



## Association of Northwest Steelheaders

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Established 1960

March 23, 2013

To: Chair Dingfelder and members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Fr: Russell Bassett, executive director

Re: Support for HB 2697

Dear Chair Dingfelder and members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written comments, and thank you for your service to the great State of Oregon. I am the executive director of Association of Northwest Steelheaders, representing 1,500 members, most of which are anglers who reside in Oregon.

Steelheaders wholeheartedly support HB 2697. Currently, state and federal agencies expend funds, supplemented with volunteer efforts, to place hatchery carcasses in streams with the approval of DEQ; however, it is currently illegal for the average angler to put their fish carcasses back in the stream. Many of our members already participate in nutrient enhancement, volunteering their time to take excess salmon carcasses from hatcheries to place them in their local watersheds to provide food and nutrients not only for fish, but also the entire food web.

The science around nutrient enhancement is clear. Many studies conducted in the Pacific Northwest have shown that artificially providing marine derived nutrients to watersheds helps dramatically increase the quantity of macroinvertebrates (young salmonids primary food source) and increase the size and quantity of smolts. In addition, carcasses help feed mammals and birds, and even provide much-needed nutrients to the vegetation.

Alaska, Idaho and Washington all already allow anglers to put their carcasses back in the river, and in fact, encourage it. I put a call into several WDFW fishery leaders to ask them how it was working for them. Bob Leland, WDFW steelhead program manager, said that the agency has not had any complaints about the program from the Washington State Police, and that the state believes the program is beneficial. Leland said (and this is a direct quote), "Most of our waters are not very productive; we are basically harvesting down to the last hatchery fish. Our numbers are pretty low, so allowing anglers to put carcasses back into the system helps provide nutrients that would otherwise be taking from the system."

We understand that there are some concerns with creating unsightly messes and with enforcing existing game laws. We are confident that ODFW will eliminate or minimize this concerns through administrative rule making.

Steelheaders believe very strongly in nutrient enhancement, and see this bill as easy way to get the average angler involved in it. If the bill is passed, we plan to do a public education campaign, including taking out a full page ad in the ODFW Angling Regulations to educate anglers on the importance of nutrients and how to place carcasses properly.

The Northwest Steelheaders urges you to pass this bill out of committee.

Respectfully,

Russell Bassett, executive director