

Legislative Testimony Regarding Proposed ODFW Budget

Esteemed Chair and Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to add my voice to those of other sports anglers who have testified today.

For the record, my name is Brad Halverson and I reside in Hillsboro, OR.

As a Life Member and current state board member of NW Steelheaders, and Life Member and past state board member of CCA, it could be construed I am speaking on their behalf. But, I would ask you to take a more global perspective and construe my testimony as speaking on behalf of all sports anglers in Oregon.

You are convened today to review and rule on the ODFW budget for the next biennium. It is my testimony that the model for that budget is flawed. It relies disproportionately on angler fees and endorsements. But, our reality today cannot sustain department programs and manpower tactics, as we experience a continuing decline in angler participation and commensurate license revenue due to a number of variables. Some of those variables in fairness are beyond legislative, Commission or agency control, such as the advent of Xbox and other distractions to our younger generations of potential sports anglers. But, many of those variables are clearly in your domain.

To attract a growing audience of sports anglers, two elements are required: affordable license fees, and Opportunity. Opportunity is defined as being able fish longer seasons in more basins with a likelihood of catching their prey. The latter is significantly dependent on sustained and expanding hatchery production, and may be discussed by others, but is not the focus of my testimony.

Many of us committed sports anglers are older and have resources. So, increasing fees and endorsements will not deter us. But, the target audience the Department seeks, I surmise, is the younger generations. To the twenty somethings and thirty somethings, these fees are real money and a barrier to entry. ODFW models demonstrate this inverse relationship between fee levels and angler participation. In fact, I believe they are modeling a 10,000 person decline related to this latest round of fee increases. They are confident the increased fees will cover this decline; but it is disintegrating spiral to extinction.

We urge you select committee members to help forge the paradigm shift that will save the Department and allow them to add personnel and programs that will attract and sustain a growing population of license holders. Our coastal state neighbors access the General Fund in their respective states on a much more significant basis than Oregon. We ask you correct that imbalance by funding the budget before you primarily, if not exclusively, from taxpayer funds.

Finally, as sports anglers are presently the primary benefactor for agency programs, we ask this Committee to provide whatever influence it has with the Governor's office to insure at least one of the two Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission seats presently vacant be filled with an advocate for our important community. The present makeup is weighted heavily to conservationists, and commercial anglers. We seek no less than a compelling representation on that body.

Thank you for your time, and consideration of the needs of all sports anglers in Oregon.