



Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

Feb. 9, 2017

Trout Unlimited letter of support for HB 2295

Chair Helm and committee members-

I am Tom Wolf, here representing Trout Unlimited (TU), this nation's largest coldwater conservation organization with 3200 members in Oregon and 155,000 plus throughout the United States. TU's members are actively involved in our mission to protect and restore wild salmon and trout and their habitat. TU members volunteer many hours engaging in advocacy and habitat projects to ensure healthy watersheds for the future of wild salmonid species and for citizens of our nation to enjoy. I am here today representing TU and its volunteers in support of HB 2295.

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) provides many critical services among them several that directly affect the health of salmon, trout and other coldwater fish species and their watersheds. These services include processing, approving and enforcing water right transactions for instream uses and ensuring the proper and equitable administration of existing water rights through water master services. Salmon, trout and other fish species rely on adequate quantity and quality of water within streams at key times to provide sufficient habitat. Ensuring adequate flow for fish species takes on a new urgency in the face of climate change and predicted future drought conditions, especially in the high desert streams of Oregon; areas particularly susceptible to the effects of both climate change and drought yet also extremely important to Oregon's fish and wildlife. Therefore, TU has a particular interest in ensuring that OWRD has the resources it needs to perform its critical functions.

Unfortunately, OWRD's current fee schedule, passed in the 2013 session, is scheduled to revert to 2009 levels this year without correcting legislation. This will significantly impact OWRD's ability to continue its current service level and will likely result in a significant decrease in services. TU supports HB 2295 because it facilitates reasonable fee increases that will allow OWRD to maintain its existing level of service including those that facilitate the protection of instream flows. While fee increases are not always politically popular (and it would be great if there was other ways OWRD could be funded) the reality is that fees provide a large part of OWRD's budget. The fee increases are reasonable and Trout Unlimited is enthusiastic in its support of HB 2295.

As a passionate fly angler, this summer I will be fishing many eastern Oregon trout streams such as the Chewecan and Blitzen. These high desert streams are very dependent on adequate stream flows and cold water temperatures to protect their unique great basin redband trout. Passing HB 2295 will enable

WRD to continue to provide staffing and services to protect the flows of these streams. So for the unselfish reason of protecting our unique Oregon native fish species, and the very selfish reason of making sure I can continue to pursue my passion for fly fishing, I, and Trout Unlimited, urge this committee to pass HB 2295.