
From: David Dobkin <dsdobkin@hderi.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 7, 2018 5:36 PM
To: HAGNR Exhibits
Subject: In support of HB 4029

Dear Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

I write to urge your support of HB 4029 to prohibit construction of bridges across a designated Scenic Waterway, specifically the Deschutes River segments covered by HB 4029. Granting an exception to the prohibition against construction of bridge crossings within the Deschutes Scenic Waterway, as requested by the Bend Park and Recreation District, will adversely impact critical ecological and wildlife values in the riparian corridor, and set a terrible precedent for weakening protections of designated Scenic Waterways in Oregon. It is entirely appropriate for the legislature to intervene and strengthen protections on state scenic waterways, fragile resources treasured by many and belonging to all Oregonians.

As a professional research scientist, I have worked extensively with federal and state land-management agencies to design and conduct ecological studies of riparian ecosystems for more than 30 years throughout the Intermountain West. My research on riparian wildlife and plant communities is published in numerous peer-reviewed scientific journals and underpins both federal and state management decisions seeking long-term conservation and sustainability of our natural resources.

As a resident of Bend since 1992, I have witnessed the decline and loss of habitat quality along portions of the Deschutes River, and the consequent decline in wildlife abundance and species richness associated with extensive recreational use of the trails along the Deschutes in the Bend area. Recreation and development along much of the river have seriously compromised the ecological integrity and functionality of the riparian corridor for native wildlife. This is not simply my opinion, this is fact.

The adverse impacts on native plants and wildlife have been especially evident over the past 15 years on the west bank of the river from the Bill Healy Bridge to the end of the developed trail. Immediately upstream from where the developed trail ends to the Bend Urban Growth Boundary, there is no developed trail and only very limited public access on the west side of the river due to contiguous private properties. The riparian plant and wildlife communities along the latter section of the river contrast dramatically with the downstream communities by having comparatively higher densities and greater structural diversity of native woody vegetation, and consequently greater abundances and diversity of native wildlife. In addition, the riparian plant community of this section provides critical cover and food for mule deer and serves as a vital spatial link in their seasonal migration between winter and summer habitat.

In summary, a bridge across the designated Deschutes River Scenic Waterway between the UGB and the south end of the developed trail on the west-bank would create the same adverse ecological impacts from heavy recreational use already seen along the river downstream from where the current trail ends. Such impacts would compromise the ecological functionality of the most important remaining riparian habitat on the south side of Bend.

Respectfully submitted,

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