



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Office of the Director
3406 Cherry Ave NE
Salem, OR 97303-4924
503.947.6044
Fax 503.947.6042
www.dfw.state.or.us

Date: April 8, 2013

To: The Honorable Jackie Dingfelder, Chair, Senate Environment
and Natural Resources Committee



**Testimony by
Roy Elicker, Director
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Good afternoon Chair Dingfelder and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Roy Elicker, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 830, which my agency strongly supports.

SB 830 addresses three statutory issues necessary to implement Columbia River non-tribal fish management and reform considerations requested by Governor Kitzhaber in August 2012 and subsequently adopted into rule or policy by the Oregon and Washington fish and wildlife commissions this past December and January, respectively.

SB 830 has three primary elements.

- 1) **Repeals existing prohibitions of fixed fishing gear and seines for commercial fisheries.** This repeal will allow the Fish and Wildlife Commission to authorize fixed gear and seines in Columbia River commercial fisheries to more selectively target the harvest of hatchery salmon without increasing overall handling impacts to wild fish. This statutory repeal does not constrain the use of gill nets.
- 2) **Establishes a Transition Fund and directs ODFW to establish and implement a transition program until January 2019.** The transition program and related fund would exist during the duration of the transition period and slightly beyond, with the specific purpose of aiding commercial fishers during that period and avoiding economic harm associated with changing gear and shifting allocations. Funding is through donations and direct general fund appropriation into a dedicated ODFW account. Distribution of funds to commercial fishers is through counties that establish an advisory committee to oversee grants that meet the purpose of the transition program.
- 3) **Establishes a Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund until January 2022.** The purpose of the enhancement fund is to help implement the Columbia River fish management and reform framework, including measures to enhance fisheries, optimize



economic benefits and advance native fish conservation. Funding is through donations and up to a \$9.50 additional fee assessed by the Commission to resident and non-resident recreational anglers purchasing annual licenses and tags to fish for Columbia Basin salmon, steelhead and sturgeon.

With passage of SB 830, my agency will be able to accomplish six essential elements necessary for the long term viability and economic health of lower Columbia River commercial and sport fisheries.

- 1) We will be able to more fully study and advance alternative non-tribal commercial fishing gears in the mainstem Columbia River that could more selectively target the harvest of abundant hatchery salmon without increasing handling impacts to imperiled wild salmon.
- 2) We will be able to provide economic support to commercial fishers during and beyond the four-year transition period to assist in the cost of changing gears or economic loss resulting from partial allocation shifts in the mainstem to sport fisheries.
- 3) We will be able to enhance hatchery fish production in lower Columbia River off-channel areas where gill nets are extremely effective at harvesting hatchery fish without significant impacts to wild fish.
- 4) We will be able to evaluate and implement expansion of the off-channel areas to include more sites, time and boundary options to further enhance commercial fishing opportunity and better accommodate the gill net fleet.
- 5) We will be able to investigate and implement actions to improve the marketability and cost-effectiveness of both commercial and sport fisheries in the Columbia River.
- 6) We will be able to monitor the implementation of the Oregon and Washington Columbia River fish management and reform framework to ensure positive economic, social and biological outcomes and adjust course if needed to achieve these outcomes.

Change is difficult. This has been a long and difficult process, and much more needs to be done to ensure the long term viability and economic health of Columbia River commercial and sport fisheries. Along those lines, SB 830 provides key statutory changes needed to ensure this new management framework results in positive outcomes for both commercial and sport fisheries and the communities and economies that depend on them. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Contact: Curt Melcher (503) 947-6044