

Mark Trenholm (Wild Salmon Center) Testimony before the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
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Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Witt, and members of the committee,

My name is Mark Trenholm, and I reside at 7104 N Seward Avenue, Portland, OR. I am a Senior Program Manager with the Wild Salmon Center in Portland, OR.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment today on the ODFW budget. I would like to speak to two items in the budget now being considered by this committee: the first, reinstatement of funding for ODFW salmonid monitoring (under Package 090 Adjustments for Inland Fisheries), and the second, full funding for ODFW's Water Quality/Quantity Program (POP 108.)

The Importance of Funding ODFW Salmonid Monitoring to Coho Recovery / De-listing

The Wild Salmon Center is leading a public-private partnership on the Oregon coast with a very simple goal: help locally-led partnerships restore the health of coastal watersheds so that the state of Oregon may become the first state to recover and see de-listed a species of Pacific Salmon.

To accomplish this goal, coastal partners – like Watershed Councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Land Trusts, and other local groups – require two types of support: 1) the best available science, to ensure that the right types of projects are implemented where they will yield the greatest benefit; and 2) sufficient funding, to ensure that partners can implement projects at a pace and scale that is sufficient to promote recovery.

The “Coast Coho Partnership” has initiated a program called the “Coast Coho Business Plan” to deliver this technical and financial support to local restoration partnerships. The Business Plan program works with coastal partnerships to develop local coho recovery plans and coordinates funders to implement the plans’ highest priority projects. Three pilot plans are now underway in the Elk, Siuslaw, and Nehalem watersheds.

The Coho Partnership includes the right partners at the table to accomplish the goal of recovering Oregon Coast coho. The National Marine Fisheries Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife provide technical expertise; the NOAA Restoration Center, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board provide funding for project implementation; and Wild Salmon Center facilitates the local planning effort and leverages additional restoration project funding.

Unfortunately, budget cuts proposed to the ODFW monitoring program undermine these partners' ability to reach their goal of recovery and de-listing. How?

The Achilles heel of the watershed restoration effort in general is demonstrating how restoration projects lead to measurable improvements in critical habitat indicators, like water temperature and habitat complexity, at a meaningful scale, and how/whether these improvements actually increase fish populations over time. Because of the state's Life Cycle Monitoring (LCM) Program, the Nehalem watershed is one of a small number of sites – and the only one on the north coast – where partners can directly address this issue. Accordingly, the LCM Program in the Nehalem, which is de-funded in the Governor's budget, is a tremendous resource to not only local project implementation but also the broader recovery effort.

Because of the wealth of data that has been collected to date through the Nehalem LCM program – ODFW began collecting fish and habitat data there in 1998 – the restoration community has an extraordinary opportunity in the Nehalem to clearly demonstrate how watershed restoration can benefit wild salmon populations at a significant scale (the North Fork Nehalem, which is a collection of three 6th field watersheds.) When NMFS begins its status review of OC coho, data that can objectively show that watershed restoration improves the health of coast coho populations will be essential to the case for de-listing. If the LCM program is de-funded this opportunity is lost, along with numerous benefits to local watershed practitioners.

We strongly encourage funding for re-instatement of the Nehalem LCM Program.

Fully Fund POP 108

Wild Salmon Center recognizes declining instream flows as the greatest threat to wild salmonid populations in Oregon in the 21st century. If we do not protect our sources of cold clean, water, strong wild salmon populations will steadily decline, and the recovery of weakened runs will become an impossibility. In short, without sufficient instream flows, the persistence of wild salmon and all of the benefits they provide – economic, ecological, social, and cultural – will be jeopardized.

Unfortunately, this looming threat is not garnering sufficient attention. In its August 2016 feature "Draining Oregon," the Oregonian sounded the alarm about the dire state of Oregon's ground and surface water management. One of the problems identified, "[l]awmakers routinely budget no money at all for studies to expand Oregon's spotty knowledge of groundwater supplies. At current funding levels, the work won't finish until 2096."

For these reasons, Wild Salmon Center strongly supports full funding of POP 108 and ODFW's Water Program. Already under-funded, this Program is vital to the state's ability to protect and

restore instream flows. In addition to other essential services, the program supports two positions that are currently working on instream flow studies as part of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. These studies were recognized by the Oregonian (and many others) as a critical first step to address the looming water crisis in Oregon.

Thank you, Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Witt, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions."