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**Testimony to the House Committee
on Agriculture and Natural Resources on House Bill 2786**

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Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council opposes HB 2786 which scales back protections of Oregon's wetlands, rivers and streams.

Wetlands provide vital wildlife and fish-rearing habitat, stormwater filtration to improve water quality, flood storage and a range of beneficial environmental services. Recent studies from Oregon State University estimate a statewide loss of wetlands over time ranging from 57% in the Willamette River basin to 94% in the Klamath River basin. To protect and preserve the functions and health of Oregon's wetlands and flowing waters, the Oregon Legislature established the removal-fill law in the 1960's, effectively helping to stem the loss of wetland and stream habitat for the past 50 years. HB 2786 would significantly reduce those protections, opening the door to increased wetland conversion and damage to the state's rivers and streams.

The Statewide Wetlands Inventory, based on more than 30-year old aerial photography, provides a limited and incomplete picture of existing wetlands throughout the state, especially those wetlands that are small but still providing important functions. HB 2786 applies the removal-fill requirements to the wetlands identified in the Statewide Wetlands Inventory only, effectively eliminating protections for all others as well as the state's many rivers and streams.

We strongly urge you to maintain the current removal-fill law to protect Oregon's wetlands and waterways, and to oppose HB 2786.