

# NATIONAL COAST TRAIL ASSOCIATION

PO Box 2491, Eugene, OR 97402 / 503-335-3876 / [www.CoastTrails.org](http://www.CoastTrails.org)

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

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Hearing Room D, Capitol Building, Salem, Oregon

RE: HB 3149

Hello:

### Introduction: Oregon Coast Trail

The completion and maintenance of the Oregon Coast Trail is one of our primary goals and the current focus for the National Coast Trail Association. We've worked with state parks for over 20 years towards its completion.

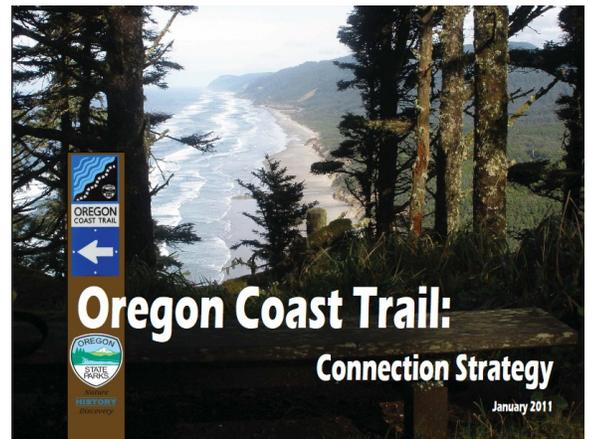
The Oregon Coast Trail was envisioned as a continuous hiking trail along the entire coast in 1959 by Sam Dicken, a University of Oregon geography professor, who promoted the concept statewide and especially with Oregon State Parks. When the Oregon Recreational Advisory Council was formed in 1971, state parks hired their first state trails coordinator whose priority project was the development of the Oregon Coast Trail, and a major section on the north coast was dedicated in 1974. Until just last year, the work of four state trails coordinators as Oregon State Parks staff had included the continued development of the trail.



**OREGON  
COAST TRAIL**

### Planning: Development & Existing Resources

Sam Dicken, "the father of the Oregon Coast Trail" himself, who had researched the entire Oregon Coast to write a book, *Pioneer Trails of the Oregon Coast*, was hired by Oregon State Parks to craft the first trail planning recommendations in the early 1970's. Realizing the need for an updated report, our organization researched, crafted and sent our recommendations in 2005 in the form of a 100-plus page document, *Oregon Coast Trail: Missing Links, Priorities & Solutions* to state parks as opportunities for discussion and action with public agencies and landowners, some of which were eventually developed. In 2011 the agency, based on our 2005 report, developed an *Oregon Coast Trail Connection Strategy*, and in a presentation to the Oregon State Parks Commission stated their intent with a basic strategy to fill in the gaps with a proposed target date of 2021.

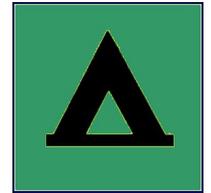


Given the proposed completion date of 2021 and the need for extensive lead time to plan, do layout and design, obtain funding and build specific trail sections, our organization field researched and crafted an extensively revised and updated version of our recommendations for the agency in another 100-plus page report, *Oregon Coast Trail 2021: Final Connections, Logistic Strategy*. Completed towards the end of 2015, it was formally presented to the Oregon Recreational Trails Advisory Council In January 2016, plus the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department coastal manager, district managers and to all park rangers managing various parks along the coast during Spring 2016.

Therefore, given the agency's own "Connections Strategy," plus our "Final Connections" report based on extensive field research with recommendations to complete the gaps and to create a quality recreational trail experience, **these existing documents could substantially inform both OPRD and ODOT in terms of developing the plan this bill would mandate, plus we could also offer additional assistance as a nonprofit organization.**

## Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD): Continuing Involvement

Since OPRD first created the trails coordinator position in 1971, someone has always filled that place until July 2016. In our view the person in that position has always acted as a kind of “internal advocate” for the Oregon Coast Trail, and of course, since the position has not yet been refilled with no apparent intent to do so in the future, the valuable contribution and coordination from that specific agency staff position has disappeared as well. And therefore, the directive of this bill for the agency to develop a plan with the expected intent to implement it, would formally continue state parks involvement in working towards the development of the Oregon Coast Trail.



## Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT): Needed Participation

In our 2015 report we recognized the need and recommended that OPRD and ODOT develop and interagency agreement to streamline the process of developing missing gaps in the Oregon Coast Trail. These gaps would either be the only available option of a route to get people off the highway but within the ODOT right-of-way or where ODOT lands offered a preferred route that would lend itself to developing not only a vital linkage but also one that would create a quality recreational trail experience. ODOT's participation is therefore not only appropriate but also needed for success.

## Importance: Economic and Quality of Life Benefits, Now and in the Future



Some may ask and wonder why the people of this state and why the legislature should consider a trail significant and worthy of attention, especially for something that may seem nonessential and apparently only used for “fun.” One reason is that trails in and of themselves are economic generators. And it's a sustainable resource for tourists that can be greatly enhanced by a continuous and safe trail along the entire coast allowing a variety of local area businesses to be linked up with those walking the trail. And there are people who will travel from other parts of

the world to do such a completed trail, if the facilities, amenities and other resources exist to make it logistically possible and enjoyable. It's also about enhancing the quality of life, about providing residents with opportunities to create their own adventures anywhere along its length, whether for a short walk, a day, a weekend, a week or by doing the whole darn thing. And quality of life means attracting new residents and keeping existing ones, it's about economic stability.

## Funding: Trail Building and Maintenance

This bill also includes developing a fund dedicated to implement the eventual plan, and part of that funding could be potential appropriations from the legislature. However, without the resources to make a plan happen, it simply can't. Therefore, it's our recommendation is that this bill would also include an appropriation from the general fund with a specified amount every biennium in perpetuity. Besides providing the kind of dedicated and stable funding needed to implement the plan, would also provide OPRD and ODOT the monetary resources upfront that required any financial match in applying for grants, thereby enhancing their ability to potentially leverage even more funding. Such ongoing funding would also proactively address the "wind, waves and rain" erosional processes of the coast, the forces that knock down trees, cause landslides and wash away shoreline, and such funding is always needed to repair and maintain coastal trails, too. In summary, ***a dedicated specified appropriation amount for trail building and maintenance from the general fund for each biennium in perpetuity would provide the kind of funding needed to successfully develop and implement the plan not only to build the trail but also to maintain it.***

Therefore, **we support House Bill 3149,** requiring the development of plan for Oregon Coast Trail, establishing an Oregon Coast Trail Fund, and continuously appropriating moneys in this fund to the State Parks and Recreation Department for developing and implementing plan.

Respectfully,

Al LePage, Executive Director

cc: Board of Directors, *National Coast Trail Association*