



## House Committee on Rules Re: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Structure

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, Members of the Committee,

The undersigned organizations represent a broad and diverse section of stakeholders who are invested in, and affected by, the policy and rule-making decisions of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) Commission.

The current statute governing the representation of the commission must be revised due to Oregon's addition of a sixth congressional district. That statute, housed in ORS 496.090, aligns Commission representation by human population, leaving two-thirds of the state under-represented yet containing a large portion of the Oregon's most necessary and impactful fisheries, wildlife, and habitat, as well as 77% of Conservation Opportunity Areas acreage, as identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. It is our assertion that a decision-making body tasked with managing fisheries, wildlife, and habitat across the diverse landscape of Oregon must equally represent that diversity to better address the agency's conservation needs and opportunities.

The regional representation found in HB 3086's five river basin model would provide an equitable and more diverse representation of the state thus ensuring the best management decisions for Oregon's fisheries, wildlife, habitat, and the public at large. The five river basin management areas have statutory precedent in ORS 536.022 as the regional representation for 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 fisheries, wildlife, and habitat management policies.

The -7 amendment, which offers the reasonable option of changing the two at-large positions to statewide positions, rather than the previous east/west delineation, provides a necessary stipulation that those two positions may not be housed in the same river basin area. We support the -7 amendment as it aligns with our consistent belief that diverse representation is necessary for the ODFW Commission. Making the at-large positions statewide creates more opportunity for Oregonians from around the state to serve in the capacity of commissioner while also ensuring that no single river basin receives disproportional representation.

HB 3086 does not alter the appointment process by which the Governor appoints commission nominees who are then confirmed by the Senate. This ensures Oregonians' continued representation throughout the appointment process through our elected officials.

The statutory update needed to bring the ODFW Commission into compliance must be done within this session. While the Department of Justice has stated the ODFW Commission is currently operating legally, four of the seven members are up for reappointment within the next six months. The Governor must have clear representational framework to reappointment members into the correct regions. To delay the process is to delay the needed structure for the appropriate management of fisheries, wildlife, and habitat around the state.

We, the undersigned, are stakeholder organizations representing conservation, sportsmen/women, natural resources, livestock producers, land managers, and local governments. Our organizations stand with the six Tribes that have gone on record in support of the river basin model, as well as the legislators who have championed bipartisan support for HB 3086.

We urge your support for HB 3086-7 and a Commission structure that provides Oregon's fisheries, wildlife, and habitat with the diverse regional representation needed to ensure proper management of the State's resources.

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