



## ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST STEELHEADERS

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Testimony submitted on SB 59

Oregon Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 59.

My name is Betsy Emery. I am the Advocacy and Campaign Manager for the Association of Northwest Steelheaders. Our organization was founded in 1960 and is one of the oldest recreational fishing and conservation non-profit organizations in the Pacific Northwest. We have eight chapters in Oregon and one in Southwest Washington, representing over 800 members and nearly 5,000 supporters dedicated to enhancing and protecting fisheries and fish habitats for today and tomorrow, with a vision of abundant, sustainable fisheries and healthy watersheds.

SB 59 would eliminate the sunset provision on the Columbia River Endorsement Fee. This fee on recreational angling in the Columbia Basin was enacted as a key component of the joint bi-state Columbia River Fisheries Policy Reform package approved by Oregon and Washington back in 2013. As Governor Brown has noted, the Reform package was a “hard-won compromise” adopted by both states to resolve persistent conflicts and provide stability for non-treaty fisheries management in the lower mainstem Columbia River.

Northwest Steelheaders, along with a broad coalition of recreational fishing and conservation groups, supported instituting the endorsement fee on top of our usual recreational license fees, because we understood, as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) expressly stated in the 2014 and 2015 fishing regulation pamphlets, that “[m]oney from the endorsement will help fund the transition to *eliminate* non-tribal commercial gill nets on the lower mainstem Columbia River and provide additional salmon and steelhead for sport fishing.” This special fee paid by recreational anglers generates approximately \$2.5 million per biennium and helps fund Columbia River fisheries improvements, including expanded hatchery production in off-channel fishing areas to benefit the commercial gillnet fleet.

Northwest Steelheaders continues to support full implementation of the Columbia River Reform package, including the removal of non-treaty commercial gillnets from the lower mainstem, and the recreational priority allocations set forth in the original agreement.

Although these reforms have not yet been fully implemented, we recognize the substantial progress the Reforms have made in improving the selectivity and conservation value of lower mainstem non-treaty salmon fisheries. The Reforms have also increased socio-economic benefits to our region through the prioritization of recreational fisheries on the mainstem, while maintaining and enhancing the viability of the commercial fishery with significant increases in hatchery production in off-channel commercial fishing areas.

Unfortunately, not only have the Reforms not been fully implemented, there have been repeated attempts to undermine the core commitments embodied in this “hard-won” compromise, most recently through policy deviations coming from the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Accordingly, we cannot at this time support making the Columbia River Endorsement Fee permanent or SB 59 as currently drafted. We would like to see SB 59 amended to temporarily extend the endorsement fee while providing that the current Oregon administrative rules concerning management of lower Columbia River non-treaty salmon fisheries will not be revised to expand the use of gillnets or reduce recreational allocations, and that these management measures will be effectively employed.

We look forward to working with the Committee, ODFW, and other affected stakeholders to find a viable solution so we can continue to maintain and enhance the improvements in fisheries management that the Reforms have achieved thus far.

Thank you for your time.

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