

May 23rd, 2023

Testimony before the House Committee on Rules

Subject: Support HB 3086 with the -7 amendment

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Kropf and Breese-Iverson, 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, 130,000 members nationwide, and more than 4,500 in Oregon. **The TRCP is providing testimony in strong support for HB 3086 with the -7 amendment that utilizes a watershed based regional representation model.**

[HB 3086](#) has generated an unbelievable swell of supportive testimony from over 1000 individuals so far this session in support of the regional model. HB 3086 with the -7 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, through 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.

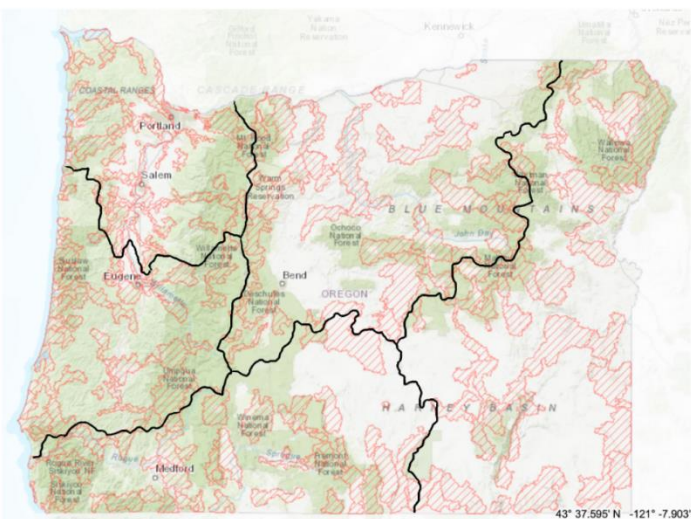
With HB 3086 and the river basin model, we can achieve a commission that has both a diversity of backgrounds, experiences AND we also get the added benefit of a commission that will have the necessary local knowledge of fish and wildlife habitat and populations at a regional level. Our state is blessed 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 support HB 3086-7 and pass this bill to restructure the ODFW Commission. HB 3086-7 has strong support from six 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.



Conservation Opportunity Areas - River Basins

Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) are places where broad fish and wildlife conservation goals would best be met. Focusing investments in these prioritized areas can increase the likelihood of long-term success, maximize effectiveness over larger landscapes, improve funding efficiency, and promote cooperative efforts across ownership boundaries.

-Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife website

Sincerely,

Michael O'Casey

Deputy Director, PNW Region

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

70633 Holmes Road

Sisters, Oregon 97759

Phone (541)-668-2316

Web www.trcp.org

Email mocasey@trcp.org