

February 4, 2018

House Committee on Agriculture and National Resources  
Representative Brian Clem, Chair  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Opposition to House Bill 4029/Support for Local Trail Planning

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger and members of the Committee:

The undersigned board of directors of the Bend Paddle Trail Alliance urge you to vote "No!" against the misguided House Bill 4029. This bill seeks to explicitly prohibit construction of a pedestrian footbridge over the Deschutes River at the edge of Bend's urban growth boundary, while being bundled with additional "sweeteners" which should themselves be proposed as separate legislation. Legislative requirement of State Parks to recommend three additional Wild and Scenic designations annually, while noble in principal, would create an unfunded and unrealistic mandate which would most likely end in a waste of taxpayer resources.

As Bend's population continues to expand, improved access to recreation will be fundamental to maintaining the quality of life which many seek when relocating to our outdoor-centric community. Building such a pedestrian bridge would create the missing link between two currently existing popular sections of trail and allow for greater equity in our community by enabling Bend's population East of the Deschutes River to easily access and enjoy the many miles of recreation in the Deschutes National Forest without resorting to driving automobiles through the city to the popular trailheads. This bridge has been the key missing link in our community vision of a fully connected trail system along the Deschutes River from Sun River to Bend, and is broadly supported by recreational trail advocates and a majority of residents of Central Oregon.

Bend Parks and Recreation District has diligently invested many years planning, coordinating carefully with the USFS and other regulatory permit agencies, and gathering broad public review of the project. In contrast, this hastily drafted legislation was once again put forth with zero public review, or even legislative presentation or debate, and once again serves primarily a handful of homeowners who prefer no improvements to public access of public lands near their private properties. Once more, Legislature is being lobbied to create law to take a side in what is essentially a local land use planning decision.

Bend Paddle Trail Alliance, is a local all-volunteer non-profit dedicated to enhancing recreational enjoyment of the Deschutes River for pedestrians, canoeists, and whitewater paddlers. We have built innovative and strong private/public partnerships with the USFS, BLM & BPRD and we have raised and donated more than \$1.25M for public access and recreation along the Deschutes. We are passionate advocates for our treasured river and for the sustainable public enjoyment of it.

Our board members urge you to vote "No!" on house bill 4029.

Our local newspaper has written several editorials opposing a very similar past legislative attempt by special interests to block construction of a bridge at the edge of the urban growth boundary that include many additional details and history of the special interest group pushing the anti-bridge agenda:

- [House bill amended to allow footbridge in Senate Committee](#)
- [A Bridge, a bill, and an influential backer](#)
- [Gene Whisnant's give-away to riverfront property owners harms Bend trail users](#)
- [Local lawmaker tries to kill Deschutes trail connection](#)

We believe strongly that the bridge proposed entirely on USFS property would be a great benefit to our community, and urge this committee to allow further local conversations to drive the details of its implementation.

Thanks for your public service.

Warmest Regards,

Board Members of the Bend Paddle Trail Alliance.

Justin Rae- President  
Jayson Bowerman- Vice President

Geoff Frank  
Laurel Brauns  
Katie Urban

Myria Bury  
Stephen Junkins