

Re: HB 2343

Co Chairs Rep Helm and Owens, Vice Chair McDonald and Honorable members of the House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Thank you for opportunity to Comment on HB 2343, renewing the Columbia Basin Endorsement. We have indicated that we are neutral on HB 2343, but in the current form, we are challenged to support. NSIA was one of the original negotiators and sponsors of this funding source as part of an agreement to move the Columbia River nontreaty gillnet fleet out of the mainstem river into side channel fisheries. The goal was for the sport fleet to “pay it forward” for reforms to provide better conservation and optimize the benefits of fishery resources to the state.

With my comments, I’ll be uploading the Director’s Message from the 2014 fishing regulations pamphlet. The message was explicit regarding the intentions, “The endorsement will fund the transition of non-tribal commercial gillnets out of the mainstem Columbia River into enhanced off-channel areas, freeing up additional salmon and steelhead for sportfishing.”

Since then, the off-channel fisheries are meeting the goals, (nearly every year harvesting more spring chinook than over 140 miles of sportfisheries) this body affirmed a more direct tie to the reforms in the 2021 renewal, and the Washington Governor and Legislature worked to fund a buyback of the Washington fleet. Additionally, the two states do not have concurrent regulations which has resulted in fisheries that penalize the anglers in Oregon who are purchasing the endorsement and are penalizing our State and our industry the economics of tens of thousands of angler trips.

We believe that four years is a more supportable horizon, and that there are ways to assure -the hundreds of thousands of endorsement-purchasing anglers that the reforms are still on track. As always, we are ready and willing to work with other angling groups, ODFW and the legislature on solutions.

Director's Message



A great year for salmon

Salmon is Oregon's most iconic game fish, and Oregonians are passionate about salmon and salmon fishing. Whether it's because of their epic round-trip journey from river to ocean, or the fact they fight hard and taste great, there's something special about salmon.

I'm pleased to say that in 2013 there was some special salmon fishing in Oregon. The fall Chinook return on the Columbia River was record-setting. Almost one million adult fall Chinook were counted at Bonneville Dam, and on one day alone – Sept. 9, 2013 – 63,870 passed the dam.

There were also solid returns of salmon to coastal rivers as fall Chinook returns continued to build and are approaching the levels anglers enjoyed in the early 2000s.

The Deschutes River opened for fall Chinook for the 12th straight year – remember when there was no salmon fishing on the river? This 100 percent wild run is one of the healthiest in the Columbia River Basin and was on track to set a new record in 2013.

Impressive numbers of coho headed up the Willamette River, where managers predicted at least 15,000 would pass the Falls in Oregon City.

And for the Columbia River

The year 2013 marked another milestone in salmon management with the adoption of a package of management reforms for fisheries on the lower Columbia River.

For years, sport anglers on the lower Columbia River have been advocating for a greater share of the available salmon harvest, and the removal of non-tribal commercial gill nets from the mainstem. Thanks to the management reforms adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Oregon State Legislature, we're well on our way to accomplishing these goals.

Under this new management regime, commercial gill nets are being transitioned off the lower mainstem Columbia River into off-channel areas, and the sports share of available salmon harvest is increasing. By the end of the transition period in 2017, for example, 80 percent of available spring Chinook harvest will be earmarked for sport anglers.

Taxpayers and anglers will share the costs of this new management approach. Sportfishing groups and others involved in developing this compromise agreed that in return for increased fishing opportunities, sport anglers would be asked to help fund this effort through a new

Columbia River Basin Endorsement beginning January 1, 2014.

Anglers will need the \$9.75 annual endorsement (or \$1 per day for daily licenses) whenever they are fishing for salmon, steelhead or sturgeon in all rivers and streams within the Columbia Basin. The endorsement will fund the transition of non-tribal commercial gill nets out of the mainstem Columbia River into enhanced off-channel areas, freeing up additional salmon and steelhead for sport fishing.

You'll find more details about this endorsement on the inside front cover of this booklet, or on the ODFW web site at:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/columbia_river_basin_endorsement.asp.

And don't forget trout

Finally, while salmon management was high priority this year, we didn't ignore other popular fisheries. We continued to work to restore and enhance trout fisheries throughout the state using both experimental and tried-and-true techniques. For example:

- In Baker County we introduced tiger muskies into Phillips Reservoir to help control an exploding yellow perch population that has decimated the trout fishery. Since the illegal introduction of yellow perch in the early 1990s, angler use and the value of the fishing to the local economy had declined 90 percent.
- In Lake County we treated Lofton Reservoir with rotenone (a plant-based fish toxicant) to eliminate an invasive Tui chub population. This will allow us to save money by stocking smaller fingerling trout that couldn't compete with the Tui chub.
- Throughout the Cascade mountain range and Eagle Cap Wilderness, we stocked hundreds of high elevation lakes with almost half-a-million fingerling trout to provide fishing opportunities for those who like to add solitude and scenic beauty to their fishing experience.
- At popular Diamond Lake, we revised the regulation to allow year-round fishing and hundreds of anglers took advantage of the new ice fishing opportunities.

For 365 days of the year there is great fishing somewhere in Oregon. Whether it's an iconic world-class river or a small neighborhood pond, take advantage of what this great state has to offer and GO FISHING.

Roy Elicker, Director

Text highlighted in blue is new or changed from 2013