



May 15, 2015

Trout Unlimited Comments on HB 3217

Chair Edwards and Committee members-

My name is Tom Wolf and I am here representing the Oregon Council Trout Unlimited with 2800 members in the state. I am here today to voice Trout Unlimited's concerns about HB 3217.

- Although the purposes of HB 3217 to restore stream conditions are commendable, the actual proposal for artificial beaver dams may be counterproductive to the purposes of the bill.
- Artificial beaver dams are not likely to mimic all the desired functions of actual beaver dams. In particular-
 - Natural beaver dams allow fish passage for trout and other fish species to go upstream from the dam. The artificial dams will actually impede fish passage at least at certain water levels.
 - The woody material which comprises real beaver dams is an important food base for aquatic insects, which are important food for fish. Artificial dams are not made of materials which insects can feed on.
- Hydro-logically, artificial beaver dams are not likely to closely mimic beaver dams under the varying flows that these structures are exposed to. Natural beaver dams often erode away under high flows, which is important for the ecosystems of streams.
- There are many added benefits to actually having beavers. For example, beavers naturally maintain their dams. Beavers are also likely to be better at proper placement of their dams. Trout Unlimited doubts that we have adequate knowledge to know precisely to build the artificial dams to actually mimic natural beaver dams. Instead of just putting in an artificial "fix", we need to look at ways to improve the habitat in a natural way. We need to look at reintroducing beavers which will be able to build beaver dams in the way that adds to the ecosystem. Artificial dams don't mimic the important contributions that beaver dams make, either in providing food for insects, allowing passage, allowing flow and allowing the creating of natural riparian habitat. The importance of beavers on the natural ecosystem are vastly undervalued. They provide great values that cannot be replaced by artificial structures. I have included two papers that show the importance of beavers in history for the natural ecosystems.

Trout Unlimited's biggest concerns about HB 3217 is the lack of fish passage in the artificial beaver dams. Historically and ecologically, native fish in these high desert stream systems moved up and

down the stream in order to deal with the extremes of the climate in this area. Creating dams with no fish passage precludes these species from being able to pass up and down the river basin.

We ask that amendments be added to HB 3217, per suggestions of DSL and ODFW that would require fish passage within the bill. Without fish passage, these dams would not allow essential movement of these native fish species. ODFW and DSL have prepared a one pager which deals with many of TU's concerns about this bill.

In conclusion, if the fish passage concerns of TU are met, we will be neutral and not oppose HB 3217. We ask that these amendments be made for the maximum benefit of the native fish for passage in streams within this SE Oregon high desert ecosystem. As people work towards habitat restoration and native fish recovery in these systems, allowing fish passage at possible barriers is very important. Fish passage requirements must be made within HB 3217 for this bill to have the maximum benefit to the native fish species.

Sincerely,

Tom Wolf,

Executive Director

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited