



Together. For Oregon's Land.

April 5, 2017

Testimony in support of SB 327

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts represents nineteen land trusts in Oregon that collectively hold more than 85,000 acres of land open to the public. Land trusts protect our most special places through private land conservation; helping landowners conserve working forests, agricultural land, and critical habitat for endangered species like salmon. Our agreements limit development on those lands, keeping them available for ecosystem health and recreation.

The Johnson v. Gibson case reinterpreted Oregon's recreational use statute as not including agents of landowners like employees. SB 327 will restore the immunity to landowners and their employees that was originally intended to encourage them to open their lands to the public.

Passing SB 327 will protect the owners, employees, and volunteers of land trusts from liability and allow them to keep lands open for thousands of Oregonians to enjoy each year. Most land trusts are relatively small non-profit organizations that could struggle to pay for enough insurance to cover their properties. Without a fix to this problem, land trusts could close their properties to hiking, bird-watching, biking, environmental education and all the other activities they currently offer. Recreational immunity allows trusts to continue offering conservation and recreation for all Oregonians.

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts respectfully requests that you support Oregon's legacy of providing public access to our special resource lands and support SB 327.

Sincerely,

Kelley Beamer
Executive Director
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

Blue Mountains Conservancy
Blue Mountain Land Trust
Columbia Land Trust
Deschutes Land Trust
Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust
Greenbelt Land Trust
Klamath Lake Land Trust
Lower Nehalem Community Trust
McKenzie River Trust
North Coast Land Conservancy
Oregon Rangeland Trust
Pacific Forest Trust
Southern Oregon Land Conservancy
The Conservation Fund
The Nature Conservancy
The Wetlands Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
Wallowa Land Trust
Wild Rivers Land Trust