

**John Stockham and Carol Schunk
2138 NW West Hills Ave.
Bend, OR 97703**

February 7, 2018

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Representative Brian Clem, Chair
900 Court Street, NE Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 4029

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger and members of the Committee:

We are writing about HB 4029, specifically Section 1 that calls for a ban on bridges crossing the Deschutes River south of Bend to access the Deschutes River Trail. We strongly oppose this section of the bill for the following reasons

1. This ban would conflict with the local adopted Bend Transportation System Plan, the Deschutes County Greenway Study, and the Bend Parks and Recreation District's Trail Plan. These plans have been in place for decades. Furthermore, the Deschutes National Forest Alternative Transportation Plan supports the bridge if environmental concerns are addressed.
2. Currently most residents accessing the river trail from Bend make an 11 – 16 mile roundtrip drive to reach the USFS Rimrock Trails trailhead. They drive further if they want to access other river access points. Taking this route by car involves increasing greenhouse gases from vehicle emissions, as well as adding to congestion in an already congested roadway corridor. These environmental impacts are far greater than those that would result from building a pedestrian bridge.
3. Many scenic waterways have bridges across them which in no way detracts from the visual experience or wildlife habitat. Bridges provide corridors for wildlife. The Deschutes Scenic River currently has a pedestrian bridge just upstream of Benham Falls and it enhances the user experience and gives access from Sunriver to USFS trails. Good examples of other pedestrian bridges across scenic rivers to access trails are the bridges across the Umpqua Scenic River, McKenzie River, Metolius River, all of which are national scenic rivers.
4. Data collected in recent years shows broad community support for a bridge and trail connection across the Deschutes. In a spring survey conducted in 2017, 72% of respondents were supportive of completing a footbridge across the river linking south to west trail systems, only 14% were unsupportive.

5. The proponents of this bill, Oregon Wild and a nearby property owner who has been the “loudest” opponent, claim a bridge would be detrimental to the environment and wildlife, especially migration patterns. This is ludicrous. There are many examples of wildlife currently using trails and bridges as migration pathways. (Bridge spans have been created over freeways for this purpose). Anyone living along the river can tell you that the migration patterns changed drastically when a housing development began along that section. Coincidentally the person who sold the land to developers is the “loudest” above mentioned opponent of the bridge and he has also sold a new plot of land along the river that is currently under development. Those developments have a much larger impact on wildlife than a pedestrian bridge. This is clearly a case of a small number of self-interested property owners acting in a manner detrimental to the rest of the community.

With all due respect, we feel that this issue should be resolved at a local level by the stakeholders that are most affected and local governmental agencies and not by the State Legislature. If passed as now drafted, this bill would be a prime example of a failure on the part of the Legislature to listen to local sentiments. We urge you to remove Section 1 from HB 4029.

Sincerely,

John Stockham and Carol Schunk
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