



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish & Wildlife

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**To: The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water**

House Bill 2966

Shaun Clements, Deputy Administrator Inland Fisheries
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide background relevant to House Bill 2966. The Department has no position on the bill.

The Department's mission is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. In some instances, non-indigenous fish can have a significant negative impact on the conservation of native species, either because of predation or competition. The clearest illustration of this currently is in the Coquille basin, where the illegal introduction of smallmouth bass has been associated with the collapse of the fall Chinook runs as a result of predation on out-migrating juveniles by bass. In these instances, the Department utilizes a range of approaches to actively manage to suppress the non-indigenous population. Angler supported suppression is one such tool, however its usefulness is limited because of statutory provisions related to tournament and waste of game or food fish.

HB 2966 will impact the Department's ability to manage for conservation of native species in situations like the Coquille in two ways. First, the provision in Section 1 will allow the Department to issue permits for tournaments in which the primary goal is the removal of a non-indigenous species in an area the Department has determined these species are having a significant adverse impact on the conservation of native species. Under current statute, the Department cannot authorize such tournaments as the fish must be returned in a healthy condition to the waters where they were caught.

Second, existing law prohibits the waste of any game or food fish. While this restriction is typically desirable, it also places practical limits on the ability of anglers to capture and remove large numbers of fish in an area where they are harming native populations. The -4 amendment to HB 2966 will allow the Department to waive this requirement for beneficial use of a non-indigenous species in an area where the Department has determined that the non-indigenous species is having an adverse impact on the native populations.

In summary, HB 2966 and the -4 amendment would afford the Department more flexibility to utilize anglers as a tool to suppress non-indigenous aquatic populations in areas where they are having an adverse impact on the native populations.

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