

Dear Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources:

I am writing to urge you to vote “yes” on the HB 2027 amendment. **As the owner/operator of the 40-acre Helen M. Thompson Wildlife Sanctuary** on the Deschutes River for the past 40 years, I can provide a detailed description of the special features of the affected portion of the State Scenic Waterway upon request. Bridges in this area would destroy the integrity of the riparian corridor, including documented Oregon Spotted Frog habitat. Please do all you can to prevent this from happening.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is actively exploring abolishment of environmental rules in the Upper Deschutes Scenic Waterway. OPRD’s rule abolishment would ultimately allow the Bend Park and Recreation District to construct a high-intensity bridge and trail system in this area. Disturbingly, OPRD has proceeded with this agenda against warnings from both the public and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists.

Legislative preservation of the Upper Deschutes is critical. The Upper Deschutes Scenic Waterway was consciously set aside by Oregon voters and must remain a protected area. Instead of honoring voter intent, OPRD is promoting development. This policy undermines the conservationist purpose of the Oregon Scenic Waterways Act. Further, abolishing environmental protections in Oregon scenic waterways would mark the beginning of an insidious trend. All Oregon scenic waterways are at risk.

Passage of the HB 2027 amendment is vital to ensure continued protection of the Upper Deschutes Scenic Waterway and to affirm Oregon’s commitment to rivers statewide.

Thank you for defending Oregon’s rivers.

Stephen E. Thompson, PhD

Director, Helen M. Thompson Wildlife Sanctuary

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