

March 21, 2023

Representative Ken Helm
Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water:

RE: HB 3232, Relating to commercial fishing methods.

Our diverse coalition of conservationists, scientists, resource managers, commercial fishers, and recreational fishers is writing to you today in strong support of HB 3232. This bill will enhance the resiliency of rural fishing economies, advance sustainable fisheries, improve compliance of state hatchery programs with Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements, and benefit all fishing interests in the Columbia River within established allocations between recreational and commercial sectors.

HB 3232 will amend two OR Fish & Wildlife Commission rules established in 2016 that cap sustainable, mark-selective salmon fishing within the existing commercial allocation in the Columbia River non-tribal commercial fishery. As a result of these rules, only up to 2% of assigned commercial fishing allocation can potentially be used sustainably for mark-selective fisheries that target hatchery salmon for harvest and release endangered species with minimal mortality. Due to concurrency requirements between the states of Oregon and Washington for jointly managed waters, these existing Oregon rules also suppress Washington's objectives to more meaningfully allow for sustainable mark-selective fisheries in the Columbia River.

Restoring Concurrency and Adaptive Fisheries Management. The overarching principle for Columbia River fisheries management is concurrency between Oregon and Washington in all shared boundary waters (ORS 507.010). HB 3232 will directly improve joint-state fisheries management by restoring concurrent fisheries policy that once existed between the Fish & Wildlife Commissions of each state prior to 2016. As fisheries departments of Oregon (ODFW) and Washington (WDFW 2022) can confirm, "Having a diverse suite of gears that can be deployed tactically in the times, places, and manners that are most appropriate will position the Department to promote salmon conservation while also making the best use of harvestable salmon resources for the fishing industry and the public." HB 3232 will restore management's ability to effectively apply a diverse suite of tools to optimize use of allocations and protect ESA-listed species.

Benefits to Commercial Fishers. Commercial fishers support passage of HB 3232. Without flexibility to effectively use other tools in the toolbox (beyond the gillnet), fishers on both shores of the Columbia River cannot maximize use of established harvest allocations. Each year, impacts from conventional fishing practices to ESA-listed fishes constrain opportunities to harvest hatchery fish and prevent achievement of sustainable market certifications that stand to increase the prices fishers receive.

HB 3232 will provide commercial fishers greater flexibility to use the right tool for the right occasion. It will offer them the option to effectively apply alternative gears during challenging return years that require a more precise fishing approach to avoid damaging ESA-listed species in pursuits for hatchery fish. While increasing selective fishing opportunities, fishermen can further achieve sustainable market certifications that increase fish prices and profits. Overall, HB 3232 will enhance the resiliency of rural fishing economies.

Strong Support from the Scientific and Conservation Communities. With greater flexibility for managers to implement mark-selective fisheries, scientists and conservationists concur that hatchery production programs can be managed more sustainably by reducing the proportion of hatchery-origin spawners and releasing wild salmon with minimal mortality. HB 3232 will allow managers to advance recommendations of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (2009) that "Columbia River fisheries be managed as selective fisheries" to reduce detrimental effects of hatcheries on wild salmon and improve compliance with the ESA.

Benefits to Recreational Fishers. HB 3232 stands to advance salmon recovery, improve hatchery program compliance with the ESA, and maintain fish production for all users in the Columbia River. While the bill maintains established commercial and recreational fishing allocations, it provides managers and commercial fishers a means to reduce the environmental harm that is caused within the existing commercial allocation.

A Win-Win for All Stakeholders. Few bills provide win-win outcomes for all stakeholders—HB 3232 is unique in the benefits it delivers to all parties involved. It must be noted that the bill does not affect tribal treaty fishing rights nor state-tribal fishery management agreements. Furthermore, the bill does not affect the right of any commercial fisher to negotiate fishing seasons through the North of Falcon process and to use gillnets within the existing commercial allocation if they choose to do so.

We appreciate your leadership and support for HB 3232 that will improve joint-state fisheries management by restoring concurrent Columbia River fisheries policy between the Fish Commissions of Oregon and Washington. Working in-concert with other policy commitments from both shores of the Columbia River that encourage mark-selective fishing techniques, passage of this bill will advance wild salmon recovery, maintain fishing opportunities for all users, and improve the resiliency of Oregon’s rural fishing economies.

Sincerely Yours,

Name	Title	Affiliation
Emma Helverson	Executive Director	Wild Fish Conservancy
Lee Blankenship	Senior Research Scientist, Retired	WDFW / Hatchery Scientific Review Group
John Barr	Fisheries Biologist	Hatchery Scientific Review Group
Andrew Appleby	Co-Chair (2010-2019), Retired	Hatchery Scientific Review Group
Miranda Wecker	Chair (2009-2015), Retired	WA Fish and Wildlife Commission
Larry Carpenter	Chair (2018-2020), Retired	WA Fish and Wildlife Commission
Bryon Davis	Fisherman	Chinook Member
Billie Delaney	Commercial Fisherman / Owner	Commercial Fisherman
David Moskowitz	Executive Director	The Conservation Angler
Gary Marston	Science Advisor	Trout Unlimited
Jennifer Fairbrother	Conservation Director	Native Fish Society
John Skalski, PhD	Professor Emeritus	University of WA, Columbia Basin Research
Fred Kootz, PhD	Wildlife Biologist, Retired	WA Fish and Wildlife Commission

Deborah Giles, PhD	Professor	University of WA, Friday Harbor Labs
Andrew Chione	Habitat Restoration Biologist	Habitat Restoration Biologist
Shari Tarantino	Executive Director	Orca Conservancy
Nicholas Rowell	Business Owner / Fishing Guide	Anadromous Anglers LLC
Quinn Read	Oregon Policy Director	Center for Biological Diversity
Nina Bell	Executive Director	Northwest Environmental Advocates
Adrian Tuohy	Biologist	Wild Fish Conservancy
Maradel Gale	Program Director	Bainbridge Beach Naturalists
Graham MacKenzie	President of the Board of Directors	Wild Fish Conservancy
Doug Hennick	Aquatic Ecologist	Wild Fish Conservancy
Gene Helfman, PhD	Emeritus Professor	University of Georgia, Odum School of Ecology
Bill McMillan	Fisheries Biologist and Author	Retired
Larry Low	Fisheries Biologist	Retired
Peter Hapke	Managing Partner	Hapke Law Office
Stephen Conroy, PhD	Environmental Scientist	King County Department of Local Services
Sharon Stroble	Concerned Citizen	Pacific Northwest Resident
David Herasimtschuk	Photographer	Freshwaters Illustrated
Candace Beardslee	Board of Directors	Wild Fish Conservancy
Colleen McGee	Biologist	Wild Fish Conservancy
Steve Erickson	Restoration Ecologist	Whidbey Environmental Action Network
Eric Showmaker	President	Trask Group LLC