

Testimony
SB 401
Emily Ackland
Environmental Policy Manager

The Association of Oregon Counties opposes SB 401.

Counties certainly support efforts to protect the environment; especially our waterways. County commissioners and judges understand the importance of having superior water quality and protecting fish habitat. However, declaring waterways as “scenic” sets up a cumbersome situation, particularly for county road departments.

Counties already obtain the necessary permits for doing road bank restoration, culvert replacements, and bridge work, etc. When a waterway is designated as “scenic” another review process must be conducted by yet another agency (Oregon Parks and Recreation) and the requirements are different for each segment of designated waterway. This adds expense and time to getting a project done. Furthermore, in the event of an emergency, (a bridge is washed out, or there is a slide) another set of requirements slows down response time.

Again, counties understand the value of our rivers and they do their work in accordance with state and federal laws that ensure our waterways are protected. A designated a segment of a waterway sets up a redundant process that is not necessary.