



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

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

April 10, 2013

Co-chairs Edwards, Unger and Committee members-

I am Tom Wolf, chair of the Oregon Council Trout Unlimited and I am here to present TU's general support for the 2013-2015 ODFW budget. In my testimony, I will look at specific POP's that TU supports, general programs which shouldn't be cut, some suggestions for cuts, possible future funding suggestions and an overall proposal for bringing more non-resident anglers into the state.

Trout Unlimited supports the Fish Research and monitoring POP's -109, 110, 112 and 115. It is an important function of ODFW to do monitoring and research on wild fish populations. These POP's would insure that there would be adequate funding for key ODFW biologists to work on this research. In a general sense, Trout Unlimited feel that research and study of wild native fish populations in Oregon is the best possible use of funding. We also support POP 116, which would supply funding for ODFW to do their duties concerning the Integrated Water Resources Plan.

As for a program which shouldn't be cut, we support ODFW to continue funding the Hatchery Resource Center. It is important, since they no longer have a Research Division, for ODFW to have a place that important research can be done on many fishery issues. For the department to cut funding for this is the wrong place to make cuts. TU thinks that there are other places which ODFW can cuts can be made which are much less important than a place, such as the Hatchery Research Center, which can drive future studies that can help with our understanding of wild native salmonids and how we can limit the negative impact of hatchery fish on our wild populations.

As for possible cuts, Trout Unlimited suggests that the Legislature look at some cuts in the hatchery programs. We are not suggesting overall cuts but rather that the legislature look at future cuts on hatcheries which are very inefficient and cost-prohibitive. TU also suggests that certain unnecessary hatchery programs such as stocking Atlantic salmon (a species recognized by the Oregon Invasive Species Council as one of the 100 worst invasive species in Oregon) or some of the brook trout programs, also a non-native fish. Trout Unlimited believes that if these programs can be cut and help with future budget cuts to help balance the budget.

As for future funding, we think that there are ways that ODFW can help fund the program by charging extra fees. For example, right several groups, including TU, are working on a bill, HB 3469, which would charge a fee to retailers on wild bird seed. This money can be used to fund the Oregon Conservation Strategy, an important ODFW program which deals primarily with non-game fish and wildlife. There are other funding ideas which can be used, charging a fee which can be used to bring money into ODFW budget. This could be an important source of funding for underfunded programs like non-game fish and wildlife. TU hopes the Legislature encourages ODFW to look strongly

and creating this type of fees and working with stakeholder groups to bring these funding principles forward in the future. Also, in the future the Legislature should look at giving more money to ODFW out of General fund. For example, the Washington State Legislature funds the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife with 20% General funds. TU suggests that ODFW budget, in the future, be increased to 10% General Fund. It is an approach that we need not only with ODFW but with all Natural resource agencies in Oregon-increasing how much funding they receive from General Funds.

In 2010, in the American Fishery Society national magazine, AFS compared the number of states who attracted large number of non-residents fishers into their state. Oregon finished way back on that list, number 45. For a state with the high caliber of fisheries we have, whether salmon in the Columbia, trout or steelhead on the Deschutes or smallmouth on the John Day that is a sad statement. According to ODFW data, only 15,000 non-resident licenses, most of them daily, are purchased annually. We need to look at ways that we can bring more out of state anglers into Oregon so that they can fish in the wonderful places we have in this state and leave their money in rural community economies. When you look at states such as Montana, Michigan, Florida, where millions of dollars are brought into those states by non-resident anglers, we need to work harder to bring those type of fishers into our state. So the state Legislature should look, in the future, at helping ODFW develop and fund ways to market Oregon fishing opportunities.

So, hopefully, the suggestion's Trout Unlimited has made will be used to consider cuts, programs to protect and future ideas.