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Contact: Kelley Beamer, kelley@oregonlandtrusts.org, 503.719.4732

Brad Chalfant, email, bsc@deschuteslandtrust.org, 541.420.3389

Zavi Borja, email, zavier.borja@latinooutdoors.org, 541.771.2281

Governor Brown highlights importance of land conservation, community partnerships and recreation during Central Oregon visit

Sisters, Ore. – Governor Kate Brown and First Gentleman, Dan Little, visited Whychus Canyon Preserve today in Central Oregon with the Deschutes Land Trust, Latino Outdoors, and Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT). The visit highlighted land and resource conservation and the promotion of outdoor recreation for all.

“I’m grateful for every opportunity to get outside in the unique and precious natural beauty of Oregon,” said Oregon Governor Kate Brown. “We need to make sure every Oregonian now, and in the future, can enjoy the same opportunities. I’m grateful for the commitment shared by the Deschutes Land Trust, Latino Outdoors, and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts to connecting more Oregonians to the outdoors and the conservation movement.”

For nearly 25 years, the Deschutes Land Trust—owner and manager of the 930-acre Whychus Canyon Preserve near Sisters, Oregon—has worked collaboratively with local partners and the community to bring the long forgotten Whychus Creek back to life. The land trust is a member of the Deschutes Partnership, which with primary funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), has worked to permanently protect nearly 10 miles of Whychus Creek, return water to the creek, and initiate large-scale wildlife habitat restoration projects. Key to that success has been the community buy-in developed through local schools bringing their science classes onto the creek, as well as, expanded public access through trail development and guided interpretive tours. With outdoor recreation now a primary economic driver for Central Oregon, the land trust recognizes the importance of ensuring the broadest possible access for the community. For that reason, the land trust and a long list of community partners and agencies are now working with Latino Outdoors to initiate planning and programs that can encourage more people from **all** parts of the community to get outside and enjoy the land sustainably.

“Fewer and fewer Oregonians make a living on or from the land. Our future will be bright and strong if we all understand the lands we inhabit, embrace inclusive community partnerships and build a conservation ethic to help care for the land. Given our work with multiple state agencies, we appreciate the Governor and First Gentleman making the time to visit and understand the kinds of partnerships that are critical to Oregon’s future,” said Brad Chalfant, executive director of Deschutes Land Trust.

The collaboration aligns directly with the work of the [Governor’s Task Force on the Outdoors](#), and Mr. Little’s [Roadmap to the Outdoors initiative](#), which works to connect Oregonians—particularly youth—to

nature by diversifying the outdoors, identifying barriers to seeking or accessing the outdoors, and identifying strategies and action items to make Oregon's outdoors a more welcoming and inclusive space for all.

"Latino Outdoors is a national movement, driven at a local level, by dedicated and passionate volunteers hungry for change," said Zavi Borja, central Oregon program coordinator for Latino Outdoors (LO). "After hearing and learning about LO and having grown up in Madras, to now living in Bend, I knew that Central Oregon was in desperate need of this organization and its presence. Using LO as a platform to help foster, connect and engage the Latinx community into what it means to be outdoors, for us. Once there is that sense of belonging and connection to nature, we and future generations, from our community, can be a part of the stewardship and advocating that goes into protecting our Earth. The Deschutes Trails Coalition was the first organization to reach out about collaboration and what that would look like. By collaborating with them and other local outdoor partners, together, we will be able to break down many barriers, to further LO's mission and the overall mission that is, the outdoors IS for EVERYONE"

"Land trusts in Oregon work across our varied geographies to protect special places and connect more people to nature," said Kelley Beamer, COLT executive director. "Today's tour of Whychus Canyon Preserve was a great reminder of the ways conservation can strengthen natural ecosystems and also build community connections."

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About the Governor's Task Force for the Outdoors – Governor Brown created the first-ever Office of Outdoor Recreation in 2017 to coordinate outdoor recreation policy across state and federal agencies, and work with public agencies, outdoor recreation retailers, companies, and tour operators to help Oregon's outdoor recreation sector reach its fullest potential. In April, Governor Brown launched a one-year Task Force on the Outdoors to recommend policies, legislation and initiatives to support economic development in both rural and urban areas, balance improved outdoor recreation access with resource protection, and increase outdoor recreation participation, especially among youth and traditionally underserved communities.

About Latino Outdoors (LO) – LO offers free outdoor activities and supports people who are receiving their introduction to nature, creating a welcoming and family-friendly environment with outings that weave together aspects of culture, community, wellness, and connection. Guided by LO's theory of change, volunteers craft outdoor experiences that emphasize connections between people, place, and process. The goal is to inspire participants' conservation ethic and encourage their evolving engagement in outdoor recreation. LO believes these outcomes will arise naturally if individuals and communities have an equitable opportunity to play and recreate outdoors.

About the Deschutes Land Trust – The Deschutes Land Trust is Central Oregon's locally-based, nationally-accredited land trust. Since 1995, the Deschutes Land Trust has protected more than 9,100 acres for wildlife, scenic views, and local communities. For more information on the Deschutes Land Trust, contact us at (541) 330-0017 or visit www.deschuteslandtrust.org.

About the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) – The [Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts](http://www.coalitionoforegonlandtrusts.org) serves and strengthens the land trust community in Oregon, with 27 member organizations across the state. COLT builds connections and advances policies that help protect our natural world – our water, wildlife and open space – for all people, forever.