



Oregon

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Department of Fish and Wildlife

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To: The Honorable Jackie Dingfelder, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources



**Testimony by
Curt Melcher, Deputy Director
Dr. Bruce McIntosh, Fish Division
Department of Fish and Wildlife
House Bill 3441A**

Good afternoon Chair Dingfelder and members of the committee. My name is Curt Melcher, Deputy Director for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the committee with these comments on HB 3441A.

The Oregon Hatchery Research Center (OHRC) was approved by the 2003 legislature and began operations in 2005. The OHRC is owned by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and operated jointly by ODFW and Oregon State University (OSU). The mission of the OHRC is to understand the mechanisms that may cause differences between hatchery and wild salmon; develop approaches to best manage differences to meet fishery and conservation objectives; and help Oregonians understand the role and performance of hatcheries in responsibly using and protecting Oregon's native fish. The OHRC Senior Scientist (Dr. David Noakes), is an OSU professor and is advised by a non-voting, 15 member advisory committee that represents science (4), sport fishing (1), commercial fishing (1), conservation (1), watershed councils (1) local government (1), resource producers (1), education K-12 (1), tribes (1), the federal government (1) and the public-at-large (2). The advisory committee assists with the development of long-term operation and research planning; provides advice on working papers, reports and outreach materials; develops expectations, guidelines and protocols for committee operation; and provides a communication mechanism between the OHRC and their constituents.

The OHRC Research Plan describes two tiers of research. Tier one is advanced scientific (basic) research to understand the underlying differences that may exist between hatchery and wild fish. Tier two is operation and applied research to develop improved fish culture and release practices in light of the differences between hatchery and wild fish. Some of the findings have direct application to fishery management and hatchery practices. Other findings may provide a foundation for future applied research.

HB 3441A would establish a 13 member board that includes 10 voting members but does not include any scientists. Scientists play an extremely important role in helping to evaluate the science conducted at the OHRC and providing creditability, especially within the scientific community. Furthermore, a board that votes to approve research projects may result in a

loss of credibility for the OHRC among the scientific community. We recommend that the board include some science representation.

The relationship between ODFW and OSU is an important one. HB 3441A states that the ODFW Director after consulting with OSU and the board, shall appoint the OHRC Director. The Director of the OHRC is an OSU academic appointment. Input from ODFW is important but, since this is an OSU faculty position, we recommend that the final decision to appoint the Director be made by OSU.

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