



WaterWatch of Oregon
Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers

HB 2841

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon
by Kimberley Priestley

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
May 21, 2019

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

While WaterWatch very much appreciates the intent of HB 2841 to ensure the preservation and safety of some of Oregon's most vulnerable fish and wildlife species, we do have concerns about the unintended consequences of this bill.

First, we are concerned that the bill could unnecessarily impede access to legitimate requests for public records related to Oregon's fish and wildlife.

Second, we are concerned that the bill is overly generous in granting exemptions to its reach, which could potentially undermine the intended effect of the bill. The list of exempted entities in Section 2(4) is very broad, including the undefined "stakeholder." Under current statutes that grant ODFW the ability to refuse disclosure of information related to threatened and endangered species, the only entity that is statutorily exempt is the landowner (see ORS 192.345(13), ORS 564.130).

Third, there is no sunset that would force future assessment of whether the statute was working as envisioned (keeps sensitive information out of the hands of those that might harm wildlife, while at the same time allowing legitimate requests for public requests to be fulfilled).

In conclusion, while WaterWatch supports the intent behind this bill and appreciates all the work that has gone into it, we think this bill could use further discussion.

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