

Dear Ways & Means Members:

I am a long time Oregonian, and an active conservationist. I am a river enthusiast and a fisherman. I have spent my professional and personal life trying to help restore, protect and enjoy rivers. I think most Oregonians would tell you that our rivers and lakes are one of the key reasons they live in this state.

I understand you are considering a bill – SB 247 - that addresses the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget. I strongly support full funding for the ODFW Water Quality/Quantity Program. Do not cut the Fish Water Program. You should support full funding for ODFW district or field biologist positions.

The Water Quality/Quantity Program and the biologist positions are budgetary priorities. These are key things to be funded, whether through the use of license fee revenue, general funds appropriated by the legislature, or a mixture of the two funding sources. That program and those positions are the key scientific underpinning that allow the State to implement its Fiduciary Obligations, as the Trustee of the water, fishery and wildlife resources of this State.

This is not the time to cut the heart out of the State's ability to manage water in a key resource agency. We have a major drought on our hands, and that could spell doom for our fisheries if the agency charged with protecting them loses the key scientific and technical abilities to address the legal and substantive issues that surround the use of water and its effects on fish and wildlife.

I, and most Oregonians, would support increases in licenses and fees for commercial and recreational fishing activities in an amount sufficient to pay for all programs that benefit these user groups. I, and most Oregonians, also support the use of general taxpayer revenues to pay for the water program, conservation programs, and other activities that benefit Oregon's citizens and the water and fishery/wildlife resources they love.

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