



To
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon

Sub: Opposition to HB 3086 – Relating to the State Fish and Wildlife Commission

Chair Helm, Vice Chair Owens and Levy, and members of the Committee

I am submitting this testimony in opposition of HB 3086 on behalf of my organization, Western Environmental Law Center. My organization opposes this bill because it moves the Fish and Wildlife Commission away from serving as an entity of proportionate representation of Oregonians and prioritizing their interests in fish and wildlife management. Instead, I urge you to consider the -1 or -3 amendment as a reasonable compromise.

The redistricting and the increase in a congressional district in Oregon led has led to this closer inspection on the Commission structure as the current statute would have been out of sync with Oregon's congressional districts. It is not a result of an inefficient or non-functional structure and therefore, should not be viewed as an opportunity to change the state's Fish and Wildlife Commission. We advocate for maintaining a structure based on proportional representation to ensure that the public interest in fish, wildlife, and habitat will be represented and that we have a diverse candidate pool that reflects Oregon's rapidly changing demographics. We advocate for a technical fix that requires minimal changes to the existing structure based on congressional districts.

We support the existing structure because the purpose of the Commission is to serve and represent the diverse perspectives of Oregonians. The concerns and points of view of all interested parties must be represented and considered, but ultimately, the primary responsibility of every board or commission member is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public. The structure of the base bill HB 3086 is based on river basin management areas – this model was created to serve an unrelated commission that deals specifically with water specific and related issues. This structure moves away from proportional representation most of Oregon's population will be represented by very few seats on the Commission. The river basin model moves toward a land and industry prioritization model rather than one where people are prioritized.

The proposed HB 3086-1 and -3 amendments don't resolve all of our concerns – particularly the language that would grant an at-large seat be appointed “with consideration for equity in the geographic distribution of the overall membership of the commission.” – we believe it represents a reasonable compromise between the land versus people representation argument even if the at-large seat is viewed largely as an east of the Cascades seat. We urge you to oppose the complete restructuring proposed by HB 3086 and proceed with the -1 or -3 amendments.

Thanking you

Sincerely

Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
Western Environmental Law Center
kamal@westernlaw.org