



NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters

February 14, 2018

Re: NFS Opposition to HB 4016 with – 1 Amendment

Chair Helm and Members of the House Energy and Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 4016 with - 1 Amendment.

Native Fish Society is writing in opposition to HB 4016. Native Fish Society has five place-based, volunteer River Stewards who live, work, and recreate throughout the upper and mainstem Klamath Basin with a keen interest in the protection and recovery of the river's wild, native fish populations and the habitats that sustain them.

We are concerned with HB 4016's ability to balance the need for a healthy and productive freshwater habitat in the Upper Klamath Basin for threatened and sensitive native fish, with the risk of introducing new, narrowly focused public policy that will allow the transfer and authorization of an unknown quantity of water to an already stressed basin.

In particular, the Klamath watershed faces significant water scarcity issues, has experienced multiple years of catastrophic drought, and has a high likelihood of similar near term water shortage conditions due to an unseasonably low snowpack at the start of 2018.

The footprint of the Irrigation Districts eligible for the transfer of determined claims is also shared with federally-listed endangered Shortnose and Lost River suckers, which are the focus of significant recovery efforts by public, private, and tribal stakeholders throughout the Klamath Basin. Similarly, the Klamath downstream of the project has experienced multiple years of drought, low flows, parasitic outbreaks, and poor outmigration of juvenile salmonids that have combined to create dire conditions for the river's sensitive and threatened populations of steelhead, Chinook and Coho salmon. For example, last year Governor Kate Brown (OR) and Governor Jerry Brown (CA) requested federal disaster relief due to a collapse in commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fishing for the Klamath Fall Chinook that resulted, in part, from past water related issues.

HB-4016 has the high likelihood of exacerbating existing water shortage problems for native fish populations at the expense of a limited number of users in the Klamath Project irrigation districts. For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully request that you deny this bill and find a more appropriate and balanced approach to the diverse water needs of the Upper Klamath Basin. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jake Crawford
River Steward Program Director