



Coastal Conservation Association

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Good morning Co-Chairs Devlin, Rayfield and members of the Committee.

My name is Bruce Polley, Vice President and Government Relations Chairman for CCA Oregon. I am a volunteer with CCA and an avid recreational angler living in Sherwood. CCA is one of the largest marine conservation organizations in the country. Here in Oregon, CCA has a dozen chapters across the state and has been a key player in state fishery management on behalf of recreational anglers.

I am here today to outline the concerns CCA on ODFW's budget request and associated legislative proposals, which includes significant recreational fishing license fee increases. We understand ODFW's need for additional revenues, but believe the budget must include policies to grow recreational fishing opportunity and the resulting license sales and agency revenues, rather than merely raising license fees. We also believe the budget must place a greater emphasis on addressing key threats to the future of our fisheries and recreational fishing.

Each year about 625,000 licensed anglers make roughly 5.2 million angler trips and spend over \$780 million in Oregon. Recreational fishing provides immense economic benefits to Oregon. Recreational fishing is also the leading source of revenue for ODFW, with recreational license fee revenue currently accounting for 19% of the Department's budget. Federal fishing dollars, including excise taxes paid by recreational anglers, fund another 1/3 of agency's overall budget. By comparison, commercial fishing revenue provides only 2.3%. The state general fund accounted for only 5% of ODFW's current biennial budget

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and even with the proposed increase of general fund dollars in this budget request, which we support, general fund would still only amount to 8% of the agency's budget.

Recreational anglers have been asked time and time again to fund agency activities, including those that don't directly benefit them. This is contrary to the claims of some groups that call for even more license fee increases to underwrite ODFW activities. It is against this backdrop that the proposed license fee increases should be considered. The proposal assumes a 32% increase in the Salmon/Steelhead tag for residents, a 66% increase in the resident senior angler license, and a 12% increase in the Sports Pac. Recreational anglers have consistently stepped up to the plate to fund our fisheries, particularly when it is tied to increased opportunity and priorities important to sport fishers. A good example includes the new \$9.75 Columbia River endorsement to fund the Columbia River fishery reforms adopted by Oregon and Washington.

We would ask you to focus on the following proposals and priorities as you consider ODFW's budget and any license fee increases:

Maximizing Economics, Growing Sportfishing Opportunity & License Sales: ODFW should be directed to continue implementing reforms that recognize and grow the economic and revenue benefits of recreational fishing. For example:

The Oregon-Washington Columbia River reforms, when fully implemented, will generate at least 75,000 more angler trips – a 20% increase. This will correspond to increased license sales and increased revenues to ODFW and the state. The agency must continue implementing this and other policies intended to grow license sales.

Funding Hatchery Reform, Improvements, and Strategic Increases in Production:

Hatcheries fuel most of Oregon's popular salmon and steelhead fisheries, while also contributing to commercial fisheries up and down the Pacific coast. We support hatcheries and efforts to improve their efficacy so we can maintain robust fisheries consistent with

native fish conservation. This is a critical issue to the recreational fishing community. Many of our state's hatcheries are aging and in need of investment to produce hatchery fish consistent with modern, science-based hatchery management -- we urge this committee to consider capital funding for these needs. Meanwhile, we also urge the Committee to direct ODFW to grow fisheries through strategic increases in production, including providing funding for promised increases and monitoring under the Coastal Multi-Species Plan. This plan reduced hatchery production in some coastal rivers but called for increases in others -- we are concerned that the increases will not be adequately funded.

Predation: Many of you may be aware of the record number of sea lions that have entered the lower Columbia River this year. This continues a recent trend that is threatening endangered salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. In fact, a recent study from scientists at NOAA indicates that marine mammal predation may be affecting 40% of the endangered Columbia River spring Chinook run. Predation from Cormorants is also having a significant impact on out-migrating salmon smolts. These predator populations are unnaturally large primarily due to federal policies and laws. Fortunately, the feds are beginning to take action to address these policies. ODFW must meaningfully engage in this effort and the 15-17 budget should include a plan and funding for dealing with this challenge.

In summary, recreational anglers are opposed to this proposed fee increase as currently structured. Merely raising license fees is not sustainable for ODFW. Instead, the budget must also include policies that recognize the economic benefits of recreational fishing and grow recreational fishing opportunity and license sales to reverse the trends we have seen in declining participation among Oregonians. We look forward to working with the Committee and ODFW to shape these proposals in the coming weeks.