



## **HB 2076 Fish Screen Devise Subsidy**

*Testimony for House Ag and Natural Resources 2.14.2017*

It's time to end this subsidy and require fish screening devices to protect fish when farmers divert water for irrigation.

The tax credit for fish screening devices, bypass devices and fishways has been a flawed effort. Though it's been available since 1989, these devices are evidently still needed in thousands of situations, yet the tax credit was provided to only 24 devices in 2015, according to the tax expenditure report. About half of those were required devices, [\*according to the Daily Astorian:\*](#)

*Between 2010 and 2015, Oregon has issued 230 tax credits for the installation of fish screens at an average amount of \$819, according to the Legislative Revenue Office.*

*"We have tens of thousands of unscreened diversions, so this is way of chipping away at those," said Shannon Hurn, ODFW's deputy director for fish and wildlife programs.*

*While the amount of money spent on the tax credits is relatively small, Hurn said it helps incentivize voluntary installation of fish screens, she said.*

*The program also smoothes the process for mandatory installations, since irrigators are required to install fish screens when establishing new water rights or changing the point of diversion, she said.*

*"When they are required, it is a very tense conversation and this makes it more palatable," said Hurn, who estimated that roughly half the tax credits are used for mandatory installations.*

*The tax credit supplements a cost-share program that assists landowners with money and technical expertise.*

If we keep extending this "incentive" that has been only partially successful we send a message that fish protection doesn't really matter.

Without action, the HB 2076 tax credit will end 1.1.2018. Rather than a six-year extension, it would be better to make it clear that REQUIRED devices are needed to protect fish and MUST be installed by 1.1.2019, and that the tax credit that pays for half the cost will expire at the end of 2018.

It is clear that the "carrot" of a tax break has not done the job – its time to follow the law and protect fish.