



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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RE: Testimony in support of SB 109

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Heard and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) requests your support on SB 109 enabling the agency to develop administrative rules to manage the take-off and landing of unmanned aircraft systems, or drones, in state parks.

As unmanned aircraft activities have increased across the state with the operations by both commercial pilots and recreational hobbyists, OPRD has faced increasing questions and conflicts among and between visitors.

For drone pilots and hobbyists, it is often confusing to know where operations are allowed and appropriate. State Parks are often contacted with questions from drone enthusiasts about where they can fly. For some park visitors, there is a frustration that State Parks have not prohibited drone operations.

As an agency, we are caught in the middle. The flights of unmanned aircraft are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). At national parks, drone flights are prohibited. Visitors who travel to Crater Lake or one of our National Wildlife Refuges will find those areas closed to drone operations and often wonder why it is not the same with state parks. We do not have the ability to ban drone operations at the state level. However, we would like to work with the community to adopt fair, sensible rules that address the location of take-off and landings, but currently lack the statutory authority to engage in rulemaking.

If SB 109 were to pass, OPRD would have a public conversation during rulemaking about regulating the take-off and landing of drones within a state park. We would start with a Rule Advisory Committee bringing together commercial drone pilots, recreational hobbyists and conservation advocates to help craft a rule that provides clarity to drone operators while protecting the natural, cultural and scenic resources within state parks. The public would then have an opportunity to review and comment on that rule before adoption by the volunteer, governor-appointed Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission.

There are places within Oregon State Parks where drone operations can be managed as any other recreational use. There are places that with a special use permit, drone operations may be appropriate. Finally, there are places that for the protection of natural, cultural or scenic resources drones are not appropriate some or all of the time. Passage of SB 109, to create administrative rules, will provide the clarity needed for drone pilots, hobbyists and the general public to know where drone take-off and landing is allowed and prohibited within a state park.