

Paul L Evans
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 22, 2023

Senator Michael Dembrow, Co-Chair
Representative Khanh Pham, Co-Chair
Natural Resources Sub-Committee, Joint Committee on Ways & Means
82nd Legislative Assembly
Oregon State Capitol

Ref: Public Testimony on SB 5509 and the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham:

I had hoped to participate in the public testimony portion of ODFW's agency budget presentation today. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend "in-person." The good news for you and your committee members – is that my absence will save you some time. However, I feel compelled to send a brief written account of some of my concerns about the agency: most specifically about the fisheries management functions of the agency.

Over the past several years I have become increasingly concerned about the leadership choices (and budgetary allocations) related to the management of our fisheries with special emphasis on the hatchery outcomes. Please understand, all organizations are comprised of people, and sometimes people make mistakes. However, there is a clearly identifiable pattern of negative outcomes up and down the line at ODFW that warrant in-depth study.

The unfortunate truth is that ODFW has been responsible for a series of massive kills in recent years. Millions of salmon were killed before they had a fighting chance to even get to the ocean. While some of these could be associated with natural disasters and factors beyond the control of leadership – many are the result of actions, and in-actions – failures that must be learned from and never repeated. Clogged pipes, late decision-making, technical errors, preventable diseases, long-standing, unresolved maintenance issues, and other published errors have left a significant mark.

If I understand the most recent salmon fishery assessments correctly, Oregon will not have a commercial salmon season this year. Global climate change has undoubtedly played a role, but the actions of ODFW three years ago – and since – cannot be easily dismissed. We need the very best leadership available to develop and then implement a strategic plan for the long-term sustainability of our fisheries. We need to use all tools at our disposal, including private hatcheries, to ensure our stocks are as healthy, as ready for their journey as possible.

In conclusion, I ask that additional scrutiny be given to the fisheries management functions of the agency, with a robust examination of the existing hatchery policies and stock management planning associated with providing Oregonians with sufficient fish for commerce, food, recreation, and species survival. We really cannot afford any more stumbles resulting from leadership inattention.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Evans".

Office: 900 Court St NE, Salem, OR 97301 - Phone: 503-986-1420
District phone: 971-273-0014 – Email: rep.paulevans@state.or.us