



NORTHWEST SPORTFISHING
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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March 13, 2019

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co Chair

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co Chair

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Via email: jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: ODFW Budget

Honorable Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and members of the Committee

On behalf of the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association (NSIA) thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) budget. NSIA is a trade organization consisting of over 250 businesses and associations. (partial listing attached) The sportfishing industry consists of manufacturing, wholesale, distribution, retail and tourism jobs spread across the pacific northwest.

In Oregon, 625,811 adult licenses are sold, sustaining 11,043 jobs and creating \$1.4 Billion in economic output (according to ODFW). These adult anglers, and the children they take with them, enjoy 5.658 Million days outdoors fishing, second to jogging in outdoor recreation activities. Sportfishing is not only a heritage that connects family and friends to the natural environment, it is an economic force for conservation. The combination of license sales and a federal excise tax paid by our industry funds over one half of the total fish division budget. And none of this accounts for the tens of thousands of hours fishing groups put into river restoration every single year.

But as you've seen from ODFW, the number of fishing license sales is down by roughly 15,000 anglers, from the 2013-17 average and 2018. What business wants 15,000 less customers?!? When ODFW received a large, but phased in fee increase four years ago, their own economists told us we would lose around 10,000 people who buy licenses.

We sought funding for programs that would especially target outreach to women, minorities and millennials in hopes that we could put a dent (or possibly reverse) the declining numbers of anglers, but these efforts have been largely ignored by ODFW leadership.

The larger than expected drop in license sales are no surprise to anyone who follows the actions of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Columbia River is the lifeblood fishery to the sportfishing industry. Nearly 175,000 anglers not only purchase their \$41 annual fishing license, they then spend an additional \$40.50 (for salmon and steelhead tags) to fish for salmon and steelhead and an additional \$9.75 Columbia River Endorsement, totaling nearly \$100 to fish in the Columbia River and it's tributaries. The \$9.75 is a surcharge that anglers paid for several years to help fund the Columbia River reforms and to fund what is now about one half of the salmon production that goes into the SAFE area fisheries for the Commercial gillnetters.

Oregon's ODFW Commission continues to be openly hostile to the sportfishing community and its proponents. The Commission's constant eroding of the Columbia River Harvest reforms enrage the anglers who paid millions into a program only to watch that program betrayed by the Commission. The Commission's decision to cut short fisheries, raise fees, eliminate sportfishing gear, cut off opportunities for retirees to fish on the Columbia, disregard the impact of sportfishing jobs and economics; create

NSIA is dedicated to the preservation, restoration and enhancement of sport fisheries and the businesses dependent upon them.

an environment of anger and a desire for Oregonians to pursue other outdoor activities. As businesses who rely upon sportfishing, these actions are detrimental and harmful to our businesses.

Furthermore, these actions will cause layoffs in the sportfishing industry due to shorter fishing seasons, and they are driving more customers away from the agency and our industry. This is wrong, and we hope many of you will work with Governor Brown to find ODFW Commissioners who will want to honor the reforms, work to protect and enhance sportfishing opportunities, not rewrite history to turn back the clock, and find new ways to grow license sales to benefit ODFW.

NSIA supports general funds to be used for continued operation of the Leaburg hatchery. We were instrumental in securing bridge funding last year for the hatchery and see it as vitally important. Leaburg provides two key functions to our ecosystem. First, as we discuss climate change and its impacts, Leaburg serves as a safety net for fish that need to be transferred out of wildfire areas given its location and water quality. For instance, during the Columbia River Gorge fire, fish from the Bonneville Dam were transferred successfully to the Leaburg preventing their loss. Secondly, Leaburg also serves as a food bank for Orca whales in Washington and fulfills our promise to protect them from starvation. Leaburg is currently projected to produce 250,000 smolts to be transferred to the Columbia River that will eventually make their way north. Given our overall commitment to protecting our natural resources, the failure to fund the Leaburg hatchery would be disastrous.

It should be noted that NSIA considers ODFW's fish division staff to be excellent professionals, accessible, and good partners to the Industry on most all issues pertaining to salmon and steelhead recovery. Their work on water quality, water quantity, stream habitats, harvest practices that conserve fishing opportunities for the future, and hatcheries that do not impede wild fish recovery are second to none. But we also know they are constrained by ODFW's Commission actions. Aside from the Columbia River reforms, if they could freely work with NSIA's members, we could collaborate and find ways to increase license sales.

Recreational Sportfishing is not only an economic engine, it nurtures our souls and creates future conservationists and activists. It may be called fishing, not catching, but when one does catch a fish for the table, it can feel better than a payday to feed our families with a delicious and nutritious source of protein. There are scant other place in the world where the chance to feed your soul and your family is just a short cast away. We should be celebrating this and seek to connect more citizens to this amazing bounty of experience. NSIA looks forward to working with the Joint House and Senate Ways and Means Committee on Natural Resources to make this happen.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.



Liz Hamilton, Executive Director
NSIA 503.631.8859

Encl: NSIA Membership
Oregon Sportfishing Economics
Columbia River Harvest Numbers
Letter from Scientists and Former Commissioners

NORTHWEST SPORTFISHING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



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*Dedicated to the preservation, restoration and enhancement of sportfisheries
and the businesses dependent upon them.*

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Glass, Brandon
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Larson, Virgil
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Burnside, John
Carskadon, Trey
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Casne Engineering Inc
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Conroy, Rocky
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Daly, Jay
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FishEng Products
Fisher, Robert
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Lomas, Fabian
Long, Frank
Marshall, Dan
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McLain, Cory
Mellor, Kevin
Miller, Gabe
Miller, Mike
Myers, Dan
Neverick, Steve
New, Don
O'Leary, Michael
Oregon Guides & Packers
Overby, Don
Owsley, Robert
Pacific Crest Marketing
Patel, Janek
Paysinger, Nancy
Phillips, Jerry
Ponciano, Dan
Pryor, Larry
Rask, Christopher
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Singley, Bob
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Sports Sales, Inc.
Stern, Richard
Strahan, Dave
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Taylor, Michael
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Wade, Bruce
Walter, Brian
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Westcoast Sales
Whitcotton, Terry
Wilson, Greg
Wilson, Jonathan
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Workman, Gerald
Wright, David
Young, Bob

OREGON SPORT FISHING:

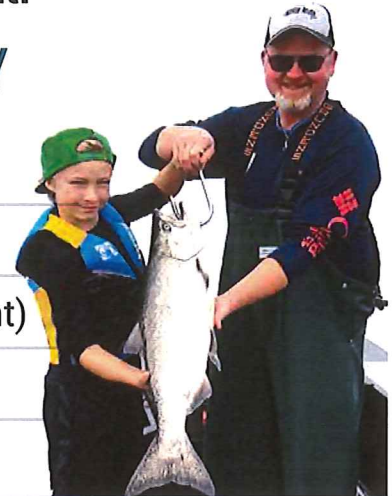
A Heritage and an Economic Force for Conservation



Sportfishing Means Business! In Oregon, growing sport fishing opportunity grows jobs, protects an important piece of our culture, connecting families and friends to each other and the natural environment.

SPORT FISHING & THE OREGON ECONOMY

12,656	Jobs
\$382,802,979	Salaries & Wages
574,739	Adult Anglers (resident and non resident)
\$841,000,000	Retail sales
\$1,400,000,000	Economic Output
\$72,381,359	State & Local Tax Revenues
\$91,781,493	Federal Tax Revenues
5,658,437	Total Fishing Days



Citation: Southwick Associates. Based on data from US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011 and 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, and Esri, Inc.



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DID YOU KNOW?

RECREATIONAL FISHING RANKS higher than bowling or playing basketball, softball or soccer, according to data from the National Sporting Goods Association.

MORE AMERICANS FISH than play golf (23.8 million) & tennis (18.1 million) combined.

ANGLERS SPEND MORE on fishing gear and trips (\$49.8 billion) than Americans spend on Valentine's Day, Easter and Halloween combined (\$45.4 B)

IF FISHING WERE A COMPANY, THE amount spent by anglers to support fishing-related retail sales would rank number 51 on the Fortune 500 list.

FISHING GENERATED MORE revenue (\$48 billion) than Lockheed Martin (\$47 billion), Intel (\$44 billion), Chrysler (\$42 billion) or Google (\$38 billion).

THE NUMBER OF ANGLERS is nearly three times greater than the number of active downhill skiers and snowboarders combined.

THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY generated by sportfishing is greater than the economies, measured in Gross State Product, of 17 states.

RECREATIONAL FISHING is the nation's second most popular outdoor activity after jogging.

ANGLERS ARE NEARLY 2.5 times as numerous as annual visitors to Disney's Magic Kingdom, the world's most popular amusement park.



Rank	State	Number of Non-Resident Anglers	Total Non-Resident Expenditures
1.	Florida	1,197,279	\$898,283,876
2.	Michigan	347,029	\$326,337,857
3.	Wisconsin	336,753	\$445,006,874
4.	North Carolina	328,810	\$260,296,738
5.	Alaska	327,418	\$361,768,322
6.	New York	297,070	\$282,573,249
7.	Oregon	264,424	\$241,771,577
8.	Minnesota	259,324	\$364,108,877
9.	New Jersey	256,950	\$106,323,764
10.	Missouri	244,290	\$205,686,074

March 11, 2019

Dear Legislator,

We, the undersigned former Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissioners, took part in the development and approval of the Department's Hatchery and Harvest Reform Policy as well as its Columbia River Reform Policy. We are writing to voice our dismay that much of the progress that we made through these reforms is being reversed.

After too many years of arbitrarily picking numbers to placate various user groups, our Commission decided to take a more principled approach. Our "Hatchery and Harvest Reform Policy" was central to that effort. The policy announced commitments to: 1) the best available science; and 2) wild fish conservation as the highest priority. Those commitments were made to apply both to fish protected under the ESA where the law already requires such stewardship as well as to runs that have not been listed *where the law's protections are less rigorous.* Without such clear commitments to science and to conservation, we believed then, and still believe now, that the Department will be perpetually driven by pressures to maintain historical practices rather than moving towards a sustainable future.

The current Commission's decision to suspend belief in the science and relax standards in place that protect wild fish genetics was perplexing. That decision relegated conservation and science to positions subordinate to outside pressures. We are keenly aware that it takes courage and strength of commitment to bring an end to practices that science has shown are detrimental to wild fish recovery. The reform policies were designed to create incentives for more selective fisheries and impose disincentives on users employing old more harmful methods. ***The Columbia River policy called for a buyback of non-Indian gillnets that was never attempted.*** Only with a determined effort to move towards more selective harvest methods can we produce much greater numbers of hatchery fish without harm to wild fish genetics.

Some users assert that current wild fish genetics are not pure enough—nothing like the wild fish of old. They claim that it makes no sense to conserve those "mongrel" fish. Established science tells us otherwise: *if they are free from excessive hatchery influence,* naturally spawning fish will fairly quickly evolve and adapt to their home stream. By protecting naturally spawning fish, we are rebuilding genetically fit runs and protecting this fitness into the future.

For the state's non-tribal fishers, fishing is *not* a right, but a privilege. With the privilege comes a responsibility. Most users prefer not to adopt new fishing techniques, but everyone has a responsibility. We all are called upon to contribute through better forest practices, shoreline development rules, and habitat restoration spending. Fishermen and women cannot be exempted.

The 2018 State of the Salmon report from the Governor's Office listed 13 of the 15 listed runs as "below the goal." Only two of the runs were "near the goal. Reversing the downward trajectory will take courage and commitment. The millions of dollars being spent on salmon habitat restoration will be largely wasted *if no additional wild fish are allowed to escape into the restored habitat*. We cannot return to a time when we fished without concern for wild fish runs. We cannot return to a state of ignorance about the importance of fish genetics.

Fish runs are the public's heritage. As stewards of those resources, we urge you take a stand. The Department needs your direction to resist the pressure to allow fishing methods of the past that are unsustainable in the long run. The best path forward can be found by following the lodestars of conservation and good science. We urge your support of those principles.

With respect,

Dr. Conrad Mahnken, Former Director, Manchester Research Station, NW Fisheries Science Center, WA Fish and Wildlife Commissioner 2006-2016

Rollie Schmitt, Former Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, WA Fish and Wildlife Commissioner 2009-2014

Chuck Perry, Former Range Land Ecologist, WDFW, WA Fish and Wildlife Commissioner 2005-2013

Gary Douvia, Vice President, Raymond James, LLP, WA Fish and Wildlife Commissioner 2006-2013

Miranda Wecker, Former Director of the Marine Program, UW Olympic Natural Resources Center, WA Fish and Wildlife Commissioner 2005-2017

The Bi-state Columbia River Salmon Management Reforms are Working

- Greater certainty for recreational fishing and sport fishing businesses
- Average commercial ex-vessel values are higher (\$4.97M) than pre-reform levels (\$4.4M)
- Increased harvest of hatchery salmon, improved conservation of ESA-listed salmon

The facts speak for themselves?

