



TO: Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Amanda Parsons, Executive Director, Oregon Recreation & Park Association
DATE: February 16, 2025
RE: Support for SB 179

The Oregon Recreation & Park Association (ORPA) urges your support if SB 179.

ORPA includes city, county and special district parks agencies, and 2,200 park and recreation professionals, agencies, and volunteers. We have been working with a coalition of stakeholders dedicated to making sure lands stay open for public use.

The Oregon Public Use of Lands Act passed in 1995 with a goal of encouraging public and private owners of land to make their land available to the public for recreational purposes.

ORS 105.676: The Legislative Assembly hereby declares it is the public policy of the State of Oregon to encourage owners of land to make their land available to the public for recreational purposes, for gardening, for woodcutting and for the harvest of special forest products by limiting their liability toward persons entering thereon for such purposes and by protecting their interests in their land from the extinguishment of any such interest or the acquisition by the public of any right to use or continue the use of such land for recreational purposes, gardening, woodcutting or the harvest of special forest products.

The Act increased the availability of land for free recreation by limiting liability to cities, counties, parks, schools and a wide range of private owners, including farmers and timber companies that allow hunters, anglers, hikers, mountain bikers and other members of the public to use or traverse their lands at no charge.

However, prior to the 2024 legislative session, litigation caused insurers to urge property owners and parks agencies to close their trails due to liability. With Oregonians at risk of losing access to trails statewide, the legislature stepped in and adopted temporary changes to statute. Open spaces remained open.

The temporary fix worked and balanced out the law – the public could still recreate, and legal action could still happen.

We urge making it permanent law.