

NATIONAL COAST TRAIL ASSOCIATION

*Keeping The Coast For Everyone!
through advocacy, education and action
for trails, public access and coastal preservation*



Oregon Coast Trail on the beach south from our westernmost point, Cape Blanco!

February 4th, 2026

*Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301*

Re: Support SB 1590 – “Relating to public lands”

Protecting Public Lands and the Oregon Coast Trail Corridor

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SB 1590**. I am writing as the executive director of the **National Coast Trail Association**. As such I have been a committed advocate of the Oregon Coast Trail (OCT) for over thirty years. And I know that Oregon’s long tradition of treating our coast as a shared natural heritage, and not a privileged commodity. **SB 1590 is essential to safeguarding that heritage by protecting the public lands and continuous trail corridor that make the OCT a truly world-class experience.**

- **The Oregon Coast Trail Depends on Its Corridor**

A “world-class trail” is not just a line on a map from point A to point B; it is the full, immersive journey through a living landscape. The Oregon Coast Trail, stretching more than 400 miles along beaches, headlands, forests, and dunes, is renowned not simply for its tread, but for the tapestry of landscapes, habitats, views, and cultural features that envelop it—the trail **corridor**.

Nowhere is this more evident than where the OCT passes through and alongside federal public lands such as Siuslaw National Forest, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) refuges. In these segments, the corridor is the “soul of the trail”: it shapes what hikers see and hear, their sense of safety and discovery, and their connection to Oregon’s coastal communities and ecosystems. **SB 1590 directly supports the continued integrity of this corridor by reinforcing protections for public lands that are indispensable to the trail’s continuity, quality, and long-term resilience.**

- **Federal Public Lands: Significant Part of the Backbone of a World-Class Trail Experience**

The Oregon Coast Trail is only possible because it threads together a mosaic of federal, state, local, and other lands. Among these, besides the many Oregon State Parks along the coast, USFS, BLM, and USFWS public lands form a significant part of the backbone of the most scenic, ecologically significant, and memorable stretches of the trail.



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BLM's Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area, lighthouse and headland in the distance, viewed from OCT

Beyond USFS, BLM lands and USFWS refuges are equally crucial to achieving a continuous, world-class OCT corridor. **The Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan** explicitly notes that the trail crosses lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as counties and cities, and **calls for collaboration among these landowners to close gaps and improve the user experience.** National Wildlife Refuges along the Oregon coast protect irreplaceable estuaries, old-growth forests, wetlands, and headland ecosystems—such as those at Siletz Bay and Bandon Marsh—that provide habitat for migratory birds and fish while giving hikers unparalleled opportunities for wildlife viewing and education.

If these public lands are fragmented, sold, or managed primarily for short-term extractive use, the OCT cannot be maintained as a continuous, safe, and high-quality trail. Instead, hikers are forced onto highways, away from beaches, estuaries, and headlands, undermining both the recreational experience and the conservation values that Oregonians have worked for decades to secure. **SB 1590 is aligned with the intent of maintaining these lands for public benefit.**

- **Consistency with State and Federal Goals**

Oregon has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to keeping the coast accessible and resilient—from the original historic **Beach Bill** to recent legislation evolving shoreline management and promoting nature-based solutions to erosion while maintaining public recreation access. Likewise, the Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan emphasizes closing gaps, improving safety, and coordinating with federal agencies to provide camping, transit connections, and high-quality experiences along the full length of the trail. **SB 1590 is consistent with USFS recreation and conservation goals** on the Siuslaw National Forest, **BLM and USFWS missions** on coastal lands and refuges and **State economic and community objectives**, as trails with protected, scenic corridors attract more users, increase tourism, and support local businesses—creating a virtuous cycle of conservation and economic vitality in coastal towns **SB 1590 complements that framework by ensuring that the land beneath some of our most important trails remains in public hands and managed for the public good.**

- **A Respectful Request to Act**

I recognize that legislators must balance many interests. Rural economies, local governments, and land managers all need predictable frameworks and tools to meet community needs. **SB 1590 honors those realities by affirming that the long-term public value of our shared federal and state coastal lands—managed by USFS, BLM, and USFWS—far exceeds the short-term gains of disposal or fragmentation.**

For the Oregon Coast Trail, the stakes are especially high. Fragmenting its corridor – in places like Sand Lake, Cascade Head, Cape Perpetua to Cape Mountain, and the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area – would irreversibly diminish one of Oregon’s signature recreational assets and a core part of our coastal identity. By contrast, affirming and strengthening protections for these public lands ensures that future generations will experience a continuous, safe, and inspiring OCT—one that reflects the best of Oregon’s conservation ethic and commitment to outdoor access for all.

For these many reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support SB 1590** and to view it as a vital step toward securing a truly world-class Oregon Coast Trail and a resilient, accessible coast for every Oregonian and visitor. **Thank you** for your careful consideration in this regard to **“keep the Oregon coast for everyone!”**

Respectfully,

Albert LePage, Executive Director