

REPRESENTATIVE ANNESSA HARTMAN (SHE/HER)  
HOUSE DISTRICT 40



## OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, members of the committee,

My name is Annessa Hartman, and I am the State Representative for House District 40, representing Gladstone, Oregon City, and unincorporated Clackamas County. I urge your support for HB 3086 and its -7 amendment, though I would also support the -8 amendment.

As it stands, the Governor appoints our Fish & Wildlife Commission based on Oregon's federal Congressional districts, in addition to one at-large Commissioner from east of the Cascades and one from west of the Cascades.

If we allow congressional districts to continue to determine the Commission's makeup, **one Commissioner will represent a total of 13 river basins**. In contrast, another would represent **slightly over two river basins**, and the rest would represent fragments of two to three basins—a far cry from the effective and equitable representation our rivers and wildlife deserve.

Under the current model, Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) are sorely underrepresented. COAs are geographic areas that have been identified as having significant conservation value and potential for conservation action. They are regions where conservation efforts can substantially impact biodiversity, ecosystem health, and the well-being of local communities. COAs serve as strategic focal points for targeted conservation interventions and prioritize the allocation of resources and efforts.

For far too long, political and environmental leaders have ignored the voices of this land's original stewards, favoring the opinions of Urban Areas over those of Indigenous leaders. Clustering the OFWC representation in Northwest Oregon exacerbates the current muting of Tribal voices because Tribal ecological knowledge of fish, wildlife, lands, and waters is place-based, meaning it recognizes each water basin's unique cultural, social, and environmental context. Structuring basin management through congressional districts significantly fragments river basin representation, making it incredibly difficult to have Indigenous knowledge meaningfully impactful.

Instead, we need to listen to Indigenous voices and structure the Commission based on regions more aligned with wildlife and habitat management. We must organize the representation structure to more equitably give Tribes a voice and encourage sharing Tribal ecological knowledge with the OFWC in setting fish, wildlife, and habitat policy.

Doing so will elevate ecological concerns over political considerations in the selection of Commission representatives and the development of State fish and wildlife policy, as the health of Oregon's fish and

wildlife populations and habitats are rooted in natural and ecological features such as watersheds and river basins, not on political considerations or voting power.

Place-Based Management is used by many other states and departments. I am such a proponent of place-based management because it empowers local communities and recognizes their invaluable knowledge and connection to the land. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making processes, we foster a sense of ownership and stewardship. This collaboration not only enhances the effectiveness of conservation efforts but also strengthens the social fabric and economic resilience of these communities, creating a win-win scenario for both people and nature.

By recognizing the uniqueness of each region and working together, we can forge a brighter future where nature thrives and future generations can cherish the wonders of our natural world.

I was not the original Chief Sponsor of this bill, and when this came through the Ag committee, like many bills that come through that committee, I was incredibly surprised at how these two perceivable “sides” again are warring against each other. And caught in the middle were our Tribal Partners. And their voices were and are continuing to be suppressed. So I approached Rep. Levy and Chair Helm to learn more about what is going on to learn about the historical context. I had to consider what I could do to help, and I asked Rep Levy if I could jump in with the hopes that I could bring us together and teach a little bit about Indigenous Sovereignty and our attempt to decolonize a commission.

You will hear from the opposition that the bipartisan River Basin approach—which has received well over 1,000 testimony submissions and is supported by 6 of the 9 Sovereign Tribal Nations—is anti-wildlife and will unravel progress that has been made. And as an Indigenous person, I can speak to the inaccuracy of that statement going to speak to that wildly inaccurate statement that this approach is anti-wildlife.

I am First Nations, Haudenosaunee, Cayuga Nation. Haudenosaunee people are raised with the creation story of Skywoman. From birth, we are taught to know that in our bones, we have a responsibility that flows between humans and earth.

We do not view the beaver as anything but a cousin. We don't view the wolf as anything but a brother. The river is a living, breathing highway for our water relatives. To us, everything has a spirit, and we don't walk in separate worlds. Since rivers cannot speak, and since the beaver cannot speak, we must give them a voice. There is a relationship with all living things that Tribal Leaders have always been able to intertwine our beliefs, science, and caretaking. So, when I talk about making sure all living things have representation, I am not just talking about people. I am talking about all my relatives. The river basin model offers us a chance to represent all living things adequately.

As silly as it may seem, I see many of the situations we are going through in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy story. Where you have warring sides who do not trust each other, each thinking the other does not have their best interest, it just takes one. One to extend their vulnerability of trust and, ultimately, peace. When we don't live in gratitude with the water, with our relatives, with one another, then conflict will only bring more conflict. We are only visitors to this land, stewards, and if we don't start to work together on things like water basin management and fish and wildlife management, then we will continue to not live in gratitude, and the earth will continue to hurt. None of us can change the past—we can only move forward.

In addition to six of Oregon's federal-recognized tribes, the river basin approach has received bipartisan support from several bipartisan legislators and stakeholder sectors, including the Coastal Caucus, the Sportsmen's Caucus, the Sportsmen's conservation community, the natural resources community, and the livestock producers community. This broad swath of stakeholders agrees that the only path forward for the OFWC is HB 3086's -8 amendment.

Overall, I believe that passing the -7 amendment will elevate ecological concerns over political considerations in the selection of Commission representatives and the development of State fish and wildlife policy, as the health of Oregon's fish and wildlife populations and habitats are rooted in natural and ecological features such as watersheds and river basins, not on political considerations or voting power. This is a matter of environmental and Indigenous justice. We must include and truly listen to the voices of our land's original stewards and those most impacted by changes to river basin policies.

I am very grateful that Chair Fahey and this committee have allowed space for this discussion. I urge your support of the -7 amendment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annessa Hartman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Representative Annessa Hartman  
House District 40 – Gladstone, Oregon City, North Clackamas County