

May 27, 2015

Oregon Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Chair Edwards and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3217, creating a pilot program for voluntary stream restoration efforts in parts of Eastern Oregon.

The 2015 Oregon Business Plan calls for a renewed commitment to Oregon's rural communities and natural resource based economies. In particular, it calls for "more flexible regulatory policies to help Oregon's 'frontier' communities take advantage of opportunities to improve ecological and economic health." HB 3217 does just that.

The pilot projects contemplated in HB 3217 would provide an incentive for private landowners to conduct beaver habitat restoration projects, bringing much needed investment to Harney County and facilitating the return of ecological conditions critical to the long-term economic health of frontier Oregon.

Last summer I had the opportunity to visit Silvies Valley Ranch to learn about the innovative watershed management approaches that ranch managers have employed, and to observe the benefits of these approaches to severely eroded streams, the surrounding landscape, and the productivity of the range. The results are remarkable, including reduced erosion, a return of natural streamside vegetation, and more productive uplands for grazing.

HB 3217 would create an incentive for other landowners to undertake similar voluntary stream restoration efforts at no cost to the State by simplifying the permitting process.

When it comes to restoring the economic and environmental health of "frontier" communities, there are no "home runs." Success will be achieved with lots of "singles." HB 3217 takes a model that has been demonstrated to work at Silvies Valley Ranch and expands it a little further in order to continue to test and refine the concept and extend its benefits.

I strongly urge you to support HB 3217. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Rogers, Vice President
Oregon Business Council
Director, Oregon Business Plan