

Co-chairs Fredrick and Levy, esteemed members of the Committee

My name is David Moskowitz, I have been a wild fish advocate for - and critic of - the Department's budget since 1991.

Every new biennium it is a struggle to fund ODFW to do the work Oregonians expect them to accomplish.

Using the current service level (CSL) to build the budget assumes all the work the agency did in past bienniums is essential to carry through to the next. Neither the Legislature nor ODFW can ever catch up - especially when agencies must reduce expenses.

To escape this conundrum, the Legislature should establish an agency program review schedule so the agency and the Legislature may review program effectiveness on a regular basis.....something to consider in the interim.

An example of this type of review would be the budget note review of Oregon's hatcheries - which have grown in physical size and as a proportion of the agency's overall budget - even though the scientific evidence of the adverse impacts of the hatchery system on wild fish has been consistent and growing since 1977.

You will hear more about this tomorrow when ODFW presents its preliminary findings on the 2023 Budget Note.

Returning to the proposed budget, there are three legislative proposals Ways & Means will consider that are important for the next biennium.

HB 2342 will increase license fees - which are well overdue.

HB 2343 will extend the sunset on the Columbia River Endorsement surcharge that supports monitoring and enforcement for Columbia River fisheries.

HB 2345 will repurpose the Hatchery Research Center surcharge on fishing licenses and apply them to hatchery maintenance and fish monitoring.

Regarding specific budget line items, I urge the Natural Resources subcommittee to consider fully funding the work required in the Klamath Watershed for monitoring and fish screening.

I support the work of the Oregon Water Partnership and concur and incorporate the testimony provided by Kimberley Priestley (WaterWatch) and Caylin Barter (Wild Salmon Center) on reforming Oregon's water laws so there are adequate streamflows for wild fish in the future.

As many of my colleagues testified, anti-poaching funds are critical for ODFW and the OSP to protect wild fish and wildlife for present and future generations and I appreciate their testimony for this critical program.

The NatRes Subcommittee must find a way to fund ODFW's core mission-critical fish monitoring work (the OASIS program). This program is the heart of the agency's wild fish management mission and is proposed to be cut. Please restore these programs.

Finally, there is a \$20 million bond request that would help ODFW begin to address its backlogged hatchery deferred maintenance that is soaring beyond \$200 million. ODFW's Hatchery Resilience Study was aimed to provide a roadmap or blue print for addressing the crumbling hatchery system - since ODFW has not provided a clear path forward as intended - it may be unwise to approve a \$20 million bonding request "blank check."

One example of a very poor investment you will be asked to support is contained in SB 512-2. This bill would divert scarce funds for a burned out hatchery on Rock Creek which turns out to be the most expensive hatchery to repair or operate in ODFW's entire system. SB 512-2 would also conflict with ODFW's premier watershed planning effort aimed at a coast wide management strategy - an effort itself already challenged by a loss of monitoring funding (OASIS). SB 512-2 would be perhaps the worst investment in state hatchery operations amidst a system crying out for strategic, science-based decision making.

Aside from SB 512, these are critical investment programs and without them, challenges for ODFW's Fish Division, which is facing flat license fee revenue, increasing hatchery operation costs and a backlog of deferred maintenance exceeding \$200 million (growing every single day) - the challenges are almost insurmountable.

Tomorrow in your Committee, you will hear about Oregon's failing fish hatchery infrastructure - which requires a long-term investment in concrete, rebar, stainless steel, best practices, and a large number of staff.

At this point, 150 years on from Oregon's first hatchery on the Clackamas River, it is worth asking why Oregon still prioritizes spending for a failing and adverse practice - one that bears a great deal of the blame for the declining status of Oregon's wild salmon and steelhead populations in numerous watersheds.

Some of Oregon's angling organizations have made statements before the Legislature that they are not getting what they have paid for - but it is abundantly clear that they have received exactly what they paid for - a state fish program that has invested an increasingly large amount of public funds into a hatchery program that adversely affects wild fish and is also ill-suited to face the current challenges from climate change.

Oregon is trying to come to grips with a conflicted management policy and an unsustainable fiscal approach while trying to also protect our wild fish legacy.

A truly sustainable future for Oregon's salmon and steelhead populations lies with investment in wild fish, natural production and opening up fish habitat - and success stories abound - chief among them are Oregon Coastal coho as well as wild steelhead and fall chinook on the Klamath River.

I look forward to working with the committee to try to solve these conflicts and to protect Oregon's wild fish populations for future generations.

I will also submit additional materials specifically highlighting issues arising from ODFW's Hatchery Review required in 2023's Budget Note.

Thank you for wrestling with these issues.

Sincerely,  
David A. Moskowitz  
Wild Fish & Wild Rivers Advocate  
NE Portland