

April 1, 2021

Dear Chair Whitt, Vice Chairs Hudson and Breese-Iverson, and members of the committee,

I'm submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 3281-1 on behalf of the Oregon Trails Coalition.

Our advisory council includes representatives from more than twenty-five federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

Fifty years ago this year, the Oregon legislature passed the 1971 Oregon Recreation Trails System Act which so moved:  
"It shall be the policy of the State of Oregon to supply those outdoor recreation areas, facilities and opportunities which are clearly the responsibility of the state in meeting growing needs; and to encourage all agencies of government, voluntary and commercial organizations, citizen recreation groups and others to work cooperatively and in a coordinated manner to assist in meeting total recreation needs through exercise and appropriate responsibilities."

In 1975, the first segment of the Oregon Coast Trail, Columbia River to the Tillamook Bay at Barview, was officially designated as a State Recreation Trail under the act. Forty-six years later, the State of Oregon still has yet to complete this trail of statewide significance. It is long past time to address the remaining gaps in the trail.

Oregonians care fiercely about our trails.

The 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan demonstrated that 74% of Oregonians use local trails, and 52% of Oregonians travel to use trails outside of their community. The plan also determined that trails are a top investment priority of the Oregonians surveyed. During the COVID pandemic, trail use has skyrocketed as Oregonians take to local trails for exercise, joy, solace, and relaxation during challenging times. All existing funding programs for non-motorized trails in the state are consistently and significantly oversubscribed.

The Oregon Trails Coalition strongly supports HB 3281's allocation of general fund dollars to support the completion of the Oregon Coast Trail. We would like to see the language for this allocation include, "to complete trail development, construct designed trail segments, and restore existing segments of the Oregon Coast Trail that are at risk for becoming additional gaps." We are also supportive of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department investing a portion of funding already allocated to bike and pedestrian trails to the Oregon Coast Trail as specified in the -1 amendment, but it cannot be overstated that we will never meet Oregonians' needs for safe, connected trails across the state with current funding levels.

Please act on this 50th Anniversary of the Oregon Recreation Trails System Act to invest general fund dollars in the completion of one of the most beloved trails in Oregon, the Oregon Coast Trail.

Please forward HB 3281.

Thank you for your leadership,  
Stephanie Noll  
Oregon Trails Coalition