



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish & Wildlife

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**To: The Honorable Ken Helm, Co-Chair and the Honorable Mark Owens, Co-Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water**

House Bill 2345

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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2345, which extends an existing surcharge on recreational and commercial fishing licenses. The bill directs the funding to support critical hatchery maintenance needs and monitoring programs that directly benefit fisheries and conservation. Statutes related to the Oregon Hatchery Research Center Fund and advisory board would be repealed.

History of the Surcharge

In 2014, the Oregon Legislature adopted a surcharge on angling licenses (ranging from \$0.50 to \$1.50 per license) and commercial landing fees (four cents per pound for each fish species landed). The surcharge generates approximately \$1.1 million per biennium. For the past ten years, surcharge funds have been dedicated to the Oregon Hatchery Research Center (OHRC) Fund.

Surcharge Sunset

This surcharge is due to sunset in 2026. In considering whether to pursue an extension on the sunset, the Department considered several factors:

Recent Closure of the OHRC Facility: The OHRC facility is located on a tributary of the Alsea River on Oregon's central coast. In recent years, the facility has been closed due to the on-going, massive, upstream landslide that impacts water quality, makes the facility unreliable for keeping fish alive and conducting experiments, and is a threat to human safety.

Status of the Research: The OHRC was established to conduct research and provide education about hatchery fish production relative to naturally produced ("wild") native fish and fisheries. The three major lines of multigenerational research studies related to mate selection, rearing environment, and olfactory imprinting have recently completed or are coming to a close.

With these major lines of research ending and the physical OHRC center closed, the Department reviewed the continued need for the research program against other priority needs, including:

Hatchery Infrastructure Needs: During the past year, the Department has been completing an extensive review of the state hatchery system with funding provided by the Oregon Legislature.

The assessment highlighted a significant need for capital investment and ongoing maintenance to sustain the system in the future.

Core Program Needs: The Department's budget is largely dependent on revenues from license sales and associated federal taxes. The Governor has introduced HB 2342 on behalf of the Department which would adjust recreational and commercial licenses and permits. Even with the proposed fee adjustment, the Department's budget anticipates about \$8 million in planned reductions to hatcheries, monitoring, enforcement and management in order to maintain expenses in line with license revenues.

Oregon Hatchery Monitoring and Maintenance Fund

HB 2345 was developed with these factors and needs in mind. The proposed legislation would extend the sunset on the surcharge through 2036 and direct these funds to the *Oregon Hatchery Monitoring and Maintenance Fund*.

Surcharge revenues would be directed 50:50 to invest in core hatchery infrastructure maintenance and in monitoring of hatchery fish to ensure any impacts to native fish species are appropriately managed. Since the legislation would conclude the OHRC research facility and funding, the bill also repeals the fund and associated board.

Ongoing Commitment to Research

Even with the proposed change to the surcharge, the Department is committed to continued support for two OSU faculty positions to engage on hatchery research. Additionally, the Department (and OSU faculty) continue to collaborate with researchers at other regional centers for hatchery research (Abernathy Fish Technology Center, Hagerman Fish Culture Experiment Station, & Northwest Science Center).

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