

From: Louise Hawker
To: [SENR Exhibits](#)
Subject: HB2027, regarding ban on bridges within Deschutes River Scenic Waterway
Date: Tuesday, May 09, 2017 1:07:15 PM

May 9, 2017

Chairman Dembrow, and Committee Members,

By: Louise Hawker
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Resident of River Bend Drive Neighborhood

I support HB2027, which prohibits a person, public body or local service district from constructing bridges on Deschutes River within certain segments of Deschutes Scenic Waterway.

The prohibition against bridges on this segment on the river was enacted based on the wisdom and foresight of long-time City of Bend residents who understood the unique and irreplaceable characteristics of this span of the Deschutes River. They were not, as Bend Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) wishes to portray them, archaic and out of touch. Further, this segment of the river is home to a multitude of wildlife that will be displaced just by the intrusion of bridge construction, as well as the existence of the bridge itself.

I have lived on my property for 40 years, so I have more experience with this span of the river than just about anyone. My riverfront property (50 feet wide at the river) and seven acres are on the east side of the river, immediately south of Bend's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and abutting the private Stephen Thompson land and the triangle of US Forest Service property where BPRD proposes to build the bridge and create a trail back to urban Bend. During those 40 years, I have personally witnessed elk, deer, otter, coyotes, beaver, mink, great blue heron, a myriad of duck species, Canada Geese, great horned owls, feeding osprey, nesting osprey, and several varieties of hawks, as well as other species I may have forgotten, living, feeding and using this river corridor. A delicate wetlands area is located downriver on the Thompson property. This wild and scenic section of the river must remain unspoiled. It would be a travesty to breach this section of the river for the convenience of mountain bikers and walkers. I walk the river trail on the west side within the City of Bend on occasion, and have no issue with driving there to access that trail. In addition, miles of biking, walking and hiking trails already exist on the west side of the Deschutes River in this area.

Further, the area proposed for the bridge currently does not include any road access. Those of us who live in the urban-wildland interface are acutely aware of the danger of wildfire. Land-based firefighting equipment would not have any way to reach these portions of the river.

There have been fires in this area, including the 1990 Awbrey Hall fire (in which I lost my home) and, six years ago, a fire started near the river by an arsonist. That fire came within 200 feet of my home. When it reignited in the night, it threatened several other homes. Increased human traffic can only exacerbate this threat.

The River Bend Drive neighborhood lies at the north end of the Deschutes County line in our area and, thus, outside of BPRD's district. We were not allowed to vote on the BPRD bond issue that included construction of the bridge. However, our quiet, rural neighborhood of modest homes will feel the greatest impact from the bridge. I can attest that people will seek the shortest route to the bridge via River Bend Drive, making that the de facto access. Rather than parking in a theoretical parking area on Buck Canyon Road (which is also outside the Bend UGB and not as yet approved by Deschutes County) and walking about a half mile to the bridge, they will park in our cul-de-sac, which is not a parking lot. The increased traffic will be a threat to the safety of our neighborhood, as well as blocking access for emergency vehicles.

Since River Bend Drive is in Deschutes County and outside the Bend UGB, we, as stakeholders, are not represented in this issue by any governing body. The County, as a policy, does not get involved in City of Bend or National Forest issues. The Forest Service does not acknowledge us as stakeholders or represent us in any way. The Oregon State Parks Department also does not represent us. So we are turning to the Oregon Legislature to represent us and carry our stakeholder needs forward.

In conclusion, legislators should also consider that eliminating this bridge exclusion would affect more than just Bend. If the Scenic Waterways Act can be weakened by a special interest group, then other developers in all parts of the state with special protections and Scenic Waterway designations will use this as a precedent to further appeal and dismantle these environmental protections. At this juncture in our County, we need to protect and defend those areas that make Bend and Deschutes County unique, and that offer quiet and solace – elements that attract tourists as well as residents. Recreation and convenience should not supersede wildlife and free, open spaces.

Thank you.