

Submitter: Seth Howe  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB512

Chair Golden, and committee members:

My name is Seth Howe. I reside in Bend but have been fishing for steelhead on the North Umpqua for the better part of 25 years. I have concerns about the overall state of the river, and specifically the summer run of wild steelhead. The drastic decline in summer run numbers over the last couple of decades is certainly multifaceted. Some of it is out of our direct control specifically in relation to factors such as climate change, and wildfire reshaping the landscape. Other facets are within our grasp, such as the hatchery system.

The science is very clear that hatchery fish are detrimental in many ways to their wild counterparts. Overall fitness of wild fish declines in the presence of hatchery steelhead. This includes genetic factors from interbreeding, disease transmission, competition, and altered behavior by wild fish.

In addition, the money saved by the state by not rebuilding the hatchery (\$50-60 million by ODFW estimates) could be far better spent on conservation related endeavors on both the North Umpqua and other rivers across the state. This figure doesn't even include operating costs, or factor in the large amount of money spent on getting just a single hatchery fish to return to the system. This is all at the cost of the taxpayer.

In conclusion, I believe strongly that opposing SB 512 will strengthen numbers of wild steelhead and hopefully in the long term create a more sustainable run of wild fish, or at the very least give them more of a fighting chance.