The revenues from the transfers will be invested in the Common School Fund for the sole benefit of Oregon's school kids. This presents an opportunity to benefit the K-12 school children in Oregon and those who value our natural environment for the multiple benefits it offers. We point to the intensely challenging situation around the Elliott State Forest as a premier example of why a program like this is necessary. Thank you for considering our testimony.

Sincerely,

Robin M. Meacher

Robin Meacher
Cascadia Wildlands