



NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters

April 2, 2015

**STATEMENT TO
THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**SB 5511
BUDGET OF THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

The Native Fish Society is a regional wild fish advocacy organization with over seven hundred members. Our mission is to protect and restore wild native fish and the habitats that sustain them.

About a year ago, the Native Fish Society began advocating for a new approach to the allocation of revenues in the budget of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The idea was to attempt to align the various programs within the agency with their most appropriate funding sources. Revenues from the sale of hunting licenses and tags would continue to be spent on programs that directly benefit the hunting community. Fees received from the sale of commercial and recreational fishing licenses and tags would also support programs benefiting the consumptive users of fish. General funds allocated to the agency would all be allocated to support conservation activities and other programs that benefit the public at large as well as the majority of wildlife species in the state that are not hunted or fished for. Federal dollars would continue to be spent on activities directly related to the purpose for which those funds were provided to the state of Oregon. Except for some items in the base budget, this new allocation approach has been generally endorsed by the department and the governor in the Governor's Recommended Budget under consideration by the Legislature at this time.

POP 101: Examples of this new approach include POP #101 that would fund a portion of several dozen field positions with general fund dollars rather than license fees. This reflects the reality that many field staff spend time on issues not directly related to hunting and fishing and it's not appropriate to continue to fund 100% of their time with revenues received from hunters and anglers.

POP 102: would allocate dollars from the proposed increase in fees for hunters and fishers to pay for programs that directly support those activities. If the proposed fee increases are not approved by the legislature, then the department should reduce or eliminate programs that directly benefit those user groups, such as the fish propagation program and the implementation of the 25 year Recreational Angling Plan. Programs that provide broad public

benefit and support the agency's conservation mission should not be adversely affected if the fee increases are not approved.

There is also a policy option package in the Oregon State Police budget that would provide a general fund allocation to support 17 fish and wildlife enforcement officers that are currently paid for by license revenues. Switching the funding for these positions from license dollars to general fund revenues reflects the fact that these officers do much more than just fish and wildlife enforcement. In many areas of rural Oregon, these officers are the only police presence for many miles and it's appropriate that funding for these positions come from the general fund.

The Oregon Legislature has the opportunity to begin rebuilding the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife into one of the premier fish and wildlife management agencies in the West. Restructuring how resources are allocated to programs within the agency is an important component of this rebuilding process and will return the agency's focus to carrying out their conservation mission as their highest priority. We encourage you to take this important step.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 5511.

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