

Testimony in Support of HB 3086 – 1

Committee Chair Representative Kenneth Helm
Committee Vice Chair Rep. Mark Owens and Vice Chair Rep. Annessa Hartman
Committee Members: Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water
(aka The Almost Everything Committee)

David Moskowitz writing to you with my personal beliefs about HB 3086 and amendments.

As a young lawyer, I first testified in front of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 1991 representing the Northwest Steelheaders, and later as the years passed, I represented Oregon Trout, the Native Fish Society, the Wild Salmon Center, and as a lobbyist representing multiple organizations, and since 2016, The Conservation Angler. A dozen or so years ago, I was joined by my grade-school-aged daughter to support some angling rules before the Commission – giving her an early experience with public participation. She has been working on Senator Ron Wyden’s staff in Washington, DC for seven years – so I must be getting on in years.

As an advocate, one of the most memorable comments you can receive is when you are accused by other advocates of manipulating or improperly influencing the Fish & Wildlife Commission. It sounds like a serious charge, but as an advocate with the same tools and access as everyone else with interests at the Commission, I took it as a compliment.

In 32 years, that has happened fewer than a dozen times. Some might say I should look for a different line of work - but I say it says more about the consistency of the Commission over the years. The Commission has met at least 320 times over those 32 years (an average of 10 meetings a year), which means I may have been successful about 3.75% of the time. That is a low number but given that there are hundreds of stakeholder groups and 9 tribal nations all well-engaged, the Fish & Wildlife Commission holds a very full hand of responsibility but has a “super-abundance” of advocates who have helped them reach decisions along the way. All long this difficult path, the Fish & Wildlife Commission has increased access for the public and grappled with increasingly difficult issues created by an increasing human population, degrading habitat conditions and decreasing wildlife and fish populations (in most cases).

The reason there is the wide diversity of opinions for the Fish & Wildlife Commission restructuring bill is that many different stakeholders have a wide range of views about their work and their vision of the future.

I support the current overall statutory structure of the Commission and its focus on composition that represents Oregonians interest proportionately.

I do not believe that the 2023 Session is the right place to raise and resolve the multiple visions that stakeholders have for the F&W Commission.

The right course is to ensure the Fish & Wildlife Commission is constituted to match the 6th Congressional District while maintaining the proportional representation of this Commission - in which each Commissioner is statutorily mandated to represent not a specific region or landscape - but to represent the public interest of all Oregonians.

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In my personal opinion, informed by 32 years of working with the Fish & Wildlife Commission, SB 890 - a bill revising the Oregon Parks Commission membership – also based on the new Congressional District map - presents a sound and simple fix.

SB 890 awaits referral on Speaker Rayfield's desk in the House as it passed the Senate 25-4!

To address the wide range of concerns on qualifications, geographic equity, tribal relations and other issues, there should be a funded work group directed to meet in the interim to try to solve these myriad issues that this simple restructuring has kicked off - the 2023 Session is not the right place to properly resolve the complex issues being brought forward. Trying to do so would be an insult to the many stakeholders who hold a passionate interest in Oregon's fish, wildlife and habitat because conveying those interests in 2 minutes of testimony is insufficient.

I implore you to seek the simple fix to bring the F&W Commission into compliance with the statutes - with SB 890 as the pathway - and a funded workgroup to address the other issues "the Oregon Way" under the skilled and watchful eyes of the Oregon Consensus Center or a like entity.

Very Sincerely,

s/ David A. Moskowitz

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