

Submitter: Paul Anderes
On Behalf Of: Eastern Oregon Counties Association
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure: HB3086

EOCA represents 14 eastern and central Oregon counties, comprising a significant majority of the land within the state's borders. Our constituents face unique challenges due the diverse and dramatic geography of the counties we represent. Together, our respective commissioners work collaboratively to advocate on behalf of those who live, learn, and work in Eastern Oregon. We aim to shape policies that recognize the needs of our region of the state and challenges we face.

Chair Helm
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Re: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Structure

Chair Helm,

The Eastern Oregon Counties Association (EOCA) represents a vast geographic portion of the state with many differing natural landscapes. Our constituents are directly impacted by the policy and rule-making decisions of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) Commission.

The current statute governing the representation of the commission members, ORS 496.090, must be revised now that Oregon has a sixth congressional district. Currently, the statute aligns the commission representation by population density, leaving two-thirds of the state underrepresented within the commission structure yet containing a large portion of the state's most necessary and impactful habitat and wildlife.

EOCA asserts that as a decision-making body tasked with managing wildlife and habitat across the diverse landscape of Oregon, the commission should equally represent that diversity in its structure.

The utilization of the five river basin management areas would provide an equitable and more diverse representation of the state. In addition to these five positions, the

current statute stipulating one at-large member residing west of the summit of the Cascade Mountains and one at-large member residing to the east of the summit should be retained to maintain the 7-member commission.

The five river basin management areas have statutory precedent in ORS 536.022 as the regional representation for establishing the Oregon Water Resources Commission. This model has provided equitable representation for all Oregon citizens regarding the imperative issues surrounding water policy and would do the same when applied to wildlife and habitat management policies.

A regional representation model ensures that all of Oregon's natural resources, wildlife, and habitat needs are included in a truly diverse and equitable commission structure. This ensures the best management decisions for Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and the public at large.

A recent glaring example of the disconnect between Commission members and the people they represent is their decision on the petition on coyote derbies. Thirty-one County Commissioners signed a letter urging the ODFW Commission to deny the petition. Yet the two ODFW Commissioners that "represent" Eastern Oregon voted to pursue rule making based upon that petition. Following that decision, there was no response to an email by EOCA to the ODFW Commission.

This is representation in need of a change.

Sincerely,
Paul Anderes, Union County Commissioner
Eastern Oregon Counties Association Chair