



KALMIOPSIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1265 • Port Orford OR • 97465

To: Oregon Legislature Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Ann Vileisis, President, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Date: March 30, 2023
Re: Support for HB 3202 Night Skies Protection Bill

Honorable Oregon House Transportation Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society. Our group has more than 400 members in Curry County who care about habitat for birds, fish, and wildlife, and our group has been engaged with local ordinances aimed at protecting our night skies from light pollution for more than two decades. We strongly support House Bill 3202 and urge you to advance it.

As in many rural communities, the towns where our members reside are located right on a state highway (Hwy 101), and so we have had specific experience with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) installing new highway lighting that is relevant to your consideration.

Though local citizens in Port Orford had long worked on a local code to protect the starry night skies from light pollution, ODOT has specific, top-down requirements for “highway” safety and so when the state agency recently designed lane upgrades for our community, we were confronted with the reality that fixtures designed for HIGHWAYS would be installed at crosswalks on the main street of our small town!

To be clear, although Highway 101 is a designated state highway, but it’s also the “main street” in our small town and just half a block from residential neighborhoods.

The regional ODOT staff worked with us, aiming to accommodate our town’s longstanding policy of protecting night skies, but because of top-down “highway” safety requirements, ODOT had limited flexibility. In our final agreement, ODOT did agree to “shielded” fixtures to reduce light trespass but still had to install tall, bright lights to illuminate cross walks—even though there is very little traffic and virtually no cross-walk use at night. We were asking for lower poles, less bright lights—or better yet, some alternatives, such as lighting bricks installed right in the crosswalk, or shielded lights triggered only when pedestrians are actually present. However, because of ODOT’s top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, they could only install fixtures deemed suitable for “highway” safety. The actual fixtures are yet to be installed in this project, but we know they will be taller and brighter than what local citizens had hoped for in our community.

This example points to the need for the Department of Transportation to work with a broader recognition of the values of night skies, even as it works to ensure public safety— and we hope this bill will help give clearer direction and guidance that will result in better outcomes.

We especially appreciate the provisions that direct the agency to consider alternatives such as reflective markings, lines, materials and signs; to emit only as much light as needed to achieve intended purposes; and to have a color temperature of 3000 kelvin or lower. New LED fixture that are much brighter and “bluer” in the light spectrum than traditional sodium vapor light fixtures make the last two provisions essential. And the direction to consider alternatives could result in cost savings as well.

Clearly a highway running through a small town is DIFFERENT from highway ramps in bigger cities with more night time traffic. And so, there is a need to consider better ways to address lighting so small rural towns don't lose the natural assets that are important for tourism and livability. Our region is now becoming a world-class destination for night-time landscape photography, and Oregon Coast Magazine has recognized the dark night skies along our coastline as an amenity for visitors. I am aware that some of our coastal state parks are also now considering ways to conserve the night skies to enhance visitor experiences, which this bill would also support.

There are many reasons to protect night skies from the detrimental impacts of light pollution— human health, wildlife health, conserving energy, and protecting the beauty of stars for reasons of both spirit and economics. The beauty of the night skies has moved people for millennia and if we can take some thoughtful, proactive steps to better manage our illumination needs, there is truly the possibility for a win-win outcome on many fronts.

Other states, such as Arizona, have already shown leadership and are much farther along in developing policies to reduce light pollution and conserve night skies, and it's now time for Oregon to work proactively on this issue now, too. For all these reasons, we urge you to please vote YES on H.B. 3202.

Thanks for considering our view and for your public service.

Sincerely,



President, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society