

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:

Please accept the following testimony on behalf of Oregon Wild and our over 20,000 members and supporters regarding SB 5527. As you consider the Oregon State Parks Department budget we encourage you to work with OPRD to ensure fulfillment of obligations under the State Scenic Waterway program. Specifically, the requirement to consider and add additional rivers to the inventory of State Scenic Waterways.

Oregon's rivers provide clean drinking water, key wildlife habitats, world class recreation opportunities, and much more for all of our benefit. Ensuring that we are protecting our rivers is paramount to the health of our state.

Currently OPRD is directed to review three river sections for designation each biennia. Following the process laid out in ORS 390.855, the Department is directed to then submit a report to the Governor each biennium recommending the designation of additional rivers or segments of rivers and related adjacent land as scenic waterways subject to the provisions of ORS 390.805.

The State was required to go through the above process or similar by the original State Scenic Waterway guidelines dating back to the 1980s. The State designated a number of waterways in 1988 via ballot initiative. Following 1988 the State neglected to consider new designations until then Governor Kitzhaber restarted the process in 2014. Subsequently OPRD considered three rivers, the Molalla, Chetco, and Grande Ronde... designating the first two in 2016. This marked the first new designated waterways in over 25 years.

The next biennium, starting in 2017, included the initial study of three rivers, however OPRD quickly stepped away from two of the three and only studied one river, the Nehalem.

We support OPRD being sufficiently funded to fully studying, and potentially recommending three rivers each biennium.

Sincerely,

Erik Fernandez
Wilderness Program Manager
Oregon Wild