



Oregon Sportsmen's Caucus

Bipartisan, Bicameral

Promoting Fish & Wildlife Conservation, Sporting
Access, while Defending our Time-Honored Traditions

May 18, 2023

The Honorable Tina Kotek
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301

Madam Governor,

We are writing to urge you to support the river basin model for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission (OFWC). The members of the Oregon Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus are united in the belief that the OFWC, as the decision-making body tasked with managing Oregon's fisheries and wildlife, should better represent the regional diversity of the state in its representative structure.

HB 3086's river basin management area model would provide an equitable and more diverse representation of the state, opening up border opportunities for participation from Tribes located in areas outside the current congressional district model. The river basin model has statutory precedent (ORS 536.022) and provides equitable representation for all Oregonians regarding water policy. Water, fisheries, wildlife, and habitat are closely linked, making this representation model an appropriate choice when applied to wildlife and habitat management policies.

The current congressional district model places more emphasis on human population demographics rather than the fisheries and wildlife populations, conservation opportunities, and management issues which vary depending on the regions of the state.

Expanding the regional representation of the OFWC expands the opportunities for involvement for all Oregonians interested in conservation and management of fisheries and wildlife, not simply those who are located in the most population-dense areas of the state.

HB 3086 has support from a broad coalition of stakeholders in the conservation, sportsmen, and natural resources communities, as well as six of Oregon's Tribes. The Coquille Indian Tribe, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Siletz Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, the Burns Paiute Tribes, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are on record in support of OFWC representation by major river basin geography and oppose expanded congressional district-based representation.

Tribal ecological knowledge of fish, wildlife, lands, and waters is place-based and is mirrored by the river-basin model of representation. The representation structure must be organized to empower sharing of the Tribal ecological knowledge with the OFWC in setting fish, wildlife, and habitat policy. State law directs the OFWC to provide for "the productive and sustainable utilization of wildlife resources for *all groups of users*" (ORS 496.090(6)). Tribal use and needs vary across the state. Non-tribal use and needs vary across the state.

Clustering the OFWC representation to Northwest Oregon exacerbates the current muting of Tribal voices.

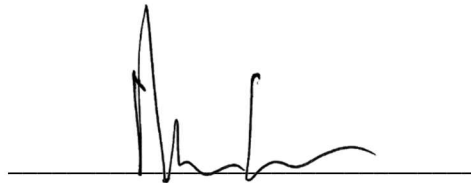
HB 3086 does not alter the power of the Governor to appoint members of the OFWC, nor does it change the role the Senate holds in confirming those appointments. We are confident in the representation of Oregonians through this structure of appointments and confirmations, as assigned in statute to our elected officials.

Therefore, the Oregon Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus submits our strong request for Governor Kotek to support the river basin model for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission. The Sportsmen's Caucus will remain engaged in the effort to support HB 3086 with provisions for Tribal recognition. We encourage you to increase diversity and equity with better regional representation through the river basin model put forth in HB 3086.

Sincerely,



Sen. David Brock Smith, Co-Chair



Rep. Mark Owens, Co-Chair



Sen. Bill Hansell



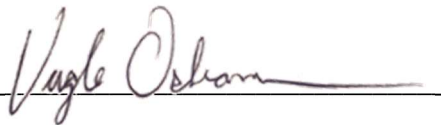
Rep. Court Boice



Rep. Boomer Wright



Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis



Rep. Virgil Osborne



Rep. Ed Diehl



Rep. Jeff Helfrich



Rep. Hai Pham



Rep. Bobby Levy