

Oregon Senate Bill 234. Relating to the Willamette River Basin; limiting expenditures; and declaring an emergency. (6 June 2001). (Reviewed by Sarah A. Koski)

The Committee on Natural Resources, Agriculture, Salmon, and Water sponsored Senate Bill 234 during the 71st Oregon Legislative Assembly. Section 1 of the bill states that the government should place top priority on addressing the problems facing the Willamette River. It is also proposed that research should begin to gather data concerning the deformation of fish in its waters. Funding will be allocated to the Oregon State Department of Environmental and Molecular Technology. This organization will then conduct the study and report back to the Legislature annually.

The bill proposes that the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board will distribute \$500,000 to the Department of Higher Education for the costs of tools and wages for the data collection.

Section 4 of Oregon Senate Bill 234 states an emergency situation for the Willamette River.

Critique

This bill is extremely important, since it outlines the need for research and development regarding the Willamette River's fish habitation. Many times when a bill is passed, money will be "misappropriated" or contracted by a private organization. However, the direct transfer between the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Department of Higher Education allows a lack of channeling or rough transitions with the money.

This bill, drafted in 2001, is the gateway for fish rehabilitation in the Willamette River. Toxins and waste, which have caused alterations to their genetic make-up, have created mutations. Finally, the State Legislature has appropriated funds to revitalize the salmon population.

Although SB 234 is a short and concise document, I believe that it holds a great deal of weight, because it declares the fish population in the Willamette River and emergency situation.

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