



HB 1517

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Submitted to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

February 3, 2016

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources

WaterWatch opposes SB 1517.

WaterWatch agrees with the conservation community's many concerns with this bill; however we will focus our testimony today on Section 6 of the bill (pg. 34 of SB 1517 as introduced).

The policy of Oregon is to encourage voluntary improvement of fish and wildlife habitat. ORS 496.270. To encourage that, among other things, existing law grants liability immunity to operators, timber owners and/or landowners for damages resulting from any fish and wildlife improvement project done in cooperation and consultation with ODFW or OWEB.

SB 1517 seeks to change the liability immunity language, as do various iterations of amendments as we understand it. WaterWatch objects to any language that would reduce the landowner immunity currently provided by the statute or otherwise interfere with and/or chill worthy restoration projects with landowners. The protections provided in ORS 496.270 should remain untouched.

For this and other reasons WaterWatch urges the Committee to vote no on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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