



March 13, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor
Senator Frederick
Senator Girod
Representative Hayden
Representative Holvey
Representative Neron
Representative Brock Smith

Re: Trout Unlimited Comments on SB 5510 (Department of Fish and Wildlife Budget)

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 5510, the proposed budget for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for the 2019-2021 fiscal years. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. Trout Unlimited has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is tasked with many important and varied functions including the conservation and management of fish, wildlife and habitat. ODFW's traditional source of funding (hunting and fishing fees and associated federal excise taxes) is not adequate to meet its needs over the long-term nor equitable as a significant part of its management responsibility extends to non-game fish and wildlife. Healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations are critical components of Oregon's environment, economy and way of life. It is extremely important that ODFW have sufficient resources to ensure they are sustainably managed into the future.

TU supports many of the recommendations in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) however we are concerned that some critical ODFW programs did not receive any funding in the GRB and some were underfunded. TU understands Oregon's current budget challenges and therefore we included our recommended funding requests in order of priority below. In particular, we urge you to fully fund POP 123 which is critical to Oregon's water future and the future health and sustainability of Oregon's rivers, fisheries and economy.

POP 123: Water for Healthy Fisheries, Ecosystems and Communities (\$714,600 GF; \$65,400 OF).

The purpose of this POP is to provide funding, positions and limitation for the ODFW Water Program to study, evaluate and prioritize in-stream needs in a changing climate and use this information while collaborating with water users to find creative water solutions that address multiple needs. One of the many challenges facing Oregon as it adapts to climate change, population growth and increasing drought conditions is the lack of information regarding current and long-term instream needs of aquatic resources. Having this understanding is critical for ensuring sustainable management of Oregon's water resources including adequate protection of fishery resources. Watersheds with little or outdated information on instream needs are susceptible to over-allocation to out-of-stream uses, which often leads to inadequate instream flows for fish.

Unfortunately, the ODFW Water Program continues to operate with a shortfall given that only half of its requested 2017-2019 budget was funded. Additional funding will ensure that ODFW is able to meaningfully implement relevant portions of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy, conduct instream flow studies and develop instream demand projections. All of these items are necessary to ensure balanced and sustainable use of Oregon's water resources. TU believes this item is critical to advancing the Governor's water infrastructure discussion (and other water planning discussions such as place based planning efforts) in a meaningful way. TU recommends that you fully fund this POP.

POPs 109 and 126: Klamath Anadromous Fish Reintroduction Plan Biologist (252,000 OF) and Klamath Anadromous Fish Reintroduction Plan (1,275,091 GF, \$107,671 Federal Funds)

These POPs will facilitate the implementation of the Klamath settlement agreements of which TU is a signatory. ODFW must prepare a Reintroduction Implementation Plan to guide efforts to reintroduce Chinook salmon into the upper Klamath basin to achieve the goal of self-sustaining, viable populations. POP 109 would expend funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a staff biologist to develop an implementation plan for reintroducing anadromous fish (salmon and steelhead) into the Klamath River basin. POP 126 addresses specific research, monitoring, and evaluation needs for anadromous fishes in the Upper Klamath Basin. Additionally, the funds would facilitate the modification of a portion of ODFW's existing Klamath Fish Hatchery to provide the infrastructure necessary to support a Klamath Basin Spring Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) Conservation Hatchery. Hatchery modifications are needed to provide for egg incubation and rearing of multiple life stages of juvenile spring-run Chinook salmon to be released in tributaries upstream of Upper Klamath Lake. Active re-introduction of spring-run Chinook salmon to tributaries upstream of Upper Klamath Lake will assist in accelerating the ecological, social, and cultural benefits of dam removal on the mainstem Klamath.

A spring-run Chinook salmon re-introduction program in the upper Klamath basin is necessary for three reasons: 1) a source population in close proximity to Iron Gate Dam does not exist, making passive recolonization unlikely; 2) it will accelerate the restoration of the ecological, cultural, and social health of the basin; and 3) it will likely shift local perception of dam removal and ease conflict that plagues the basin.

The GRB does not fund POP 126. TU recommends full funding of this package however TU believes that ODFW could take steps to prioritize certain parts of this package and ensure that those elements move forward if a reduced level of funding is allocated.

POP 110: Habitat Assessment Tools/Coast (\$215,000 OF).

This POP continues efforts established during the 2017-19 biennium to develop and implement foundational tools for modeling stream flows and fish species distributions in Oregon. TU believes this package is necessary to make informed and science-based water management decisions and is relevant to the Governor's Water Infrastructure discussions.

TU recommends full funding of this package.

POP 124: Restore Western Streams Restoration Program (537,650 GF).

This POP would reestablish three full time NRS2 positions to ensure adequate capacity across western Oregon for implementation of habitat restoration. This program has undergone significant budget cuts over the last several biennia however it serves a vital role moving priority restoration projects off the ground. These projects are critical components of the strategy to recover Endangered Species Act "ESA" listed salmonids and other species. The program not only benefits salmon populations but results in ecological and economic benefits also. A University of Oregon study found that restoration work creates jobs in local communities – typically 15-20 jobs for every \$1M spent on restoration work. Researchers also found that for every dollar spent on restoration work, an additional \$2.10-\$2.14 is generated within the county as dollars re-spent locally. Additionally, the money provided by this program is often leveraged with other funding sources to produce more restoration benefit for every dollar invested by this program. The 2017-2019 budget included cuts to the WOSR Program that were less than originally proposed but still impactful. This POP would restore the positions lost with last session's funding cuts.

POP 127: Anti-Poaching Campaign

Poaching significantly disrupts the delicate balance that fish and game managers must strike between allowing harvest of fish and wildlife resources and protecting the future viability of these resources for future generations to enjoy. It is imperative that poaching activities be deterred. This POP provides resources for a program to help alleviate poaching concerns and contribute to the overall protection of wildlife in Oregon. This POP is a multi-year strategy to increase reporting of poaching incidents and other suspicious activity, increase law enforcement detection of poaching including trail cameras, Wildlife Enforcement Decoys and other equipment to increase detection of poaching incidents; additional support for the Special Investigation Unit to investigate complex poaching related cases. This POP is a priority of Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and builds upon bills passed in previous sessions.

Hatchery POPs including POP 115

TU requests that the Committee not include funding for POP 115 at this time. For several years, many different stakeholders including TU have requested a forum for discussions around hatchery management. Hatcheries require significant sums of money for operation and maintenance; in fact, ODFW has indicated in the past that hatchery deferred maintenance obligations alone will require over 90 million dollars. It is also clear that hatcheries can have a detrimental impact on wild fish populations, at a time when we are far short of meeting Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery goals. It makes sense to take a step back and consider whether changes to our hatchery operations might make sense both economically and ecologically before investing significant sums of money into further operation. In 2017, the Oregon Legislative Sportsmen Caucus sent ODFW a letter that requested information that, if provided, would further the hatchery management discussion. The requested information included a detailed assessment of each hatchery facility including costs of operation, sources of funding, maintenance requirements, hatchery goals, fish return numbers, fish production numbers, and information concerning whether co-location or combining any facilities might make sense. Accordingly, we request that the Committee encourage ODFW to initiate a stakeholder process to comprehensively review hatchery programs to ensure that Oregon is able to meet its goals (for production, wild fish etc.) in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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