



February 8, 2021

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair
Senator Dallas Heard, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Re: Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited Comments on Senate Bill 59

Dear Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 59. My name is James Fraser and I am a volunteer officer of the Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited (OCTU). Trout Unlimited is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fish (such as trout, salmon, and steelhead) and their habitats. The organization has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide, including over 3,000 members in Oregon.

The Oregon members of TU are affiliated with OCTU. OCTU supports recovery of abundant and resilient populations of wild salmon, steelhead and sturgeon in the Columbia River basin. OCTU also supports fishing opportunity, both sport and commercial, consistent with that paramount conservation goal.

However, OCTU opposes SB 59. SB 59 seeks to eliminate the sunset on the Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund. In 2012, Oregon and Washington agreed to the Columbia River Management Plan, a package of fishing reforms, including measures to transition non-tribal commercial gillnetting from the mainstem Columbia to off-channel zones beginning in 2017 and to transition the commercial fleet to more selective gear.

To assist the commercial fleet with making this transition, the Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund was established to collect fees for recreational angling for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon in the Columbia Basin (the “Columbia River Basin Endorsement” or “CRBE”). Collection of the CRBE was authorized for a set period of time to allow for evaluation of the efficacy of the program before making permanent changes. OCTU agreed with the original Columbia River Management Plan, including the establishment of the CRBE, because the original arrangement would have had great conservation benefits — particularly, fewer non-targeted wild fish being killed in the fishery.

Implementation of the Columbia River Management Plan has had mixed results, however, and little progress has been made on key components such as transitioning the commercial fleet to more selective gear. Many stakeholders are frustrated with the lack of progress and the frequent proposals to scale back or modify the original terms of the reforms. It is clear that this program

is still a work in progress and therefore it is both premature and inequitable to the sportfishing community to permanently authorize the CRBE.

Accordingly, OCTU requests that the Committee only reauthorize the CRBE if it includes a new sunset date or a provision to trigger a sunset if the current Columbia River Management Plan rules are further modified.

OCTU looks forward to continuing discussion on this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 59.

Sincerely,



James Fraser
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