



Oregon

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**To: The Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**



House Bill 2321A
Shannon Hurn, Deputy Director for Fish and Wildlife Programs
Rick Boatner, Invasive Species and Wildlife Integrity Coordinator
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) would like to offer the following comments on House Bill 2321A.

HB 2321A would require a person to remove all drain plug(s) and drain all standing water from a watercraft before transporting the vessel within the state. Draining water from a watercraft at the location the water was taken on is a very simple way to reduce the risk of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). This practice can drastically reduce the risk of Oregon waterbodies being exposed to Quagga or Zebra mussels. Quagga and Zebra mussel veligers (larva) can live for several days in standing water. Removal of the drain plug is an important, but often overlooked tool that is needed in the arsenal of preventive measures to help protect Oregon waters.

However, the Department workload could be affected by the requirement to drain live wells before transporting boats with the new amendments. Staff and volunteers will often transport fish in boat live wells when performing research or transporting fish between waterbodies for fish stocking purposes. An exemption for the Department and authorized activities by the Department is critical to add to this bill. The Department reviews and authorizes the movement of fish thru transport permits that require knowing the locations fish are moved to and from, as well as the water source.

Previous discussion of HB 2321A has included the removal of the requirement for users of 10 foot or longer, non-motorized watercraft to purchase and have in possession an AIS prevention permit when on the water. The removal of the less than 10' exemption would be ideal and help in the consistent message that all watercraft, no matter the size or type, are capable of harboring and transporting aquatic invasive species. An amendment to remove the exemption based on length would also help generate additional funds for the AIS program. These additional funds could be used to increase inspection hours and personnel, increase monitoring efforts, and provide grants to help with AIS efforts for prevention, control, and eradication. If complete removal of the length exemption is not acceptable, the Department would suggest that the 10 foot rule be replaced with a 6 or 7 foot rule. This

change would exempt many individual type pontoon boats, most water toys, and some kayaks, but still apply to most of the vessels traveling between waterbodies that are currently inspected at the check stations.

HB 2321 would clarify the authority of watercraft inspectors as it requires a person to cooperate with decontamination of an infected watercraft. It provides under what conditions a peace officer can require a person transporting a watercraft to return to a watercraft inspection station or require a person to have their watercraft inspected for AIS. The check stations already post a white regulation sign as required by Oregon Department of Transportation specifications and the posted regulation sign states “Inspection Required for all Watercraft”.

At the watercraft inspection stations, the Department combines the definitions watercraft found in ORS 830.587(2) and in 830.005(2). Department staff inspect all motorized watercraft and non-motorized watercraft, which includes: drift boats, kayaks (all sizes), rafts, stand up paddle boards, and surf boards for both animal and plant invasive species. Staff also inspect floating docks such as “flexi- floats” which are used for heavy construction being done within a waterbody. Staff normally does not inspect water toys such as air mattresses, single inner tubes, and other type of float toys unless provided voluntarily. Float toys and one-man rafts are typically folded up inside vehicles and out of site, staff cannot get a visual identification to request inspection.

On-site decontamination of watercraft is performed immediately at the inspection station if an AIS is found. Decontamination can be as simple as hand removing plant material from the axle of a trailer or from the inside of a raft or kayak. However, if mussels are found, the vessel is scraped first and then “hot-washed” with 140° F water. Since the program began, staff has performed almost 100 hot water decontaminations; predominately on motorized boats, but also a few kayaks and floating docks.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committee with these comments.

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