



Association of Northwest Steelheaders

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Established 1960

March 19, 2019

Testimony submitted on HB 3016

House Committee on Natural Resources

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders (Northwest Steelheaders) concerning HB 3016.

Northwest Steelheaders was founded in 1960 and is one of the oldest recreational fishing and conservation non-profit organizations in the Pacific Northwest. We have 11 chapters in Oregon and Southwest Washington and approximately 1500 members, a great many of whom live and fish for salmon, steelhead, and trout in the Willamette Basin. The mission of the Steelheaders is to enhance and protect fisheries and fish habitats for today and tomorrow, with our vision being abundant and sustainable fisheries in healthy watersheds. Northwest Steelheaders thus supports both the conservation and recovery of native salmonids in their natural habitat, and abundant and sustainable recreational fisheries and the hatchery programs that support those fisheries.

House Bill 3016 would appropriate funds to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to continue production of hatchery summer steelhead in the Santiam River. Northwest Steelheaders supports this bill.

The North Santiam River hatchery summer steelhead program provides important recreational opportunity and associated economic benefits that would be lost if the State does not fund this program. Historically, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funded the program to mitigate for the loss of recreational fishing opportunity caused by the construction and operation of dams and flood control projects within the Willamette basin. Unfortunately, the Army Corps recently unilaterally and without valid justification defunded this program in breach of its mitigation obligation, leaving its fate in the State's hands.

North Santiam hatchery summer steelhead return during the late-spring and summer and provide exceptional recreational fishing opportunity throughout the summer months and into the fall. The program provides the only harvest opportunity for steelhead in the North Santiam River and would be an immense loss of recreational opportunity – as associated economic activity – in the Willamette Valley should it be discontinued. The program is currently undergoing an extensive review by the National Marine Fisheries Service for Endangered Species Act compliance, which



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will ensure the program is operated in a manner consistent with the recovery of wild salmon and steelhead in the Willamette Basin.

We urge you to support House Bill 3016.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

Best regards,

Brian McLachlan

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On behalf of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders