



**COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS**

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February 26, 2024

To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

**RE: Support for SB 1576A – Restoring Recreational Immunity Protections**

Chair Kropf and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), we thank you for the opportunity today to provide comments in support of SB 1576A, a bill to temporarily restore recreational immunity protections for public and private landowners. This legislation is captured in the Senate Judiciary Omnibus bill, which passed the Senate 25-2 on Thursday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) represents 31-member land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, and conservation organizations across Oregon that are working to protect our natural world – our water, wildlife and open space – for all people, forever. As of 2023, our statewide community of land trusts had 90 properties open for public use in Oregon.

The Oregon Public Use of Lands Act provides liability protections for landowners – both public and private – who make their land available without charge for recreational use by the public. However, a recent Oregon Court of Appeals decision undermined the immunity guaranteed in the Act, which would result in a severe reduction of land available to Oregonians for their recreational use and enjoyment.

Simply put, land trusts with properties open to the public are now at greater risk of lawsuits by recreational users, and could face increased liability insurance premiums from this decision. As nonprofits, land trusts cannot afford these increased premiums, and would have to close their properties for the summer season.



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**24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust  
Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust  
Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust  
North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural 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 • Willowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust

**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water  
Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association  
Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

Through SB 1576A, we seek to temporarily amend the Public Use of Lands Act to restore recreational immunity protections for public and private land open for recreational opportunities. As a temporary fix, this legislation has a sunset in 2026 and would necessitate bringing all parties back to the table for a more comprehensive solution in the 2025 legislative session.

To keep trails and recreation open for the summer season, we urge this Committee to pass SB 1576A and restore recreational immunity protections. Thank you for your consideration, and we thank you for the time to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Martino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Amanda Martino  
Executive Director, Blue Mountain Land Trust  
Board President, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT)

