



# NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

*Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters*

5.15.13

**Statement in Support of HB 3441  
to the  
Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

The Native Fish Society is a regional wild fish advocacy organization with several hundred members dedicated to the protection and restoration of naturally spawning populations of wild native fish. My name is Jim Myron and I am here today to offer our support for the passage of HB 3441.

The largest remaining barrier to the restoration of wild native fish populations in Oregon is the state's fish propagation program and the associated mixed stock fisheries aimed at harvesting hatchery fish. To the extent that the Oregon Hatchery Research Center can provide guidance to the state on science issues related to the effects of hatchery fish on wild fish populations and their environments, which leads to policy and management changes by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, that would be a very good outcome and a valid reason to improve the function of the Center through the passage of this legislation.

Oregon has an excellent example of how to go about recovering populations of wild salmon in their management record of Oregon Coastal Coho salmon over the past decade. When the state realized that we had a crisis with OCN coho, the first thing that ODFW did was to stop the harvest of the fish and eliminate all introductions of hatchery coho along the central Oregon coast. The fish have responded accordingly. While OCN coho are still far from reaching historic population numbers, they are certainly on the road to recovery due to the quick response to the crisis by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. While the successes with OCN coho recovery might not be able to be repeated with other species, we can certainly learn a lot from this experience.

One particular issue that could be studied at the Oregon Hatchery Research Center is the question of why wild fish survive at a much higher rate than hatchery fish. If that mystery could be resolved, the state might be able to reduce its hatchery production substantially and still have sufficient numbers of hatchery fish returning to support viable fisheries. This could result in the savings of millions of dollars in fish production costs while reducing the critical problem with hatchery fish straying into streams and spawning with wild fish. This is just one example of important research that could be done at the HRC.

We thank you for this opportunity to comment on this important bill and we look forward to our participation in the future operation of the Oregon Hatchery Research Center. This legislation could be the catalyst for rebuilding the research capacity of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, which could lead to better future management decisions that are supported by good science.