

June 16, 2020

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

725 Summer Street NE, Suite

Salem, OR 9730

Chair Mukumoto, Vice Chair Allen, Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Trout Unlimited, the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, we are submitting this letter to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission regarding the future of the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation (OREC).

Our organizations all collectively work on the conservation of public lands to improve fish and wildlife habitat, access to the outdoors, and ensure quality recreation such as hunting and fishing continue for the next generation and beyond. Collectively, we have hundreds of thousands of members across the nation, and more than 10,000 in Oregon alone.

Outdoor recreation is a celebrated and important part of our state's identity, culture, and sustainable economy. However, as recreational use continues to grow it is more important than ever that Oregonians work together in a collaborative way to ensure recreation does not negatively impact the diverse natural resources and fish and wildlife populations across Oregon. Over the past few years, we have made great progress in achieving shared goals for recreation and conservation strategies for our state. The successful delivery of these strategies will depend on collective action from agencies, partners, and other stakeholders. OREC is a critical part of our success, serving as the much-needed coordination center for the many important recreation and conservation goals for the state.

Our state is in a budget crisis right now, and we know that our public agencies are facing budget cuts and extraordinarily difficult staffing, program, and operations decisions. We have felt the impacts from COVID-19 both personally and within our own organizations, and we feel for the incredibly difficult situation that State Parks, as is other agencies are in. We do however know, that in times of great difficulty, like we are facing now, strategic collaboration across agencies, sectors and stakeholders will become increasingly important.

Several of our organizations have members on the Governor's taskforce on Outdoor Recreation which is being led by OREC. The taskforce has three main goals to accomplish.

1. Support economic development in both rural and urban areas.
2. Balance improved outdoor recreation access with resource protection
3. Increase outdoor recreation participation, especially among youth and traditionally underserved communities.

As organizations made up of sportsmen and women, the successful accomplishment of these goals will improve both the quality and opportunities available to hunters and anglers as well as the broader

outdoor recreation community. OREC has been essential to convene this important task force and the collaborative efforts of their work to date has laid important groundwork and created the relationships necessary to accomplish these joint goals. Continued funding for OREC is necessary to responsibly and proactively complete this plan that will improve access and opportunities for all Oregonians to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors that is so abundant in this state.

We respectfully ask for your assistance in the continued stable funding for the Office of Outdoor Recreation and your help in working to find additional state funding to continue the office as it currently exists as defined in statute. Our organizations are all interested and willing to work together with other stakeholders to help find solutions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Casey  
Oregon Field Representative  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Ian Isaacson  
Board Chair  
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