

March 14, 2017

Testimony of
Robert Bailey, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition
On House Bill 3232, Relating to Introduction of Wildlife Species
Before the
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Chairman Clem, Vice-chairs McLain and Sprenger, and Committee Members:

Good morning. My name is Robert Bailey. As a board member of the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, I am representing the organization.

We have several concerns about HB3232.

First, Section 3 (1)(a) of the bill prejudicially limits the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to one criterion in deciding whether to authorize introduction or re-introduction of a wildlife species to an area in Oregon where it once was naturally present but is no longer. That criterion requires the Commission to determine that the introduction is “essential to the continued existence” of the species. We believe that is an almost impossible standard to meet and gives the Commission the ability to deny introduction in virtually every instance. It perpetuates a “not in my backyard” attitude which is a death sentence for species as they are eliminated from backyard after backyard with no chance of return.

Instead, we urge that the bill be amended to require the Commission to

- 1) base its decision on an assessment of a) the ecological effects of loss of the species in its native range, b) the potential ecological, cultural, and economic effects of introduction in the areas proposed, and c) the likely contribution of introduction to the viability and resilience of the species as a whole, and
- 2) approve the introduction if it determines that the introduction a) will contribute to the viability of the species throughout its range, b) will help restore ecosystem functions in the proposed introduction area; and c) is not likely to result in undue financial or social loss to communities in the introduction area.

Second, Section 3 (1)(b) requires the Commission, even before it decides to approve introduction, to adopt rules to establish “management restrictions, protective measures, or other special management concerns” including “measures to isolate and contain the population.” This is a recipe for failure and requires the Commission to begin with a worst-case scenario. We are not opposed to reasonable regulations through a stakeholder process that aims to minimize harm to both the species and the host communities. But we are opposed to measures that prescriptively limit the ability of the Commission to work respectfully with stakeholders to as

problems arise to manage these species consistent with natural functions of the species within its environment while protecting the economic and social interests of local communities.

Third, Section 3 (2) unnecessarily politicizes the process of introduction and the approval of the Commission. We expect members of the legislature to attend to their constituent concerns and for the Commission to fully communicate with legislators, especially the appropriate committees, on high-profile topics such as introductions of species. But this requirement presumes that only legislators in the area of introduction have legitimate interests in a notice of rule-making and perpetuates an “us vs them” attitude. We urge that all legislators receive notice of proposed rule-making.

We urge that this bill be amended to more fully reflect the ecological importance of introducing...or re-introducing...species that were once common in Oregon as well as the need to minimize effects on local communities, ranchers, farmers, and fishermen.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.