



March 4, 2025

Joint Subcommittee on Ways and Means  
Co-Chairs Sen. Frederick and Rep. Levy, Members of the Committee  
Oregon State Legislature  
Salem, OR

Re: SB 5026 Oregon Parks and Recreation Budget

Dear Sen. Frederick, Rep. Levy and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Coast Alliance requests your support for **SB 5026**, the Oregon Parks and Recreation budget. ORCA is an Oregon nonprofit corporation whose mission is protection of coastal natural resources and enhancement of coastal livability.

As the Parks Department owns over half of the Oregon coastline, its lands, infrastructure and programs are an essential aspect of the coastal economy and quality of life. In addition, OPRD is the steward of places of tremendous ecological value across the coastal zone – and the rest of the state.

OPRD has suffered budgetary instability for some years now, because of the set up with lottery funds providing the principal funding stream – but which must be shared at *double levels* with local recreation districts if the funds exceed 50% more than in 2009-2011. That has now occurred, and OPRD is on the brink of collapse: if a stable revenue source is not found, the agency will be unable to meet its daily operating expenses by the 27-29 biennium. The Legislature has aggravated the problem by carving out various exceptions for special needs groups or important programs – but once again, this just removes revenue from OPRD, and it has not been replaced.

ORCA supports OPRD's request to neither increase expenses nor decrease revenue at this time. The agency is working to reduce its more than \$30 million gap in funding, but this cannot be done internally; raising parks fees up to a level that might assist would put parks out of reach of some Oregonians. The only other option at this time would be for OPRD to raid its emergency reserves at unacceptably high levels. **ORCA supports creation of an**

**interim task force, or similar entity created by budget note**, to research solutions to the agency’s difficulties. We fear that if this is not done now — when will the time come to do it? The before-crisis window for researching and putting into place a solution for OPRD, to create stable longterm funding, is closing, which would have detrimental effects on all Oregon’s cherished state parks.

The Audits Division of the Secretary of State’s office is also concerned, and will be auditing OPRD in this biennium, according to its 2025-26 Audit Plan. According to the Plan, “Key audit objectives may include: assessing the ability of OPRD to meet its mission considering its current funding challenges and condition of the state parks; identifying barriers to OPRD for meeting its long-term mission, vision, and goals; recommending ways to overcome these barriers; and identifying a funding model that might be suitable for Oregon.”

Infrastructure repair and upkeep have spiraling costs; acquisition opportunities come up rarely but need to be acted on when they do; park visitorship, especially on the coast, continues to escalate, placing strain on the land base and requiring more parks rangers; climate change and coastal erosion are causing new problems that must be attended to — these are but a few of the issues facing the Department.

ORCA supports SB 5026 – but also supports creation of an interim task force of some kind to investigate finding a stable, longterm funding solution for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Thank you,

Cameron La Follette

/s/ Cameron La Follette

Executive Director

