

FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE

January 31, 2019

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources
Co-Chairs Senator Kathleen Taylor and Representative Jeff Reardon
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for HB 5527 and Oregon Parks & Recreation Department Budget

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Joint Subcommittee:

On behalf of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, I write today in support of the proposed budget for Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD). Friends of the Columbia Gorge is a 39-year old non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and OPRD is a critical component and partner within the National Scenic Area. In the past year alone, Friends and OPRD teamed up to hold numerous stewardship parties to combat the spread of invasive weeds as a result of the Eagle Creek fire.

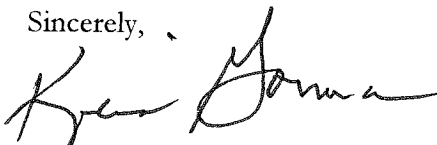
We strongly support continued funding for the Office of Outdoor Recreation, created by the Legislature in 2017. In the short time it's been in operation, the office has advance conversations core to outdoor recreation interests, including funding local search and rescue operations, advancing signature trail concepts across the state, and engaging our youth in the outdoors. We have high hopes that this office will play a key coordinating role amongst multiple agencies and private partners on a diverse array of important issues for outdoor recreation in this state.

We also strongly support policy package 105 which would enhance the OPRD's ability to reach Oregonians currently not accessing the state park system. We believe that Oregon's outdoors can and should be accessible and enjoyable to all Oregonians. As stated in the budget proposal:

OPRD is focused on connecting everyone to Oregon's special places because no one should feel unwelcome in an Oregon park. No one should feel that Oregon's parks are off limits to them. Initial small steps include having conversations, listening to one other and learning to understand each other's perspectives. This is vital to treating each other and park visitors with respect. OPRD is engaging in a model of "Engage, Relate, Adapt".

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5527. We urge your strong support for the full proposal before you today and hope to continue strengthening funding for Oregon's recreational assets in budgets to come.

Sincerely,



Kevin Gorman
Executive Director