



May 5, 2023

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Rules

Subject: SB 1095 – Testimony in opposition of SB 1095 unless reflected with the -1 amendment

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the committee

My name is Michael O’Casey, and I am the Pacific Northwest Region Deputy Director for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP). Inspired by the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, the mission of the TRCP is to *guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish* by uniting and amplifying our partners’ voices to strengthen policy for fish and wildlife habitat and enhance public access to quality hunting and fishing opportunities. We work with 62 organizational partners and 130,000 members nationwide. **The TRCP is providing testimony in opposition to SB 1095 unless language with the -1 amendment is included that mirrors the regional representation model described in HB 3086 with the -4 amendment.**

Senate Bill 1095 attempts to provide simple fixes for all commissions that are tied to congressional districts. After listening to the Public Hearing yesterday, the **TRCP is providing written testimony to state that we do not support pushing the conversations for the make-up of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Commission to a future legislative session** because there is already has a legislative fix and a clear pathway during this legislative session to address the restructuring requirements of the new congressional district.

[HB 3086](#) was referred to House Rules and is currently awaiting another hearing after an unbelievable swell of supportive testimony from over 1000 individuals earlier this session. HB 3086 with the -4 amendments would move the ODFW Commission away from congressional districts and align it with the more regionally diverse model of the five river basin management areas. As Representative Hartman states in her excellent testimony, *‘The health of Oregon’s fish and wildlife populations and habitats are rooted in natural and ecological features such as watersheds and river basins, not on political considerations or voting power.’* Regional representation, such as the utilization of the five river basin management areas, would provide an equitable and more diverse representation of our states incredibly abundant and valued fish and wildlife as well as the many tribal and rural voices that live intertwined with Oregon’s fish and wildlife.

I believe everyone who is working towards the future makeup of the ODFW Commission wants to see a Fish and Wildlife Commission composed of members who represent a diversity of backgrounds, experience, knowledge, and have a strong interest in conserving and managing wildlife in the public trust for all Oregonians. Currently, the statute aligns the commission representation by population density, leaving two-thirds of the state underrepresented within the commission structure yet containing a large portion of the state’s most necessary and impactful habitat and wildlife.

With HB 3086 and the river basin model, we can achieve a commission that has both a diversity of backgrounds, experiences AND we also get the added benefit of a commission that will have the necessary local knowledge of fish and wildlife habitat and populations at a regional level. Our state is blessed with a diversity of habitats that range from nearshore oceans and tide pools along our long coastline to the steep and deeply carved canyons of the Snake River in

Hells Canyon. **This approach would still ensure proportional representation for Oregon's population, as the Governor would still nominate commission members who are then confirmed by the Oregon Senate.**

In addition to the five positions specific to the river basin management areas, the current statute stipulating one at large member residing west of the summit of the Cascade Mountains and one at-large member residing to the east of the summit should be retained to maintain the 7-member commission. The five river basin management areas have statutory precedent in ORS 536.022 as the regional representation for establishing the Oregon Water Resources Commission. This model has provided equitable representation for all Oregon citizens regarding the imperative issues surrounding water policy and would do the same when applied to wildlife and habitat management policies.

We urge this committee to oppose SB 1095 and instead support HB 3086 as the base bill to restructure the ODFW Commission. HB 3086 has strong support from the majority of Oregon's Tribal nations, and we support the concept that Commissioners qualifications should include experience in working with Tribes and understanding the deep and lasting relationships Oregon's federally recognized Tribes have to lands, water, and natural resources that the Commission governs. Regional representation across the State and qualifications for an understanding of natural resources and tribal knowledge will ensure that appointed Commissioners will understand the unique challenges facing landscapes east of the cascades.

The TRCP believes this long-awaited update will pave the way for a truly diverse Commission structure, ensuring that management decisions for all of Oregon's awe-inspiring natural resources, wildlife, and habitats are well-represented. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the makeup for the guiding body of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Sincerely,



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