

Submitter: Karl Wenner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2977

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB2977

My name is Karl Wenner and I bring a couple of different perspectives on this bill. First as a farmer and rancher, I run a 440 acre cattle ranch and am partial owner of a 400 acre grain and potato farm in Klamath County. While our top priority is to run profitable businesses, we also recognize our responsibility for fish and wildlife stewardship on our properties. As a result we have tried to partner extensively with ODFW on efforts to enhance fish and wildlife habitat on our properties. From this experience I can testify first hand that while the department has skilled, hard working, and dedicated staff. they are woefully underfunded and understaffed given the immensity of the challenges facing our states fish and wildlife populations. We have missed many opportunities on our properties as a result. I can give specifics if you wish. This bill would go a long way towards addressing this acute and severe deficiency.

I have another perspective on this bill given that my wife has been the cochair of the Winter Wings Festival in Klamath falls for the last 30 years. This 3 day festival brought as many of 800 people to the basin to celebrate our wildlife. The vast majority were not locals and many came from different states and even different countries. These folks all stayed in local motels and contributed to the economy of the basin. This festival has been cancelled because of the acute decline of migratory birds and other wildlife in our region. This is directly impacting tourism year round in our basin and reducing revenue for our lodging industry.

This bill would allow us to enlist these visitors to Oregon to help us reverse the declines we are seeing in fish and wildlife across the state.

I thank you for supporting HB2977

Karl Wenner