



The Conservation Angler Supports Passage of HB 3232 Relating to commercial fishing methods.

The Conservation Angler would have testified in person but for two critical meetings regarding Columbia River fisheries being held simultaneously today - the OR-WA North of Falcon season-setting meeting and the Columbia Basin Collaborative's Hatchery and Harvest Workgroup were both being held today.

The forums and venues for making change for our wild salmon and steelhead are many and conflicting, but these meetings regarding the current regime of harvest and hatchery management are crucial and we felt it is important to explain our absence – and also important to testify about HB 3232 on selective fishing – a crucial piece of the puzzle for reforming harvest and addressing hatchery impacts.

Since The Conservation Angler focuses on harvest and hatchery issues in OR and WA on a daily basis – we can say that HB 3232 will be an important reform that we hope you and your committee will support.

HB 3232 will amend several 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 so that no more than 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.

Deploying suite of gear types that are used tactically by times, place, and manner most appropriate may allow state Fisheries to conserve weak stocks while trying to focus – in a less impactful manner - on harvestable salmon resources for the industry and the public. HB 3232 will make better use of a diverse suite of tools to optimize available allocations while protecting ESA-listed species.

Annually, conventional fishing practices impact ESA listed fishes resulting in constraints to harvest of hatchery fish and may dull achievement of available sustainable market certifications that can increase the prices fishers receive. HB 3232 can provide commercial fishers flexibility to use a conservative and selective harvest tool during challenging return years that require precise and low impact fishing to reduce ESA-listed species impacts. If selective fishing opportunities increase, fishermen can further achieve sustainable market certifications that increase overall fish prices and profits.

With greater flexibility for managers to implement mark-selective fisheries, scientists and conservationists believe that hatchery production programs may be managed more sustainably with the potential reductions in the proportion of hatchery-origin spawners in the wild, while reducing harvest mortality on wild fish – the very recommendations from the Hatchery Scientific Review Group made in 2009 that “Columbia River fisheries be managed as selective fisheries” to reduce effects of hatcheries on wild salmon and lead to ESA recovery. 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.

This bill will improve the resiliency of rural fishing economies, move towards sustainable fisheries, help improve compliance of state hatchery programs with Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements, and should help all fishing interests in the Columbia River achieve their goals.

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