



Oregon

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To: **The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair**
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery



House Bill 3191A

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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The department has no position on House Bill 3191A, but would like to provide concerns related to implementing the program called for in the bill during low and high salmon return years. Forty-seven million hatchery Chinook, coho, chum, steelhead and trout are produced each year to support commercial, tribal and recreational harvest opportunities. The ideal is that these fish are utilized as food for native wildlife or caught by anglers in Oregon rivers when they return two to five years later, however many survive the harvest attempts to successfully navigate back to hatcheries and collection traps.

The disposition of salmon/steelhead carcasses from ODFW operated hatcheries is currently guided by several policies that have been adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, including the Native Fish Conversation policy, the Hatchery Management policy, and the Fish Health Management policy. The current policies provide flexibility to meet agency needs and address the diverse desires for surplus hatchery fish.

Surplus hatchery fish are used to;

- *Ensure the hatchery run can be perpetuated for future generations.* To ensure long term sustainability and benefits, hatchery managers prioritize meeting egg collection goals for production, particularly during low adult return years.
- *Meet tribal obligations.* Oregon code 496.201 directs ODFW to furnish salmon for Indian ceremonies to Confederated Tribes of the Umpqua Indians, Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Indians, Coquille Tribe, and the Burns Paiute Tribe for various cultural and ceremonial uses.
- *Support Oregon Food Banks:* the quality of carcasses varies considerably based on multiple factors. Only high quality, food grade carcasses are considered for distribution to food banks.
- *Enhance nutrient needs of river systems:* Department staff and volunteers place hundreds of thousands of pounds of salmon carcasses in Oregon waterways each year. This is a vital nutrient injection that mimics the historic ecology in these systems.

The policies referenced above establish a priority list for disposition, with the highest priority being to ensure hatchery broodstock needs are met. Table 1 provides a summary of the last 10 years distribution of salmon carcasses.

Table 1. 10-year summary of beneficial use of surplus hatchery return adult salmon and steelhead (2010-2019).

| Year | Release Enrichment | Sold | Food Banks | Education Other | Bury or Render | Total | % Release Enrichment |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 2019 | 56,395 | 14,445 | 5,542 | 828 | 15,006 | 92,216 | 61.2% |
| 2018 | 54,765 | 9,974 | 8,682 | 316 | 16,193 | 89,930 | 60.9% |
| 2017 | 62,426 | 6,526 | 15,379 | 1,533 | 19,726 | 105,590 | 59.1% |
| 2016 | 71,520 | 14,794 | 24,852 | 1,161 | 23,467 | 135,794 | 52.7% |
| 2015 | 93,982 | 50,525 | 29,455 | 2,026 | 24,298 | 200,286 | 46.9% |
| 2014 | 101,954 | 65,010 | 55,881 | 3,149 | 23,983 | 249,977 | 40.8% |
| 2013 | 82,085 | 41,748 | 22,918 | 3,372 | 22,300 | 172,423 | 47.6% |
| 2012 | 94,212 | 36,659 | 24,667 | 2,379 | 22,918 | 180,835 | 52.1% |
| 2011 | 78,458 | 43,820 | 23,858 | 2,677 | 22,807 | 171,620 | 45.7% |
| 2010 | 106,712 | 51,272 | 41,924 | 2,700 | 28,039 | 230,647 | 46.3% |
| AVG | 80,251 | 33,477 | 25,316 | 2,014 | 21,874 | 162,932 | 51.3% |

HB 3191A would require the department to reprioritize the disposition of salmon/steelhead carcasses. The bill mandates that 50% of the carcasses from hatchery-produced fish that return to hatchery facilities be retained and returned to natural spawning areas. As noted above, the department is functionally meeting this intent through our existing policies, but is not constrained to having to meet this goal in years of low or high returns. In years of low returns, the department is unable to meet the broodstock goals so there are no surplus carcasses for distribution to other priorities. Additionally, the department takes into account whether fish have been treated with antifungals or antibiotics during holding, which means they cannot be used for nutrient enrichment. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) constraints must also be met when determining which and how many carcasses to place in a given stream body. In years with large returns, we would be challenged to stay within DEQ parameters on the number of fish that could be placed in a location and number of carcasses that can be placed in a given water body. For example, Bonneville Hatchery supplies the majority of surplus carcasses in large return years. Between DEQ water quality limitations (number of carcasses per mile, no authorized stretches in the mainstem Columbia, and the restriction to keep carcasses within the basin), coupled with the parameters contained in this bill, there wouldn't be enough habitat within the basin to place enough carcasses to meet the 50% threshold. Current policies provide the flexibility to make necessary adjustments during years of low or high returns.

Additionally, HB 3191A requires that eggs and carcass sales be prioritized 1) to Oregon small businesses in communities with high rates of unemployment and 2) to other small Oregon businesses. The department currently sells quality carcasses through a competitive bid process consistent with the public contracting code. The solicitation is broken into large and small packages. The package sizes provide bidding opportunities for both small and large businesses, all of which are or will need to become licensed wholesale dealers in Oregon. The revenue generated is important to address deferred hatchery maintenance projects. The current bid process supports distribution of

over 80,000 meals to Oregonians through the food share program. This is only made possible because larger distributors have the network and capacity to collect, process and distribute meals across the state.

Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

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