

Testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Concerning HB 3441

by
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Thank you for allowing me to present testimony concerning HB 3441. I am the Department Head in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Although I am trained as a Wildlife Biologist, I served on the Coordinating Committee that helped formulate and develop concepts regarding the operation of Oregon Hatchery Research Center (OHRC) and the development of the MOU/Contract between OSU and ODFW regarding the OHRC. I also served on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission for 8 years and thereby learned a little about fish and fish management. I am confused about the purpose of this bill and would like to provide the committee with some observations and suggestions. Specifically, I address the need for this bill, issues with the proposed advisory board, duties of the board, appointing the director and funding.

First, **this bill appears to be an attempted solution to a problem that does not exist.** The OHRC as designed and operated is a unique research facility that is fulfilling its mission. The OHRC is operated by ODFW, which provide approximately \$1.2M per biennium. Oregon State University conducted an international search and hired Dr. David Noakes as the Senior Scientist for the OHRC. Dr. Noakes provides scientific direction for the center and directly supervises much of the research at the center. Both ODFW and OSU pay half of Dr. Noakes' salary.

The OHRC has been a highly successful collaborative enterprise that is fulfilling the mission it was designed for—research and educational outreach related to resolving hatchery and wild fish issues. Dr. Noakes and numerous colleagues attracted to this unique facility have obtained dozens of grants totaling \$500,000 to over \$1.5 Million per year. This level of grant activity would not be possible without the state's investment and recurring support in the OHRC. OHRC-related research projects have produced more than 50 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals; the majority of these projects relate directly to the mission of the OHRC or are focused on hatchery operations. The center has attracted 75 scientists from 21 countries as far away as Iceland, Japan and Chile because of its international reputation. The OHRC also plays an important educational and professional development role. OHRC develops or offers two or more workshops each year focused on hatchery operations or hatchery-wild fish interactions. The OHRC serves to train the next generation of fisheries biologist as well by hosting lab and field exercises for several classes, training numerous interns and support 6-8 graduate student projects each year. The OHRC has also played an important role with K-12 and currently collaborates on a large grant with the Lincoln and Tillamook counties in developing science curriculum.

Dr. Noakes and OHRC programs are evaluated annually by myself and two or three ODFW Fish Division staff as a basis of Dr. Noakes' annual performance evaluation and to provide an opportunity to suggest changes in program focus. Overall oversight for the OHRC is provided by the Advisory Committee. For example during the most recent evaluation (last week) we asked Dr. Noakes to provide additional continuing education for the propagation program staff in the area of developing hatchery management

plans. Another example relates to follow-up on basic research related to straying and homing that has just been conducted at the OHRC with very important implications for hatchery management. We asked Dr. Noakes to work with staff to identify a hatchery and plan and implement a production-scale experiment focused on straying and homing. **If there is a concern that the OHRC is not fulfilling its mission, then a comprehensive review would be the best approach to validating the research, operations and organizational structure and reevaluating the state's investment in the center.**

The OHRC Board proposed in HB 3441 partially duplicates an existing structure but will not be as effective as the current Advisory Committee. The proposed board differs from the current committee in several important ways. The current Advisory Committee has broader representation than the proposed board (15 vs 10); which is more attuned with the Oregon philosophy of citizen involvement. The Advisory Committee includes four scientists while the proposed board has none. Scientific issues related to interactions between hatchery and wild fish are complex and involve highly technical projects and solutions. Scientists on the committee play an extremely important role in helping to evaluate the science conducted at the OHRC and providing credibility. **An Advisory Board composed of laypersons only will not have the expertise to propose research as directed in the bill. Furthermore, a lay board that approves research projects will result in a loss of credibility for the OHRC among the scientific community.** The proposed Board would meet twice a year where as the current committee meets four times—they do a lot of work! HB 3441 calls for the new board to establish strategic directions and operation objectives whereas **the current Advisory Committee has already developed a research strategic plan and an operations plan which took over two years to develop—why reinvent the wheel?** I recommend you delete Section 1 of the bill or if it is retained you consider: (A) appointing 4 scientists to the board; (B) change Board duties to include a review of OHRC strategic research and operations plans; (C) remove “approve” from duty number 4; and (D) remove 3.5—issue requests for research proposals because funding is mostly opportunistic and the OHRC itself does not have excess funds beyond funding for operations to actually fund research.

Section 5 contains language that will unduly restrict the operation of the OHRC. The clause in 5.2.a “while also maintaining the consumptive harvest of hatchery produced fish” may preclude research that needs to be done in the absence of hatchery fish or may be unfeasible in some systems for some species. I suggest you delete the clause—a focus on resolving hatchery and wild fish interactions is a core mission of the OHRC but directing the outcome of the research in advance is not appropriate for a scientific enterprise. The clause “pure wild broodstock hatchery produced fish” in 5.2.b is problematic because it is undefined and because it may restrict potential solutions in selection of hatchery fish. I suggest you delete 5.2.b entirely as it will be covered with a revised 5.2.a. Section 5.2.d is very restrictive of types of opportunities that the OHRC could provide college students. I suggest you delete the remainder of that section starting with “related to determining.....”

Section 6-- the Director in consultation with the Advisory Board appointing a Director of the OHRC is problematic. Although we call him a Senior Scientist, Dr. Noakes currently serves the role of the Director of the OHRC and OSU pays half of his salary. The success of a research enterprise like the OHRC requires long-term continuity in leadership. The idea that you might change Directors because the Advisory Board was displeased with research results will make that position very unattractive to any

scientist. I suggest you modify the section to include Director and OSU to collaboratively appoint the Director of the OHRC, or simply delete the section.

Section 8 is not consistent with biennial funding structure that both ODFW and State Board of Higher Education operate under. This agreement is renegotiated every two years already---Section 8 should formalize that requirement at best, not change the process with 6 months remaining in the fiscal year.

In closing, I suggest you replace this entire bill with a requirement for a comprehensive review of the OHRC; if there are issues with the research or operations of the OHRC such a review would be an important first step in developing corrective actions---this bill is premature.

Thank you for your time and the interest you have shown in the ORHC and I hope you will consider some of my suggestions.

