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March 31, 2017

To: House Committee on Economic Development and Trade

Chair, The Honorable Ann Lininger
Vice-Chair, The Honorable Pam Marsh
Vice-Chair, The Honorable David Brock Smith
The Honorable Brian Clem
The Honorable David Gomberg
The Honorable Ken Helm
The Honorable Rick Lewis
The Honorable Bill Post
The Honorable E. Werner Reschke

Re: Support for HB 3350

On behalf of the 3,700 members of the Mazamas, I am writing to encourage the Committee's support and passage of House Bill 3350 that would create Oregon's Outdoor Recreation Office within the Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). This bill also creates a new Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council and Fund that we fully support.

As a nonprofit mountaineering organization formed more than 120 years ago, we have seen our fair share of problems related to outdoor recreation in Oregon. That is why we were excited to be part of the team that helped create a vision for Oregon's outdoor recreation future; Travel Oregon's Outdoor Recreation Means Business Initiative. Throughout the past year, Travel Oregon's staff successfully convened a group of outdoor recreation leaders from around the state to develop a long-term vision for Oregon's recreation future. We believe that this collective impact strategy evolved into the foundation from which an Outdoor Recreation Office, if created by HB 3350, would begin its work. We thank the team at Travel Oregon and everyone that spent many hours developing this vision.

One of the key priorities that emerged from the Outdoor Recreation Means Business Initiative was to create state-level leadership for the sector. HB 3350 is a pathway to achieving that objective. It would strengthen Oregon's outdoor recreation economy and establish a new funding stream for this work.

Oregon's outdoor recreation office would provide key policy direction so that sustainable growth in all related sectors can happen at a pace congruent to our increasing population. As Oregon attracts new residents and businesses each year, we hope that growth will be considered with a conservation ethic in mind. That is, we need to know how our state can increase its outdoor recreation economy in a sustainable way.

More than half of the state is made up of federally-managed land, of which, many of our most iconic recreation assets can be found. Infrastructure on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands needs maintenance and the current backlog of trail work is astronomical. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, "the Forest Service is only able to maintain about one-quarter of the National Forest System trails to the agency standard, and the agency faces a trail maintenance backlog of \$314 million, and an additional backlog of \$210 million in annual maintenance, capital improvements, and operations." Without a coordinated effort by citizens, nonprofits, for-profit companies and agencies, we will not have an outdoor recreation infrastructure capable of supporting future generations.



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An outdoor recreation office could coordinate an all-lands trail maintenance effort and provide planning services when connection trails are made available to the public. A good example of this type of effort is the Timber Trail being pieced together as a long-distance mountain-bike ride in Oregon. Similarly, the Oregon Coast Trail requires state-level inter-jurisdictional work and funding to link the final 50 miles for public access.

HB 3350's creation of an Advisory Council shows great leadership by the state to bring together representatives to work on issues such as trail infrastructure. The state of Oregon nor its federal partners currently utilizes any sort of Recreation Resource Advisory Council. We think Oregon is in a great position to step up and help bring our growing sector to the table in a formalized way much like Travel Oregon has done.

Another key point for Mazamas' support of HB 3350 is the movement toward diversity in outdoor recreation. Oregon's forests and streams are our natural places of peace, refuge, exercise and fun. Recreation can help people who have experienced traumatic situations. Veterans, refugees, and all of our citizens should have increased access to recreation in their future. We need state-level leadership to build new partnerships to make this vision a reality. Ultimately, our public lands should be more accessible to underserved communities throughout the state.

Overall, we know that HB 3350 is a key foothold in the climb ahead. This concept can help grow our outdoor recreation economy, support the expansion of its nonprofit sector and leave future Oregonians with the same experiences that we enjoy today.

Sincerely,

Lee Davis, Mazamas Executive Director

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