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4/10/17

TO: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
RE: HB 3228 State Wildlife Policy

Please pass HB 3228 which would clarify state wildlife policy requiring the ODFW to first and foremost prevent "serious depletion" of our wildlife resources.

I have lived along the Upper Nestucca River Scenic Waterway for over 30 years and have witnessed firsthand the destructive nature of ODFW's management policies. Since the expiration of former Governor Barbara Roberts tenure, the agency has embarked on a downward spiral despite my best efforts to influence sound management policy.

It is remarkable that ODFW has repeatedly ignored pointed advice from DOJ to the contrary but harvest and license sales have taken the highest priority for the beleaguered agency. HB 3228 would be an important starting point for bringing the agency's rogue behavior in line with their own attorney's legal advice.

Equally important would be the need to ensure Commissioners are selected who will discontinue the harmful practice of "rubber stamping" staff's continued mismanagement of resources for the sake of maintaining budget priorities.

Even if HB 3228 were to become law we need to ensure that ODFW's disregard for the law, as acknowledged by DOJ, is brought under control. Ultimately, this is a task for the Commission and it is troubling that for some 20 years now the Governors and Senators responsible for appointing Commissioners have chosen to maintain the status quo.

Arguably, a primary criticism of the bill may be that it provides too little, too late. But the sheer number of species and populations of wildlife listed under the Endangered Species Act provides a sound basis for the legislature to compel the agency into compliance with both state and federal law.

The agency's opposition to HB 3228 is additional evidence that fundamental change is needed. The agency is in clear denial of the fundamental fact that conservation leads to opportunity and not the other way around.

I suspect Governor Roberts and her capable Natural Resources Advisor, Anne Squire, would look favorably upon HB 3228. We accomplished a great deal during her administration only to see much progress undone, including the departure of the agency's most talented staff.

Please pass HB 3228!

Thank you very much,

Les Helgeson