



COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

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

February 9, 2021

Testimony in support of HB 5025- Funding the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Subcommittee Members:

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is the central voice for 29 organizations in Oregon that work to conserve 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.

The members of COLT are rooted in local communities and accomplish their conservation missions by partnering with landowners, volunteers, foundations and public agencies. Oregon land trusts have a strong partnership with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), based on a shared mission of protecting special places for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations. Our members represent local voices, advancing local conservation strategies that connect protected lands and expand recreation for Oregonians. For example, last year we celebrated the protection of Oregon's iconic East Moraine in Wallowa County as a community forest and locally owned recreation area. Support from OPRD was critical to acquire the Moraine and build public access to one of Oregon's most iconic and scenic treasures. Such partnerships continue to play out across Oregon.

**We are writing today in strong support of HB 5025, the Governor's Recommended Budget for OPRD and would like to highlight a few key elements:**

**Property Acquisition:**

The proposed budget includes \$1.7M for the acquisition of new park properties to keep pace with Oregon growth and changing demographics, recreational habits and conservation priorities. While we recognize the importance of addressing ongoing maintenance needs, this budget continues OPRD's commitment to build our land base for outdoor recreation through strategic acquisitions.

**Office of Outdoor Recreation:**

COLT strongly supports the funding allocated to support the Office of Outdoor Recreation (Office) that provides coordination and services to Oregon's recreation providers and economy. In 2020 The Office led the Governor's Task Force on the Outdoors and developed a vision in their final report, "2020 Framework for Action," to grow Oregon's outdoor recreation community based on inclusivity, health, equity and economic prosperity. The findings of the

task force point to the ongoing need to balance improved outdoor recreation access with resource protection and to increase outdoor recreation participation, especially among youth and traditionally underserved communities. We applaud the goals set forth by the task force and support funding to increase capacity in Oregon's Office of Outdoor Recreation.

**Community support grants and OPRD's Recreation Trails Program:**

OPRD's community support grants help local and regional partners provide recreation services to their community. Land trusts and local park providers use this program to expand recreation connectivity in the communities they serve. For example, Greenbelt Land Trust partnered with regional land managers to develop a publicly accessible trails website to serve the residents and visitors of Benton County.

**Support for HB 2125, Oregon Parks for the Future Fund:**

Oregon's Parks and Recreation Department provides crucial services to our state to enhance outdoor opportunities and connect people to nature and our natural heritage. 2020 was a year like no other, and OPRD's budget was hit sharply by the double-blow of decreased lottery revenue and decreased revenues from closed parks, while the demand for outdoor recreation exploded. COLT supports HB 2125 as a forward-looking investment to support the future needs of our parks system, including land acquisition, trail development and building a robust outdoor recreation program that serves all Oregonians. HB 2125 would authorize the State Treasurer to issue \$100M in lottery bonds to be deposited in the Oregon Parks for the Future Fund. This infusion of support is needed to lift up one of Oregon's greatest public assets, our state park system and associated conservation and recreation lands. As the bill states, the well-being of our people dependent on outdoor recreation resources for the "physical, spiritual, cultural, scientific and other benefits that such resources afford." House Bill 2125, if passed, will bring together leaders from our civic and private sector to think about the long-term goals of the Department and how to most efficiently move the agency into a new era of serving more people and stewarding the outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational sites of our state.

**Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 5025. We urge your strong support for the full proposal before you today.**

Sincerely,  
Kelley Beamer  
Executive Director, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

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**23 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST CENTER FOR NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT  
COLUMBIA LAND TRUST DESCHUTES LAND TRUST DUCKS UNLIMITED FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE LAND TRUST  
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  
TUALATIN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT YAMHILL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT