

Oregon

Legislative Budget Committee:

My name is Tamara Mautner, and my husband and I own a charter fishing business in Garibaldi, Oregon. My family has been directly involved in the charter business for over 15 years, and members of my family are also currently involved in numerous advisory committees and councils regarding fishing regulations. I am writing this letter to address the issue of the proposed fee increases to the angling and shellfish licenses here in Oregon. Every angler that takes one of our fishing trips is required to have a fishing license, and many purchase shellfish licenses as well, thereby making the charter fishing industry one of the largest sellers of daily permits in the state. With over 2,500 anglers fishing from our two boats last summer, we spent over \$26,000 on Pre-Paid daily fishing licenses. With three charter businesses just in Garibaldi, and somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 charter boats in all of Oregon, we represent quite a large portion of the Oregon daily fishing license users. I urge you to carefully consider the impact this will make on the overall number of tourists who travel to the Oregon Coast, as well as the many coastal communities who will suffer greatly if this proposal is approved.

Let me first say that as a business owner, I understand costs of doing business, as well as the costs involved in managing a department as large as the ODFW. I understand that price increases are inevitable, and I think most people understand when prices increase slightly every few years. However, I also know that a large increase in fees such as this will be enough to stop many people from coming to Oregon to fish, crab or clam. I believe they will turn elsewhere, or simply opt out of fishing all-together. Under the proposed fee increase schedule, the cost of licenses required for a basic bottom ½ day fishing/crabbing excursion for a non-resident guest will rise from just over \$28 (by far the highest on the coast already) to an alarming \$43 in 2020. This will constitute 40% of the cost of our actual fishing trip. Currently, the cost of Washington daily fishing licenses *including shellfish* are \$11.35 (resident) and \$20.15 (non-resident). California is the cheapest at only \$15.12 for a daily combined angling and shellfish license.

After reviewing the fee increase proposals for other types of licenses, I noticed that the increase on several items was scheduled at a fairly reasonable rate (14% over 6 years - which averages approximately 2.3% a year). The proposed fee schedule for the non-resident shellfish license represents an increase of 65% over 6 years (averaging 10.8% a year). I understand that some increases cannot be avoided, but I think a sudden rate increase of this magnitude will result in a backfire – the very thing the ODFW is trying to accomplish (producing more revenue) will actually have the opposite effect.

I'd like to reference a quote from Guy Norman (WDFW Southwest Regional Director) as published in a recent news article. He addresses Washington's similar struggles regarding the increased cost of managing fish and wildlife, and although he specifically mentions hunting rather than fishing, I think we can learn something from his projection. He states, "*We think that by selectively reducing certain fees we can increase the number of hunters, and thereby increase revenue.*" I cannot stress the importance of this mindset enough. If we keep fishing and shellfish license fees reasonable (especially to first timers and beginners like we see so often in the charter industry), we will build a sturdy consumer base for the product. More people fishing equals more license revenue. There is no long-term benefit from pricing out our future customers just to fill a short term budget gap.

We coastal communities depend on our out-of-state visitors to drive our economy. If they are continually bombarded by increased fees in Oregon, they will go elsewhere. They do have a choice. This not only affects charter fishermen, but also affects hotels, restaurants, markets, gas stations, seafood processors, and virtually every other business in our tourism-driven economies. This proposed fee increase should be inspected very carefully before implementation, treating it as you would treat an executive decision in any business seeking additional revenue. Our prices are already higher than the "competition" (Washington, California, and yes, even Idaho). If our prices continue to rise much higher than our "competitors," we will lose business. With up to 41% of our fishermen coming from another state, neither the ODFW nor the coastal communities of Oregon can afford to risk losing the business of our out-of-state visitors.

I hear from hundreds of people a day during the peak season, and have heard numerous complaints of the cost of fishing licenses in Oregon. One recent encounter stands out in my mind. A man from Idaho came through my door to inquire about a bottom fishing trip. After hearing the price and nodding his head, he inquired about fishing and shellfish licenses. He told me that because of the added license fees, his family wouldn't be able to afford it this year, and that they would try to "stay home next year to save up" for a trip the following year. I can only imagine how many people will do the same – decide to find something closer to home that is less expensive – if this fee schedule is implemented.

I would like to propose a smaller fee increase on the daily angling and shellfish licenses and/or a combination option for shellfish and angling license that brings us more in line with our neighboring states. Another option could include offering a lower price for a one-day non-resident shellfish permit (rather than the current 3-day permit. I believe this would offer reasonably priced options that won't devastate the coastal economy, and incentive for beginners and visitors to get excited about fishing while still providing revenue to the ODFW.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Tamara Mautner

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Owners Garibaldi Charters