

House Committee on Agriculture and National Resources members:

I would like to address HB 4029.

This bill is obviously an extension of last year's failed HB 2027 gut and stuff. I appreciate that at least this year's bill was more openly submitted on its own instead of being injected into another like a parasitic wasp.

I can't help but notice that HB 4029 even contains the entirety of its predecessor, verbatim. However, it goes further with additional language meant to obfuscate and distract from the original provision of an unnecessary absolute bridge ban on a limited section of the Deschutes River.

The first of the additions specifies a process at the state level to control local trails. This would be like the federal government directing how trails in a state park are created. I suspect you would find that unacceptable. But let's ignore that inappropriate level of management for a moment. The intention of local trail system planning in this area is not just to connect Bend and Sunriver, but additionally (some would say more importantly) to connect southern Bend with Deschutes National Forest trails and sites west of the Deschutes River.

Additionally, this bill seeks to mislead one into believing that the bill is dealing with statewide concerns rather than regional issues by adding additional mandates for studies of other rivers around the state. While river studies aren't a particularly bad thing, these requirements seem to have only been added to help dispute that the bill is actually aimed at only a very small location.

Nobody disputes that there are valid environmental concerns in this area of the Deschutes River, just as there are in many other locations. There are processes and procedures, along with existing law, already in place to address those issues. Proponents of this bill want to short circuit those, apparently under the impression that the site of a suggested foot bridge is exceptionally sensitive and in need of unprecedented additional protection. If that were the case, why wasn't there some kind of bill previously submitted to restrict the creation of the 78-home subdivision currently under construction adjacent to this area? (See attached site plan diagram.) This subdivision also has a stubbed road leading closer to the suggested foot bridge site in order to support even more development in the future. This kind of development will have a much greater impact on wildlife and the environment than a small foot bridge.

Just like its predecessor, this bill should be rejected. Allow current laws, regulations, and planning procedures to do their jobs.

Lowell Von Ruden
Resident of Bend

