



Oregon

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Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Date: February 28, 2013

To: The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources



**Testimony by
Curt Melcher, Deputy Director
Department of Fish and Wildlife
House Bill 2697**

Good morning Chair Witt and members of the committee. My name is Curt Melcher, Deputy Director for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments on HB 2697.

HB 2697 allows anglers to discard the carcass of a legally caught fish into the water from which the fish was caught. The carcass must be discarded at least 100 feet from any public access point and more than 10 feet from shore.

Marine derived nutrients are an important component to a healthy watershed and aquatic food webs. Since the 1990's, ODFW, with approval from DEQ, has conducted a comprehensive nutrient enhancement program where excess hatchery fish carcasses are placed in streams by volunteers. In 2007, carcasses placed individually "by hand" were determined by DEQ to not be a pollution point source. Following this decision ODFW developed guidelines based on the previous DEQ approval to specify that these carcasses should be added in a manner and location that mimics natural recruitment and below a threshold of 2,500 pounds per mile.

Carcasses are primarily placed from October through January. However, placements may occur in every month. While the nutrient enhancement program has grown over the past 15 years the placement rate has remained relatively stable in recent years. During the 2011-12 nutrient enhancement season, ODFW, with help from a variety of partners and volunteers, was involved in the placement of more than 36,000 hatchery surplus Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead carcasses (411,000 pounds) in 107 waterways across the state. This translates to an average of 725 pounds of carcasses, or 75 individual carcasses, placed per stream mile within the treatment areas.

During review and development of angling regulations, the question of "why can't I clean my fish in the stream?" is frequently raised by many anglers. The Fish and Wildlife Commission has not been able to address this through the angling regulation process due to the language in ORS 164.785.

As currently drafted, HB 2697 does not cover streams or stream reaches that are less than 20 feet wide. It only allows anglers to clean their fish at the end of their fishing day and excludes large sections of other waterbodies where beaches are a common substrate or where the entire river



section or lake considered public access points. A violation of any of these conditions is also considered a Class-A misdemeanor.

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