



Legislative Report

Representative Brad Witt



February 4, 2011

www.leg.state.or.us/witt

E-Newsletter Volume 5, No. 2

rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

Hi Everyone,

This past Wednesday, I had the honor of testifying before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources in support of HB 2831, a bill that I introduced to protect large, woody debris in riparian zones around our state. Currently, the Department of State Lands regulates the placement but not the removal of large wood. Large wood in stream, river, wetland, lake and estuarine systems is very important in the ecosystems that protect fish and wildlife habitats.

The need for this bill takes us back almost two decades to the mid 1990s when the federal government was on the brink of listing Oregon's Coho salmon as a "Threatened and Endangered" species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ramifications would have been devastating to our economy. Quite literally, we were faced with the potential closure of entire industries.

Having been responsible for the natural resources policy affecting over 170,000 AFL/CIO members during the 1990s, the specter of massive layoffs across the forest and construction industries caused me more than a few sleepless nights. The collective alarm expressed by all the stakeholders, including employers, natural resource agencies, labor, environmentalists, fisheries advocates and concerned citizens, led to the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (1996-97).

Under this program, Oregonians' collective action saved not only salmonid habitat but also businesses, jobs and our economy. Fast forward to last Sunday's Oregonian Commentary entitled quite simply, yet arrestingly, "The Reckoning." Author, Paul Van DeVelder wrote about Judge Redden's impending ESA decision expected to be handed down on salmon recovery later this spring. According to the author, Judge Redden's decision "promises to be as momentous as any court-ordered environmental remedy in our lifetimes." I agree with that assessment.

Despite our best efforts in the 1990s, the author describes a number of missed opportunities in the ensuing years that have punted salmon recovery to Judge Redden. The article leaves us feeling a need to regain control of salmon recovery, and our own destinies, before harsh federal mandates overtake both. HB 2831 is intended to be an effective first step for doing precisely that. For those concerned about impacts to farming operations and home sites adjacent to streams, two amendments have been offered to:

- Exempt removal that is dangerous to human structures, property, life or livestock

- Exempt the relocation of large woody debris that impedes business operations or transportation

I'll keep you posted on the bill as it moves forward.

Bills of Interest...

HB 3241 Prohibits picketing of funeral service, burial service or other memorial service and engaging in activities that are disruptive of service within 300 feet of property line of establishment where service is conducted.

HB 3295 Allows city to order cessation of alcoholic beverage sales or other operations at premises licensed for full or limited on-premises sales upon reasonable belief that continued sales or operations are immediate threat to public safety.

HB 3300 Establishes a Task Force on Investment Account Protection for senior citizens.

HJR 29 Proposes amendment to Oregon Constitution modifying amount of lottery income dedicated to funding parks and natural resources.

HJR 27 Recognizes need for Veterans Remembered Flag.

In the District...

This past Thursday, the South Columbia County Chamber recognized a number of volunteers who have given their time and talents repeatedly to the community. To those who received recognition at the Awards Banquet, thank you for all that you have done and for all that I know you will continue to do. You are the best! Congratulations from a grateful community!

- ❖ Bill Blank, Scappoose 1st Citizen (James Grant Watts Award)
- ❖ Keith Locke, St. Helens 1st Citizen (Henry Knighton Award)
- ❖ Oregon Aero, Business of the Year (HF McCormick Award)
- ❖ Ace Hardware, Chairman's Award (Swep Morton, Jr. Award)
- ❖ Beth Pulito, Outstanding Scappoose Community Club Member
- ❖ Kevin Owens, Kiwanis Award
- ❖ Tonya Arnold, Educator of the Year – St. Helens
- ❖ Courtney Scott, Educator of the Year – Scappoose

Have a great weekend, everybody and thanks for taking the time to read my newsletter.



At the Chamber Awards Banquet...



Courtney Scott, Scappoose Teacher of the Year



Bill Blank, Receive Scappoose 1st Citizen Award



Kieth Locke receiving the St. Helens 1st Citizen Award



Michael Dennis, Oregon Aero, Business of the Year Award



Tony Arnold, St. Helens Teacher of the Year

At the Knappa Schools Auction...



Shawn Teevin, MC at the very successful Knappa Schools Auction.