

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

3/23/2017

Subject: HB 3153 heard in committee March 21, 2017

My name is Steve Beyerlin, and along with Bill Hanot (VP of Sound Metrics) gave testimony for HB 3153. Thank you for your time and the courtesy we received from the committee.

We testified first on HB 3153, and then ODFW testified. I was taken aback by some of the testimony given (or left out, in my opinion) by ODFW spokesman Shawn Clemens.

Our testimony revolved around Sonar Fish Counters for the Rogue River. The Rogue River is the indicator stream for fish runs for the entire Oregon Coast. For over 75 years there has been more information gathered from the Rogue to manage both in-river and ocean fisheries than any other Oregon coastal river. A large part of this data was collected at the fish counting station at Gold Ray Dam 125 miles upriver from the ocean, which was removed in 2010 leaving a void in data collection.

There is also in the summer and fall a seining operation on the Lower Rogue about 8 miles up from the river mouth, but the operation does not begin until July 15th. The Huntley Park Seining does not nor has it ever counted Spring Chinook as Springer's are past Huntley Park before the annual seining operation begins July 15th. This link shows the ODFW seining count:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/fish_counts/rogue_river/index.asp

Since 2010 there has been no fish counting system on the upper Rogue. There is no way to get run size data or very important run timing data at this time. There is also no way to differentiate between Spring Chinook and Fall Chinook. Spring Chinook populations have plummeted. In my opinion, ODFW representative Shawn Clemens testified in a misleading manner, as follows:

- Stated that Sonar Fish Counters cannot tell a Fall Chinook from a Spring Chinook. This is not true because on the Rogue River Fall Chinook and Spring Chinook are defined by ODFW as:

All Fall Chinook enter the Rogue River after July 15th. Any Chinook entering prior to July 15th is considered Spring Chinook.

All Spring Chinook pass Gold Ray Dam (now removed) by August 15th. After August 15th Chinook passing the old Gold Ray Dam site are Fall Chinook.

Spring and Fall Chinook are defined by date in all rivers they run in Oregon, not by DNA or Scale Samples. The Sonar Fish Counter image files record the time and date of all fish passage, so ARIS most assuredly does have ability to identify Spring Chinook from Fall Chinook. Currently ODFW has no way of doing this simple task on the Rogue River. The need for such information in Rogue River Spring Chinook management is identified in ODFW's Spring Salmon Conservation Plan.

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/rogue_spring_chinook_conservation_plan.asp

- ODFW testified that Sonar Fish Counters could not identify Coho Salmon from Spring or Fall Chinook. This is a little misleading. In 2016 the first Coho was not counted at Huntley Park until October 3rd, just 10 days before Huntley Park Seining was shut down for the year due to fall rains and high water. Of course it would have been impossible for Coho to be confused with Spring Chinook because the Spring Chinook count was completed a month or more earlier. In 2015 there were no Coho counted at the Huntley Park Sein until October and only one was counted before mid-October.

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/fish_counts/rogue_river/index.asp

- ODFW testified that Calibration of equipment would take 5 years to reach a confidence level. Our vision of Sonar Fish Counters on the Rogue River would include 2 counters. One would be deployed near the Old Gold Ray

Dam counting station that had 75 years of accepted fish counting data that could be compared to the new Sonar Counter data. The other would be on the Lower Rogue near the Huntley Park Seining site and could be compared to the data collected there for over half a century. We agree there would be a 5 year burn in time just as any other new data collection method would be subject to. At present I believe ODFW just completed its 5th year of new spawning bed surveys and they have been telling us they needed 5 years of data to get a high enough confidence level to start making run forecasts for the next year. Thus it was a little misleading when ODFW said it would take 5 years of data from the ARIS without explaining that it would take 5 years of data no matter what new system is being used before it becomes fully accepted scientific data. However the Sonar counters placed on the Rogue would benefit from up to ¾ of a century's data already collected. Also, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game established a 2-year period for comparison data when shifting first to DIDSON, and then again to ARIS for managing Chinook escapement on the Kenai River, so 5 years may be overly generous.

Rogue River Seine Counts at Huntley Park



Each year ODFW assesses the freshwater escapement of Rogue River Coho, fall chinook, late run summer steelhead, and "half-pounder" steelhead by beach seining the waters near Huntley Park three times a week from Mid-July thru October

- Here is a passage from the ODFW website referring to Rogue River Spring Chinook.

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/rogue_spring_chinook_conservation_plan.asp

Numbers of Rogue River wild spring Chinook have seriously declined during the last 20 years, and a conservation plan is now in place for these fish. Prior to the construction of Lost Creek Dam, an average of 28,000 wild spring Chinook were counted annually at Gold Ray Dam. Between 1997 and 2002, an annual average of just 5,100 wild spring Chinook were counted at Gold Ray Dam. In addition, the fish's life history has changed, with fewer early-returning, early-spawning wild spring Chinook present in the population. The decline and life history change is attributed to many factors, including construction and operation of Lost Creek Dam.

As you can see by the excerpt from ODFW page, the Rogue River Spring life history and run timing is a critical issue and this information is unavailable without a system of counting fish passage and timing that ARIS can provide. That seems like an important point to leave out of their presentation.

We would be glad to provide any data or testimony needed to support these assertions.

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