



MRGA

To: Co-Chair Senator Dembrow
Co-Vice Chair Senator Bentz
Co-Chair Representative Power
Co-Vice Chair Representative Brock-Smith
Members of the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction

From: Dylan Kruse, Sustainable Northwest
Chandra Ferrari, Trout Unlimited
Bob Van Dyk, Wild Salmon Center
Leland Brown, The Wildlife Society, Oregon Chapter
Steve Mealey, McKenzie River Guides Association
Bob Rees, NW Guides & Anglers Association
Liz Hamilton, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Bob Oleson, Northwest Steelheaders

Re: Comments on HB 2020 Oregon Climate Action Program

Date: March 1, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Dembrow and Power and Members of the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on HB 2020. **This legislation represents a landmark opportunity for Oregon to distinguish itself on a world stage by safeguarding its citizens and Oregon’s natural resources from the inevitable impacts of climate change, while doing our part to prevent the situation from worsening.** Our organizations understand the need for Oregon to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. However, we must be equally aggressive and proactive in addressing the harmful effects of climate change on Oregon’s natural resources and natural resource economy. Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of Oregonians that

value our State's natural resources and the recreational and commercial activities they support such as fishing, hunting, boating, bird-watching, hiking, and sightseeing. These activities are a key part of Oregon's heritage, and support a robust commercial and recreational hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation economy. Statewide, Oregon's outdoor recreation economy generates \$16.4 billion in annual consumer spending and supports 172,000 jobs.¹

Climate change is no longer a potential threat in a distant future for Oregon's fish and wildlife resources and the people and industries that rely upon them. The effects of climate change are significant and are being felt now by our members. These effects will continue to be felt even if Oregon is successful at significantly reducing carbon emissions. Low snowpack and stream drying, flooding, high stream temperatures, 'megafires', drought, adverse ocean conditions (e.g., the blob), sea level rise, ocean acidification, harmful algal blooms, and hypoxia of the ocean floor are all effects linked to climate change. In the last decade, these changes have resulted in significant harm to fish and wildlife populations and restricted hunting, angling, and recreational access to the outdoors. Without action, we will most certainly see extinction or significant decline for some species, range contraction for other species, disruption to food chains, and increased incidence of invasive species and disease.

The human and economic costs from these changes are high. Already we are experiencing fish kills and closed or truncated sport and commercial fishing seasons because of 1) poor runs associated with drought or adverse ocean conditions, 2) toxic domoic acid associated with harmful algal blooms, 3) high river temperatures, 4) low river levels, and 5) algal blooms. On land, hunting and recreational access has been restricted by fire closures and some wildlife populations have been impacted by lack of forage associated with drought or fire damage. What we have experienced in the last decade is just the tip of the iceberg and many of the impacts are most acutely felt in rural areas that are more reliant on natural resources.

While we certainly support the intent of HB 2020 to reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, we believe that is only part of the responsibility to Oregonians. To safeguard our way of life and our economy, there is a need to commit substantial investments to build resiliency in our natural resources that sustain fish and wildlife. Such investments would have the added benefit of protecting clean air and drinking water, as well as building resilience in the agriculture and forestry sector that depend on these shared natural resources. We are providing testimony today to encourage the Committee to amend HB 2020 to ensure it effectively secures fish and wildlife adaption and resilience investments.

Specific Recommendations:

First, we would like to thank the Committee for including language in HB 2020's purpose statement that recognizes that climate change is, and will continue to impact fish,

¹ (<https://outdoorindustry.org/press-release/outdoor-recreation-thriving-oregons-3rd-congressional-district-2-14-billion-annual-resident-spending/>).

wildlife, and the habitats they depend on. Additionally, we are encouraged that fish and wildlife adaptation has been identified as a designated use of the Climate Investment Fund. This language recognizes that key actions such as removing a fish barrier on a stream or protecting a wildlife corridor are critical for helping fish and wildlife adapt to changing conditions. Additionally, we support the language in HB 2020 specifying that roadway projects funded by the Transportation Decarbonization Investments Account should seek to promote natural ecosystem resiliency where possible.

We recommend that HB 2020 include the following elements:

1) Planning

We support language that would require long-term coordinated planning among natural resource agencies to help understand the effects of climate change and prioritize actions in a strategic manner. However, such a plan will only be effective if there is some level of certainty regarding the amount of resources that can be applied to the problem.

2) Dedicated Auction Revenues

While we are encouraged that the fish and wildlife adaptation actions are identified as a designated use of the Climate Investment Fund, we request the dedication of a fixed percentage of auction revenues toward these actions. A consistent funding mechanism for natural resource adaptation and resiliency would provide necessary certainty for developing and implementing a coordinated plan. The lack of a dedicated, ongoing funding source for adaptation and resiliency measures for natural resources and for relevant resource agency programs has weakened Oregon's ability to meaningfully respond to these climate change challenges. We fear that the consequences for our fish and wildlife resources and the economy they support will be dire if this is not remedied.

3) Offsets

We support the use of offsets to both ease the cost of compliance with emissions reductions and, importantly, to provide resources to invest in forest management that improves the resilience of our natural systems. If such protections and longer rotations are directed at riparian areas, there can be important benefits for our fisheries, by providing more shade, reducing risk from sediments entering the waterways, and providing large wood to streams.

We look forward to working with the Committee and other stakeholders on this very important legislation. Thank you.