

# Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



Recently I carried HB 3035, my anti-poaching bill, on the House Floor. This bill increases penalties when poaching occurs intentionally, knowingly or recklessly, and represents one of the most important steps our state can take to protect our valuable fish and wildlife resources.

HB 3035 seeks to curb the wanton slaughter of animals for trophy racks, out-of-state money for hire, spree killing or repeated violations by elevating some poaching violations from misdemeanor penalties to Class C Felony charges.

These higher penalties would be imposed if the poaching crime occurs:

- Knowingly, intentionally or recklessly
- To sell or profit from the exchange or sale
- If the poaching occurs repeatedly... if the animal is the second poached and each subsequent poaching of a game animal in a 12 month period
- Is a moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, or wolf
- Is a threatened or endangered wildlife species

HB 3035 also seeks to impose higher penalties on fishing violations including:

- For the 3<sup>rd</sup> and each subsequent illegal taking of game fish by limit in 12 months
- The illegal taking of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent taking of a steelhead in 12 months
- The taking of a green or white sturgeon

The state of Washington already classifies the crime of poaching as a felony, and Oregon's misdemeanor penalties are not strong enough to prevent the serial killing of game animals. This became evident last year when a host of international headlines detailed the wildlife spree killing in the Pacific Northwest. A ring of individuals were indiscriminately killing wildlife in Oregon and Washington and posting their "thrill-kill" videos online. After they were arrested, the Washington Post described it as "A Demented Social Club" of poachers that slaughtered hundreds of animals in the Pacific Northwest.

HB 3035 does not target the accidental poacher, or a person that takes a fish or game animal without a culpable mental state. It specifically targets bad actors who know what they are doing and then knowingly, intentionally, and recklessly slaughter our fish and wildlife.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says that in addition to the

threatened and endangered species, all wildlife species are vulnerable to the impacts of poaching. In fact, they say for some species poaching kills more animals than the legal harvest levels set by the department. HB 3035 is supported by our hunting and fishing communities who agree that true sportspeople obey the laws and adhere to harvest quotas set by the state to sustainably manage wildlife resources. It is supported by the Oregon State Police and Justice Department to provide more adequate enforcement options. Conservation groups also support this legislation, because they value our natural resources and understand the importance of their preservation. I was pleased when colleagues from both parties stood up to speak in favor of this legislation, and the bill passed overwhelmingly with a 58-2 vote. It now moves to the Senate for consideration.

As Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, I recently took a few moments to acknowledge the highly successful work completed by our committee members during the first half of the 80<sup>th</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly.

In keeping with my goal to make Oregon a leader in natural resource conservation, the committee took up a variety of important issues and passed out of committee 46 bills to protect, enhance, and sustain our natural environment. This legislation included:

- Boat and wildlife inspection stations to stop the spread of invasive species and diseases
- Willamette River Greenway wake management plan
- Ban on Chronic Wasting Disease products
- Comprehensive shellfish management program
- Aggressive anti-poaching campaigns
- Wildlife corridor action plan

These seven legislative efforts, by themselves, place Oregon at the forefront of natural resource management and conservation efforts in our nation. Many of the others will define the future of our state's natural resources for decades to come.

Our committee protected fish, wildlife, and their habitats from a host of diseases, poaching, fragmentation, and harassment. We also created the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund to "protect, maintain, and enhance" our state's fish and wildlife. On the marine side we enhanced stream nutrients and fish propagation while developing a comprehensive shellfish information, enforcement, and education program. We

also undertook efforts to protect our forests and nursery stocks from the ravages of the Sudden Oak Death disease.

Waterway public safety efforts were enhanced by our committee as we moved to: register boat liveries, make helmets available to passengers traversing challenging water classifications, requiring boater education cards as a prerequisite to boat operations, increasing penalties for boating under the influence, and making some of our lakes accessible by electric motor.

Our Committee also protected Oregon's waterways from invasive species, and Willamette River shorelines from excessive wakes. We encouraged voluntary eastside stream restoration weirs and endeavored to keep the public informed about waterway access opportunities. In addition to waterway safety, we also protected the public from: unsafe dams, incorrectly-drilled wells, and wildfires in the urban-forest interface.

We also enhanced recreation opportunities in Oregon by:

- "Closing the gap" on the Cascade Crest Trail by supporting a bike/pedestrian lane on the Bridge of the Gods
- Adjusted the allocation of left-over game mammal tags
- Extended the landowner damage program to address elk depredation
- Supported a host of ODFW's proposed license and tag changes

Our committee was also responsive to the needs of Oregonians around the state who have natural resource issues. As a result, we approved bills to fund sediment studies on the Rogue River, install stream gauges on the Klamath River, and finally, to support the recycling of landfill cover materials.

The public policy that our Committee managed to shape in 11 short weeks is the definition of success. I would match our record of accomplishments against that of any other legislative committee across our nation. I believe we have demonstrated real leadership developing and approving this legislation. Our work benefits current Oregonians and preserves our natural resource legacy for future generations.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of my colleagues who served as committee members, my committee administrator Kailey Kornhauser, offi-



reflecting the spirit of our community

**Publisher and Managing Editor**  
**Scott Laird**  
**503-367-0098**  
**scott@vernoniasvoice.com**

**Contributors**  
Jamie Adams  
Jack Kauppila  
Superintendent Aaron Miller  
Representative Brad Witt

**Photography**  
Scott Laird

Want to advertise?  
Have an article?  
Contact: scott@vernoniasvoice.com

One year subscriptions  
(24 issues) \$35

Vernonia's Voice is published  
on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday  
of each month.

**Vernonia's Voice, LLC**  
**PO Box 55**  
**Vernonia, OR 97064**  
**503-367-0098**

cial and staff members from ODFW, the Marine Board, Department of Forestry, Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, DOGAMI, Department of Agriculture, Department of State Lands and others, as well as members of the public who offered their help, cooperation, and respect during the process, and various lobbyists who help craft workable legislation.

Many of these bills will now move to the Senate for consideration, and our House Committee will take up Natural Resource related bills that have been approved in that chamber.

**Email:**  
Rep.BradWitt@oregonlegislature.gov  
**Phone:** (503) 986-1431  
**Address:** 900 Court St NE, H-382,  
Salem, OR, 97301  
**Website:**  
<http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/witt>

## Where Do You Read The Voice?

Show us where you have traveled. Submit your photo and brief description to: [scott@vernoniasvoice.com](mailto:scott@vernoniasvoice.com)

## Cedar Side Inn

### Full Dish Sports Package

Big Screen, featuring Pac 12 games

### Taco Tuesday

from opening until 9pm  
3 hardshell or 1 softshell \$4.25

### Ladies' Night

every Thursday 6pm-close



• Free Pool • Free WiFi • Specialty Pizzas

Check our Facebook page for daily specials and upcoming events  
756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841



FULL DISH SPORTS  
PACKAGE!

Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7

- Specialty hamburgers
- 8 Draft beers & mixed drinks
- 5 Craft beers on tap
- Pool tables & satellite TV
- Free Wi-fi
- Beer & Kegs to go

"BIKER FRIENDLY"

Sun - Thurs 11 AM - Midnight • Fri - Sat 11 AM - 2:30 AM  
733 Bridge St, Vernonia • 503-429-9999