

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

Oregon State Capitol

900 Court St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

Chairs Helm, Owens, Vice Chair Finger-McDonald and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your time today and for your service to the people of Oregon. For the record, my name is Tristan Henry, and I'm honored to represent the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. We are a coalition of sporting groups, conservation organizations, and outdoor enthusiasts dedicated to guaranteeing all Americans quality places to hunt and fish. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of the proposed legislation that updates and expands our state's aquatic invasive species permit requirements.

Why This Bill Matters

As you know, Oregon's waters are essential to our quality of life and our economy—they support thriving fisheries, power local businesses, and connect families and communities through boating and outdoor recreation. Yet these same waters face a growing threat from aquatic invasive species that can damage critical infrastructure, disrupt local ecosystems, and cost taxpayers millions in long-term control and restoration efforts.

In 2022, TRCP convened a diverse [Aquatic Invasive Species Commission](#) to examine these issues on a national scale. Our [commission's report](#) documented that early prevention is both more effective and far more affordable than post-infestation mitigation. By applying this principle here in Oregon, we can preserve the recreational and ecological values of our waterways for generations to come.

1. Closing the Permit Gap

What's Changing: Historically, Oregon's AIS permit only applied to nonmotorized craft 10 feet or longer, leaving out kayaks, whitewater playboats, and other small craft. This legislation removes that size threshold, requiring all watercraft carry the permit.

Why It Matters: Invasives don't distinguish boat size—a kayak can move zebra mussel larvae just as easily as a large drift boat. By requiring permits for everyone, we make sure all boaters share the responsibility of preserving our waters.

2. Strengthened Prevention Funding

Stable Revenue Source: Expanding permit requirements creates a more reliable funding base for boat inspections, public education, and rapid-response programs.

Technical Rationale: The TRCP commission found that each inspection can intercept thousands of larvae or plant fragments, saving Oregon from the exponential spread of species like quagga mussels, which can colonize power plant intakes, irrigation systems, and hatcheries. Every prevented infestation is a major win for conservation, often sparing us multi-million-dollar cleanup costs.

3. Long-Term Economic and Ecological Benefits

Cost-Benefit Reality: Studies show that controlling an invasive species once it's established can be ten times more expensive than preventing the initial introduction. For example, in the Great Lakes region, invasive mussels have cost local economies immensely in infrastructure damage and maintenance.

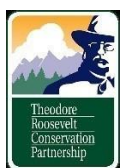
Recreation and Fisheries: Oregon's fisheries alone generate significant economic activity—anglers invest in licenses, gear, lodging, and local businesses. By protecting habitat, we safeguard commerce, as well as the experiences that connect families and communities to the outdoors.

4. Ensuring Equity and Shared Responsibility

Fairness Across User Groups: Removing the size limit means that anyone who enjoys Oregon's waters contributes to keeping our aquatic ecosystems healthy.

Conservation Ethos: This cooperative approach resonates with Oregonians' long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship and our proud sporting heritage. We all have a stake in preventing costly infestations—no matter how small our watercraft.

With this bill, Oregon can stay meaningfully engaged in the fight against aquatic invasive species. By modestly adjusting our permitting system, we will both increase the technical capacity of agencies to conduct effective inspections and reduce the future burden on taxpayers and water users. Importantly, it aligns with the key findings of TRCP's Aquatic Invasive Species Commission: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when it comes to safeguarding our waterways.



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