



COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

511 SE MORRISON ST. PORTLAND, OR 97214 • OREGONLANDTRUSTS.ORG

March 16, 2021

Testimony in support of HB 2600 and HB 2913- Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund

To the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources:

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is the central voice for 29 land conservation organizations in Oregon that work to protect land and connect people to nature. Our mission is to serve and strengthen the land trust community of Oregon. The work of COLT and our member organizations ensure that Oregon's natural systems, watersheds and recreational lands are protected for future generations. Our member land trusts protect land for public enjoyment, build trails and often expand recreation connections by linking private and public lands.

**COLT supports HB 2600** that provides a percentage of revenue from state transient lodging tax (TLT) be transferred to Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF). **We also support HB 2913** to remove the abolishment of the OCRF.

The OCRF was established to implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy and enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation. In Oregon there is a growing need to support conservation work that engages our diverse communities in authentic ways, and builds sustainable outdoor recreation experiences. The OCRF represents an important opportunity invest in fish and wildlife protection while strengthening community connections to nature.

Over the past year, the OCRF Advisory Committee has done an excellent job developing a grant program that lifts up community-based projects from all regions of Oregon. Projects include community beaver surveys on the coast (The Wetlands Conservancy), a new program to build awareness of natural areas in Lents (Lents Youth Initiative), and the construction of a wildlife underpass in Gilchrest (Oregon Hunters Association). The grant program developed by the Committee is fueling community-based efforts to protect our fish and wildlife species and engage a broad spectrum of Oregonians in this work. **The projects are there.... the partners are there.... but we lack the funding we need to fully realize the potential of the OCRF.** HB 2600 would create reliable a funding source for the landscapes and projects that make our state unique and drive tourism to places like the high desert, the Oregon coast and Willamette Valley.

We recognize 2020 was a very rough year for Oregon's tourism industry. COVID, coupled with the decrease of the state transient lodging tax has created a serious strain on the sector. We also believe that the industry will come back because we have incredible attributes to share... and we want to be

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**23 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST CENTER FOR NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT  
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FOREST PARK CONSERVANCY GREENBELT LAND TRUST KLAMATH LAKE LAND TRUST LOWER NEHALEM COMMUNITY TRUST  
MCKENZIE RIVER TRUST NORTH COAST LAND CONSERVANCY NORTHWEST RANGELAND TRUST OREGON DESERT LAND TRUST  
PACIFIC FOREST TRUST SOUTHERN OREGON LAND CONSERVANCY THE CONSERVATION FUND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN OREGON  
THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND THE WETLANDS CONSERVANCY WALLOWA LAND TRUST WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY  
WILD RIVERS LAND TRUST **6 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** CLACKAMAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
EAST MULTNOMAH SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT HELVETIA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OREGON AGRICULTURAL TRUST  
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partners in raising the TLT again to promote and deliver on world-class travel experiences, while also protecting our fish and wildlife.

Over the past two years Oregonians have demonstrated their commitment to Oregon's special resources by donating nearly \$250,000 from more than 15,000 individuals. HB 2600 and HB 2913 would show our state's investment in the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund by repealing the abolishment of the fund and linking it to a revenue source.

Our collective work can champion positive change, unite more people for conservation and protect the spectacular state we call home. Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 2600 and HB 2913.

Sincerely,

Kelley Beamer, Executive Director (COLT)

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