



February 11, 2023

Representative Ken Helm, Chair  
Representative Annessa Hartman, Vice-Chair  
Representative Mark Owens, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

**Re: NFS Supports HB 2966 with -4 Amendment**

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Harman, Vice-Chair Owens and Members of the Committee,

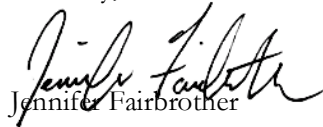
Native Fish Society<sup>1</sup> submits these comments in relation to HB 2966 regarding the management of bass by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Bass are an introduced and invasive fish which have come to flourish in rivers and waterbodies across the state. They are also voracious predators of native fish, often consuming juvenile resident and migratory species including salmon and steelhead. In many places, bass have been identified as a factor limiting the conservation and recovery of important native fish populations.

Managing bass populations more effectively has become a focus of ODFW, tribal nations, and angling and conservation groups. Efforts are underway in some watersheds to actively remove bass with the goal of reducing bass populations substantially enough to benefit native fish.

However, due to existing regulations and classification as a “game fish,” bass cannot be adequately managed. During tournament events, bass must be released live back into the waters from which they were angled. Rather, the state could benefit from enabling anglers and tourney organizers to instead remove bass which are angled during tournament events. Outside the context of tournaments, ODFW has instated no bag limits on bass angling. However, current classification as a game fish requires that anglers not “waste” fish that are harvested. HB 2966 -4 amendment will fully enable the removal of bass by anglers in areas where bass are identified as impairing native fish populations.

Native Fish Society urges the committee to support this bill with the -4 amendment. Doing so will improve the ability of ODFW, tribal nations, and recreational anglers to engage in efforts which can reduce harmful bass populations and contribute to the conservation and recovery of the state’s native fish.

Sincerely,

  
Jennifer Fairbrother  
Conservation Director

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<sup>1</sup> The Native Fish Society is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to restore abundant wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving local communities across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.