



Testimony in Support of House Concurrent Resolution 35 International Year of the Wild Salmon

The Conservation Angler is pleased to support House Concurrent Resolution 35 (HCR 35) in Support of 2019 International Year of the Salmon.

The 2019 Legislative Session has seen its share of salmon discussions, but to date, the discussion has been focused on hatchery salmon and steelhead. It is essential that Oregon focus on wild fish.

What should not be missed is that the importance of and status of wild salmon and wild steelhead drive our discussions about salmon and steelhead – from the Rogue and Chetco to the Willamette, Nehalem and to the Deschutes, John Day and Grand Ronde.

While Oregon produces many hatchery salmon and steelhead, many important fisheries across Oregon are driven by relatively healthy and abundant wild populations of salmon and steelhead.

It is the relative health of specific wild salmon and steelhead that controls the ability of anglers to harvest hatchery fish. When wild populations are low, hatchery fish harvest is also very limited.

When hatchery stocks return in low abundance, fisheries are often completely closed to ensure that the local hatchery “broodstock” goals are met. Oregon should manage its wild salmon and steelhead populations this way – protecting the returning wild fish so that they can reach their natal rivers.

Wild salmon and steelhead have consequential economic and ecologic impact across Oregon.

Oregon needs wild fish. Wild salmon and steelhead are place-based natural resources, adapting constantly to their home stream environments. Therefore, state management must be organized to protect and provide habitat conditions and processes necessary for the returning wild fish and concurrently manage returning wild fish so that wild escapement and egg deposition criteria are set and met – before harvest is permitted. Access to a connected migratory path must be the goal of habitat protection and management. State land and water management agencies must be organized to protect the spawning and rearing habitats needed by wild salmon to persist throughout their birth, rearing, migration and return to the natal rivers of their birth.

Fish managers must prioritize wild fish and ensure that fishery management does not prevent spawner escapement and egg deposition by population and by river for conservation. The unit of conservation for wild salmon and steelhead is the population and their connected habitat.

The effects of climate change have made forecasting salmon and steelhead returns a mere guess. It is also clear that wild populations are more resilient and adaptable to survive changing marine and freshwater conditions.

Investing in protection of Oregon’s Wild Salmon and Steelhead is a low-cost, locally driven, river-by-river opportunity to provide social, economic and ecological benefits to more communities, more people and to 130 other species of wildlife that depend on returning wild salmon.

We applaud Alaska Representative Garen Tarr for the inspiration and for reaching out to make this a multi-state commitment and for Representatives Helm, Helt, Brock-Smith and Senators Dembrow and Prozanski for ensuring this measure is widely supported in Oregon.

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