



Coastal Conservation Association

Mr. Roy Elicker, Director  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)  
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE  
Salem, Oregon 97302

May 16, 2014

Director Elicker,

I am writing on behalf of Coastal Conservation Association Oregon (CCA Oregon) in advance of the ODFW Town Hall meetings on its proposed 2015-2017 budget. CCA Oregon had members involved in the External Budget Advisory Committee (EBAC) process and appreciated the opportunity to better understand ODFW's budget and the challenges we all face in funding fish and wildlife management in our state. However, we do have a number of comments, questions, and concerns related to the budget request.

First and foremost, CCA members believe ODFW must focus on increasing the number of recreational fishing licenses sold, rather than the price of those licenses. The long term fiscal health of the Department hinges on reversing recent declines in licenses sales by taking concrete actions to improve and promote robust recreational fishing opportunity. Providing robust and predictable fishing seasons will fuel additional license sales, generate additional revenue for the agency, and increased revenue and state tax collections -- a true win-win proposition. Our members would like to see a plan of action from ODFW for policies, proposals, and the funding necessary to provide more recreational fishing opportunity. As you may know, there is growing frustration in the recreational fishing community that is likely to generate significant opposition to proposed license fee increases. Recent agency actions like the adoption of an overly large and punitive Youngs Bay exclusion zone area, the barbless hook requirement in the Columbia and all tributaries, and challenges to hatcheries have created significant mistrust.

CCA Oregon has appreciated the opportunity to work with ODFW in recent years and would like nothing more than to support a license fee increase if the department outlines a compelling argument for how it will benefit recreational anglers and our fisheries. There are several key areas that we believe deserve particular attention.

Implementation of Columbia River fishery reform plan: There is significant frustration and cynicism around the implementation of the plan, including the recent agency actions mentioned above. This frustration will only increase as recreational anglers pay the new endorsement fee and perceive that they have little to show for it in terms of increased fishing opportunity and enhanced fisheries. We urge you to consider specific actions to enhance recreational fisheries and promote this increased fishing opportunity under the mainstem recreational priority included in the plan.

We would also like to better understand what effect the Lower Mainstem Columbia River Fisheries Management Reform agreement is having on license sales and how that will shift as the plan is fully implemented during the 2015-2017 biennium. As you know, the conservative estimate provided by ODFW-WDFW during development of the plan indicated it would generate an additional 75,000 angler trips when fully implemented. This would represent a 20-percent increase over the baseline.

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What does this mean in terms of increased license sales and revenue? How can we work with you to identify additional enhancement actions which can be taken to increase fishing opportunity and license sales further? What can ODFW do working with WDFW to reduce interceptions of Columbia River fish in Alaskan, Canadian, and coastal commercial fisheries to increase recreational opportunity in the Columbia?

**Maintaining and enhancing responsible hatchery production:** Hatcheries fuel most of Oregon's popular salmon and steelhead fisheries. Recreational anglers are very concerned about growing threats and reductions in hatchery production, including those brought about through litigation and agency management plans. CCA Oregon supports the important role hatcheries have to play in providing harvest opportunities while conserving, sustaining, and rebuilding salmon and steelhead stocks. We also support efforts to improve the efficacy of hatchery programs to ensure that, consistent with native fish conservation, opportunities are not unnecessarily constrained.

We urge ODFW to develop a plan for maintaining our current hatchery programs and production levels while also looking for opportunities to enhance hatchery production benefiting recreational fisheries. Recreational anglers are willing to pay more for increased numbers of fish and opportunity, but are not willing to pay more for reductions in hatchery production and fishing opportunity. While this is a key priority for anglers across the state, fisheries in our coastal and southwest Oregon Rivers are heavily dependent on ODFW's leadership related to hatchery production and management.

**Taking action to address unnatural levels of predation:** Another key concern to our members is the growing impact of avian and marine mammal predation on our fisheries. While the budget proposal envisions a study related to Double-crested Cormorant predation, it offers little detail about future actions to address this and other significant predation issues. We are interested in seeing a plan of action from the Department that includes reliable funding sources to carry out predation control activities.

CCA Oregon's EBAC representative will have other comments and suggestions as you finalize ODFW's budget request. However, these comments are meant to initiate a discussion about how ODFW plans to increase recreational fishing opportunity and the resulting license sales so essential to Oregon's economy and ODFW's long term fiscal health.

Sincerely,

*Jack Smith*

President CCA Oregon

cc:  
Curt Melcher  
Ed Bowles  
Bruce McIntosh

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