



Feb.20,2017

Trout Unlimited testimony in opposition to HB 2786

Chair Clem and Committee members-

My name is Tom Wolf and I am here representing the 3200 members of Trout Unlimited here in Oregon and our 155,000 members across the nation. Trout Unlimited and its members are dedicated to protecting and restoring habitat that is crucial and important for sustaining wild native populations of salmon and trout. I am here today to state Trout Unlimited's opposition to HB 2786, as it includes language, that in our opinion, would remove certain waters of the state from protection and possibly lead to limiting efforts TU makes in protecting crucial salmon/trout habitat.

The language of HB 2786 would redefine the Department of State Lands authority under removal-fill law to only those lands that are included in the "Statewide wetlands Inventory" (SWI). The SWI is a small subset of wetlands throughout Oregon which fall currently under both federal and state regulations. HB 2786 would result in a more limited definition of protected waters in Oregon and could possibly be against current removal-fill policy goals stated in state law.

In 1967, the Oregon Legislature, with great foresight, established the removal-fill law to protect Oregon's wetlands and rivers/streams for fish species, habitat, water quality, flood storage and many other benefits for Oregon citizens. The responsibility for protecting these state waters was put into the hands of the Department of State Lands.

HB 2786 would greatly limit the ability of the Oregon Department of State Lands to implement this 1967 law. By relying only on the waters within the Statewide Wetlands Inventory, wetlands not mapped by local or federal inventories are not completely captured in the SWI. For example, small wetlands and most types of farmed wetlands, plus all waterways (streams and rivers) are not captured in the Statewide Wetlands Inventory. Thus, HB 2786 implies that many wetlands and waterways that were originally meant to be protected by removal-fill laws, will no longer be protected under the 1967 law.

So, for the dangers that HB 2786 could bring to state waters and the negative impacts on native wild fish, habitat and economic benefits from the fisheries dependent on them, Trout Unlimited implores the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to not pass HB 2786 out of committee. HB 2786 is an unnecessary bill that takes away key protection language for many wetlands and waterways in the state. Trout Unlimited, as the nation's largest coldwater conservation group, feels that protecting wetlands and waterways with good removal-fill laws is crucial-therefore HB 2786 is not needed.