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Oregon State Legislature  
Oregon State Capitol  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

March 13, 2017

Sent via email to:  
LPRO Analyst: Misty Freeman  
Committee Assistant: Derrick Wheeler

**Oregon Wild Written Testimony Re: Prohibiting introduction of wildlife species, HB 3232**

Dear Chairman Clem and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of more than 20,000 Oregon Wild members and supporters from across the state, we would like to submit written testimony for your consideration on [HB 3232](#), a bill that would damage the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) ability to carry out their mission of protecting and enhancing the fish and wildlife of our state.

Oregon Wild strongly opposes HB 3232, and any legislation which seeks to undercut ODFW's ability to restore native wildlife to their rightful place on the landscape.

**Concerns Regarding HB 3232**

This bill seeks to impose burdensome new bureaucratic processes on ODFW in order to weaken fish and wildlife recovery programs.

- Restricting ODFW's ability to carry out its mission – as written, HB 3232 undermines and restricts the existing authority of ODFW to pursue fish and wildlife reintroduction to suitable habitat within the state. Oregon has a long history of using active reintroduction as a tool to protect and restore our fish and wildlife. Oregon has successfully worked with interested members of the public to reintroduce or relocate numerous species, from bighorn sheep and mountain goats to salmon and western pond turtles. Indeed, the very existence of rocky mountain elk in Eastern Oregon today is due in part to reintroduction efforts in the early 1900's.
- Bureaucratic red tape – HB 3232 adds administrative hurdles that ODFW staff would have to go through before reintroduction or relocation could be used to advance fish and wildlife conservation. With the agency already facing enormous budget shortfalls, and funding for non-game species conservation nearly non-existent, it makes no sense to squander more of ODFW's limited resources on unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Commission commitments – Governor Brown's current struggle to ensure that the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission actually implements the 2012 compromise agreement it adopted to phase out Columbia River gillnets highlights another very serious problem with HB 3232. Portions of that bi-state agreement were approved by the legislature in 2013, yet late last year the Commission

abandoned the plan. This process has greatly eroded public faith in this Commission, and has called into serious question its ability to put fish and wildlife conservation ahead of politics. That HB 3232 would mandate ODFW staff to bring each species relocation effort up through a new Commission process underscores concerns that the intent of this bill is simply to block fish and wildlife recovery efforts in Oregon.

- Restricting fish and wildlife recovery – The burdensome new bureaucratic process of HB 3232 could effectively block any new endangered species reintroduction or recovery efforts in Oregon. This puts species like California condors, salmon, and western pond turtles at risk. Potential negative effects of this legislation include:
  - California condor: captive breeding programs like the one at the Oregon Zoo have begun to foster this keystone species' return to its native historic range across the Western United States. Currently, the Yurok Tribe is pursuing reintroduction just across the California border in Redwood National Park, and the Nez Perce Tribe is exploring reintroduction in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. Legislation like HB 3232 would hamper ODFW's ability to engage in these processes, or to explore recovery opportunities like releasing condors into the wild elsewhere in Oregon.
  - Salmon: numerous examples of successful salmon reintroduction efforts exist all across the state. ODFW has been deeply involved in efforts to bring salmon back to the upper reaches of the Klamath Basin, a program that could have enormous benefits for Oregon's commercial and recreational fishing communities. The Nez Perce Tribe, in conjunction with ODFW, recently released 500,000 coho smolts into the Lostine River in an effort to recover these iconic fish to a portion of their historic range. HB 3232 would have enormously complicated, and perhaps even blocked those efforts, causing further ecological and economic damage.
  - Western pond turtle: ODFW considers this a "sensitive species", meaning it faces threats from destruction of habitat. When development pressure, drought, or other factors threaten the survival of these animals, ODFW currently uses trapping and relocation as a tool to help ensure the species survival and ultimate recovery. The taxing process that would be imposed by HB 3232 would unnecessarily complicate and delay such efforts.

Chairman Clem and Members of the Committee, for these and other reasons Oregon Wild believes HB 3232 to be a misguided bill that would undermine fish and wildlife conservation in our state. Current laws and rules governing when and how ODFW uses reintroduction or relocation of native wildlife have been highly effective at both advancing conservation and engaging concerned Oregonians. Simply put, HB 3232 seems to be a solution in search of a problem.

If there are concerns the legislature has with specific species recovery efforts they should be addressed directly, rather than through a burdensome new bureaucratic process that further consumes ODFW's scarce budget and staff resources at a time when the agency is facing an historic funding crisis.

Sincerely,

Danielle Moser  
Wildlife Program Coordinator, Oregon Wild