

MCKENZIE RIVER GUIDES ASSOCIATION

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To Whom it may concern:

We at the **McKenzie River Guides' Association oppose Senate Bill 65** on various grounds based on our experience with Desert Springs hatchery trout that were stocked in the McKenzie River in 2018.

For over 60 years ODFW had locally produced hatchery trout in the basin for introduction to the McKenzie during trout season. These fish, having been reared in McKenzie water, acclimatize to the river environment well and feed readily throughout the water column and on the surface.

Our experience with the Desert Springs hatchery fish was resoundingly negative. These fish, raised in a warmer environment, seemed to be shocked on entry to the McKenzie's cooler waters and did not acclimate well. They stayed deep; and would seldom rise to take flies presented on the surface like the local trout do. Many of the fish provided by the Desert Springs hatchery were barely of legal size. Many 6- and 7-inch fish were stocked in the river that year, much smaller than the average size of the more robust stock traditionally raised by ODFW at Leaburg Hatchery.

In addition, it is wasteful and environmentally problematic to truck fish all the way from the opposite side of the state (near Lakeview, OR), especially when a superior product is available at a lower cost locally. A puzzling aspect of Desert Springs contract to produce the trout that were stocked in the McKenzie in 2018 is that their bid actually came in higher than ODFW's bid to produce trout locally at Leaburg Hatchery.

In our view, Senate Measure 65 is unnecessary legislation. Why would state government need to mandate that 20% of trout production come from private hatcheries? This legislation would likely lead to taxpayers paying more money for an inferior product. Instead, private hatcheries should compete for contracts to produce trout for stocking in public waters based on the competitiveness of their bid and the quality of their product.

Sincerely, Ethan Nickel

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President, McKenzie River Guides' Association