

Submitter: Matt Erickson

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB2206

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Committee Members,

My name is Matt Erickson and I grew up in the Coos Bay area. I regularly fished the Millicoma and Coos rivers, often filling up my gas tank at the southbound highway 101 Chevron before most people were awake. These rivers inspired me as a person and influenced who I am today. I view our relationship with these rivers as reciprocal. They provide us with a resource and in return we advocate for the watersheds which make these resources possible.

Salmon and steelhead have been inhabitants of this region since time immemorial, yet in just a short 150 years we have developed, degraded, and polluted their habitat in ways not favorable for the fish. This is not a viable long term conservation strategy. We need to uphold our end of the relationship and preserve the portions of quality habitat we have remaining. We owe this to the fish, and our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

I oppose House Bill 2206 and the proposed -4 amendment.

I understand that this legislation was discussed last session. As I understand it, the bill would streamline the process for developers to destroy fish habitat in one place, and then try to offset it in another place by re-building fish habitat from scratch. That's difficult to do and in many instances, probably wouldn't work as a practical matter. I think it's important to be clear that this bill isn't just about restoring salmon habitat – it's about trying to do that in one place so that habitat can be destroyed somewhere else.

A salmon credit program would require regular maintenance and monitoring forever, if we want to guarantee that mitigation credit sites truly function as offsets. In my experience, landowners in rural parts of Oregon that may want to engage in this program are going to hesitate about allowing this type of government overview of private land. And, to pose a rhetorical question: who would pay for that monitoring forever into the future?

From my perspective, the salmon credit bill is likely to lead to further development of estuaries and other salmon habitats, and result in short-sighted mitigation projects that don't work, or that work for a while and then stop functioning. House Bill 2206 sounds like a bad bill for salmon. I would rather see the legislature spend more time

focusing on true restoration efforts like fish passage barrier removals or private land habitat restoration that isn't part of a development mitigation program.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Matt Erickson