



February 8, 2018

RE: Oregon League of Conservation Voters Support for HB 4029

Dear Chair Clem and Committee Members:

My name is Paige Spence and I am here on behalf of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. In 2013, the League launched the Central Oregon Conservation Network, a growing coalition of local organizations that work together to adopt Priorities for a Healthy Central Oregon. That coalition works in concert with its member organizations, elected officials and community members to improve environmental outcomes in Central Oregon. Oregon Wild, who you have heard from, is a COCN member.

In considering legislation for this session, COCN supported even stronger protections for State Scenic Waterways, but has made compromises leading to this bill. While HB 4029 is not everything we'd like to see for river conservation, it's a good bill and we support it. Any effort to weaken public lands and rivers protections is a red flag. A bridge at this location is simply inconsistent with both the State Scenic Waterway protections and the congressional Wild and Scenic River designation that our beautiful Deschutes River is afforded. Weakening either of these protections in order to build a sprawling bridge is problematic and not in line with Oregon values.

HB 4029 continues the existing ban on new bridges over reaches of the Upper Deschutes River that are designated State Scenic Waterway. The existing administrative rule, that bans new bridges, was put in place more than 20 years ago and passing HB 4029 would ensure this stretch of river can be protected for many more years.

Oregon State Parks has already undergone two public processes that included stakeholder groups in the past three years. They've held open houses and public meetings to discuss this issue. Each time the conclusion was to maintain current river protections. I urge you now to continue those protections by passing this bill.

In closing, my COCN colleague in Bend, Nikki Roemer, wasn't able to make it today but she wanted me to share a relevant and memorable wildlife encounter she had: Not long ago, she was recreating right near the Deschutes river corridor in question and saw a

herd of over 100 elk. This was one of her most memorable wildlife experiences ever in central Oregon. Thank you for considering this bill which is a small piece of the puzzle to help Oregon's wildlife thrive.

Sincerely,

Paige Spence