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February 1, 2021

The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair  
House Committee on Water  
900 Court Street NE – H-490  
Salem, OR 97301

The Honorable Mark Owens, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Water  
900 Court Street NE – H-475  
Salem, OR 97301

*Sent Electronically to OLIS*

**RE: Support for HB 2298 – ODFW to Administer Program Authorizing Voluntary Projects for Stream Restoration and Habitat Improvement**

Chair Helm, Vice Chair Owens and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully offer this written testimony in support of HB 2298 on behalf of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA). OCA was established as a trade association in 1913 to represent the cattle industry and every producer member. Oregon's cattle ranchers are proud to provide quality protein to Oregonians every day of the year and have worked without interruption throughout the pandemic with cows and calves in every Oregon County.

The Association continues to focus on myriad issues of importance to our ranchers and stream restoration and habitat improvement are among the list of priorities. As we understand the premise of HB 2298, it provides ODFW with the authority to draft rules regarding construction, maintenance and monitoring of artificial beaver dams, which once fish are re-established, provides fish passage. It further limits the program to Eastern Oregon's small streams in closed basins that do not currently provide spawning, rearing or food producing areas for native redband trout (a species concern). As well as removes the general authorization for removal-fill law permits required for restoration projects on small, intermittent, streams.

As an Eastern Oregon rancher, I have witnessed the habitat restoration benefits as provided by weirs and artificial beaver dams which have enabled the conversion of degraded dryland sagebrush and juniper encroached rangelands back to natural riparian and wetland meadow ecosystems critical for supporting the healthy habitat needs of a variety of wildlife species (e.g. birds, native fish, and various small and large animals).

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association supports HB 2298 and urges the House Committee on Water to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Tom Sharp, President  
OREGON CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION