



NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters

April 9, 2013

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMENTS IN OPPOSITON TO HJR 16

The Native Fish Society is a regional fish conservation organization with several hundred members dedicated to the protection and restoration of naturally spawning populations of wild native fish. While many of our members are avid anglers and hunters, we realize that without healthy sustainable populations of wild fish, the future is bleak for not only the fish but also the angling community.

HJR 16 would refer to the Oregon voters the question of whether fishing, hunting, trapping and the taking of wildlife should be considered a right under Oregon's constitution. These activities are currently considered as privileges that can be revoked when that privilege is abused.

The Native Fish Society believes that if this bill were to be referred to the voters and passed, the role of wildlife conservation in Oregon would be changed forever. Rather than seeing the conservation of Oregon's wildlife as the "overriding obligation" of the Fish and Wildlife Commission, as Oregon's attorney general has opined on several occasions, the extractive use of these resources would become the commission's primary goal. Since this is a constitutional amendment, it would take precedence over the State Wildlife Policy (ORS 496.012).

Putting these provisions into the Oregon constitution would also create a serious conflict between our constitution and federal fish and wildlife laws, including the Endangered Species Act. This conflict could jeopardize funding that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife receives for monitoring and evaluating Oregon's progress in restoring federally listed species.

Fishing, hunting and trapping are all important activities but they should not be enshrined in the Oregon Constitution as a right of citizenship.

For these reasons, the Native Fish Society opposes HJR 16 and strongly encourages the committee to also oppose the bill.

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The Native Fish Society

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