

Willamette RIVERKEEPER®

Testimony to the Oregon State Legislature - House Committee on Natural Resources

Re: HB 2835 - Improving River Access in Oregon

Chair Witt, Co-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Willamette Riverkeeper and our members throughout Oregon, I write to encourage you to support HB 2835. This bill would clarify and solidify the rights of the general public to access and enjoy Oregon's rivers.

River recreation is central to the lives of many people. Whether one seeks to fish for trout in a tributary of the Willamette, or seeks to paddle beautiful stretches of the Umpqua, gaining access to public waters, and passage along them is a basic right. HB 2835 seeks to clarify the public right to access rivers in the State of Oregon, and to freely pass along them.

Most people who access our rivers and creeks do so respectfully, and seek only the pleasure of a beautiful river. Typically, conflict with private landowners is something that seldom occurs. Instead of conflict being the issue here, the lack of good access points is more prominent. The many bridges and highway waysides in Oregon can make safe, and useful entry points to our rivers. This is a sensible use of infrastructure that already exists.

HB 2835 also sets forth the idea of safe passage around barriers. This is law in other states and it makes sense to make this explicit in the State of Oregon. If there is a barrier on a river, a person can briefly pass along the shore around the barrier, and get back in their craft. This kind of provision makes it clear to all what the expectations should be of river users, and landowners. It is clean, straightforward, and will help provide for safe river access and use.

As a canoeist for over 20 years, I've seldom had to exit my craft to get around an obstacle. In the few instances where this has occurred, it would have been nice to know that the State of Oregon helped to encourage a safe and sensible approach. HB 2835 does just that. I hope you will support this piece of defining river legislation.

Thank you all for this opportunity to provide our views on HB 2835. We appreciate your service to the State of Oregon, and your thoughtfulness regarding this and other issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Travis Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a loop at the end.

Travis Williams
Riverkeeper & Executive Director