



TU Celebrates 50 Years of Protecting Cold, Clean, Fishable Water.

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

April 1, 2013

Chair Witt and Committee members-

I am Tom Wolf, chair of the Oregon Council Trout Unlimited, representing the 3000 members we have in Oregon. Trout Unlimited, although we understand and sympathize with the reason for this bill, oppose HB 3437.

As for opposing this bill, it was a tough decision which reflects on the unique position of Trout Unlimited being a conservation group but one made up of fisher persons. On a personal note, I have been fishing since I was 5 and hunting since I was 12 years old. I have hunted and fished in Oregon all my life and it has been a big part of my life whether it being fishing for spring chinook in the Willamette, fly-fishing for trout in the Crooked river or hunting for upland game birds near eastern Oregon. Likewise, the members of TU in Oregon are actively pursuing the sports of hunting and fishing because it also is their great passion. It is one of the reasons that TU members are so active in our mission of restoring and protecting wild salmonids and their habitat. In doing this conservation work we are insuring the future of hunting and fishing in Oregon.

Hb 3437, although misguided, brings up 2 key points which I want to address with some possible solutions. These solutions deals with the discrepancy that may have brought this bill forward, that whereas bird/wildlife viewing brings over \$1 billion dollar a year into the state economy, it provides very little money for ODFW budget. The hunting and fishing community, on the other hand, brings in almost 40 % of ODFW budget, through license sales AND Federal excise taxes on sale of hunting/fishing gear (Pittman-Robinson and Dingell-Johnson Acts) -according to ODFW staff. This amounts to about \$130,000,000 per biennium.

As to point 1, the composition and make-up of ODFW Commission, TU offers these suggestions-

1. That ODFW and or Governor's office convene a work group of all involved stakeholders to come up with a solution to the current issues and composition of ODFW commission.
2. Within the aforementioned stakeholder process, we perhaps looking at some rules or statutes which look specifically at what representation makes up the Commission, maybe using population percentage of user groups as guidelines or other criteria.
3. There should be a very more coordinated effort on the part of the hunting and fishing community to find well qualified candidates for the Commission and work within their community and Governor's office to bring those candidates forward. We have a good process now-it should be used..
4. Look to developing better lines of communication between fishing/hunting and conservation communities so that we can float possible candidates- the best

possible ones dedicated to protection of the future of Oregon's fish and wildlife conservation- to everyone involved.

On Point number 2, future potential funding for non-game conservation for ODFW, possible solutions are-

1. We should work to create special fees which would provide money for ODFW Conservation Strategy and other non-game programs. For example, there is a coalition, including TU, working on HB 3469, which would have a small tax on wild bird seed. The money could be used to fund the ODFW Conservation strategy. Other fees like this could be set up to provide important funding for non-game fish and wildlife.
2. We could work with our Oregon Congressional delegation in DC to have an excise tax, such as is already used on hunting/fishing gear, started on various wildlife viewing equipment such as binoculars.
3. We could greatly increase ODFW's part of the General fund up to 10% of their budget, the money to be used for non-game programs.
4. ODFW and/or Legislature put together a work group to come up with funding ideas such as special fees to be used to fund ODFW programs, especially non-game programs. There are creative people and ideas out there that we need to tap into them.

I know there are many other new concepts possible but these are just a start.

In closing hunting and fishing has been a part of my life for a long time. I can still remember with great fondness, bird hunting with my father, killing my first deer with my grandfather and the first trout I ever caught on a fly, a small 8 inch cutthroat on a small tributary of the Tualatin River. Right now, I make the long hours of the 2013 legislative session a little less burdensome by dreaming about adventures I will be taking this summer and fall- a backpacking trip into the Minian River area to fly-fish in September, a weeklong trip in October with my best friend fishing on the Malheur river and upland bird hunting in November near Pilot Rock with my brothers. As much as hunting and fishing mean to me, I and TU feel that HB 3437, while we understand the motives, is a bill which should not be passed. We can deal with the concerns of hunting/fishing community with the suggestions made earlier. Trout Unlimited feels that membership in the ODFW Commission should not be limited to hunters and fishers. We should be looking for the best possible candidates for conservation of our native fish and wildlife-not whether they hunt or fish.

HB 3437 is not the right answer to the make up of ODFW Commission. To exclude 80% of the population from making decisions on fish and wildlife matters is not the right solution. We need a solution that is a truly democratic solution, one that reflects the views of all citizens of this great state- a truly Oregon solution, as we have conceived many times in our past.