

## **Testimony of Oregon Farm Bureau**

**HB 2298**

**February 2, 2021**

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Farm Bureau supports HB 2298, which allows private landowners to conduct voluntary stream restoration without a burdensome permit from the Department of State Lands, and with strong sideboards to protect both neighboring landowners and our fish and water resources.

Many streams in Eastern Oregon have become eroded and down cut due to a myriad of factors, including loss of historic beaver influence. While beavers can cause significant issues for landowners in Western and Coastal Oregon, beaver activity in strategic areas in Eastern Oregon can help restore floodplain function and provide significant benefits to both stream ecosystems and to landowners. Artificial beaver dams include the strategic placement of structures that mimic beaver activity in key areas to maximize ecosystem benefits and limit any potential for negative impacts on landowners.

This bill allows for the placement of artificial beaver dams in certain closed basins where their placement will have a positive impact on stream and ecosystem health, but with significant sideboards that avoid any potential for negative impacts on neighboring landowners or on fish species, as they are not allowed where fish may need passage over the structures.

Our members have extensive experience with the existing permitting process at the Department of State Lands. Suffice it to say that if a landowner has to navigate that process alone for a voluntary ecosystem improvement project, the odds are very high that the time and headache of the permitting process won't be worthwhile, and the project will not happen. We support the state creating incentives and reducing red tape for habitat improvement projects such as artificial beaver dams, provided that the process has adequate protection in place for both neighboring landowners and for waterways. This bill has been extensively negotiated to protect fisheries, landowners, and our ecosystems while promoting important restoration activities, and OFB supports it.

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