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PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION of FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS



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Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon
Senator Anderson
Senator Frederick
Representative Breese-Iverson
Representative Holvey
Representative Pham
Representative Brock Smith

Re: PCFFA Comments on HB 5009 (Department of Fish and Wildlife Budget)

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 5009, the proposed budget for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for the 2021-2023 fiscal years.

I am the Northwest Regional Director for the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), which is the largest trade organization of commercial fishing families in the western U.S. PCFFA represents thousands of working men and women in the U.S. Pacific commercial fishing industry, and has member fishermen's port associations and individual members in every seaport from San Diego to Alaska. In another capacity, I am also the commercial fishing industry appointed representative to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) Habitat Advisory Committee. The PFMC is the federal agency which manages all coastal salmon fisheries in U.S. waters.

Commercial fishing is a major U.S. industry, generating *billions* of dollars annually to this region's economy, and supporting *tens of thousands* of family-wage jobs in this region as well as providing high quality seafood for America's tables and for export. A major component of that industry has long been the ocean commercial harvest of salmon, which is also a major economic boon to Oregon's rural, fishing-dependent ports and coastal jobs. But salmon spawning and

rearing habitat must be protected, and where it has been damaged, restored, for those Oregon salmon fishing-supported jobs and communities to continue to exist.

We urge the Committee to remember that both ODFW's Agency Request Budget (ARB) and the Governor's Recommend Budget (GRB) were completed when the State was anticipating a much more depressed budget outlook than what is projected today. ODFW has a big job to do and needs the resources to accomplish its missions successfully. Accordingly, PCFFA also urges the Committee to fully approve the GRB, while including supplementing it with requests from ODFW's ARB that were not included or fully funded in the GRB. *In particular, we urge you to fully fund POP 103, for the reasons set forth below.*

POP 103: Klamath Anadromous Fish Reintroduction Plan
Biologist (\$134,500 GF / \$134,500 OF)

As you know, after more than 10 years of planning and preparation, the four obsolete, fish-blocking Klamath hydropower dams are on track for physical removal starting in January, 2023. With this landmark dam removal project begins one of the most comprehensive salmon and steelhead habitat restoration programs in history. Its aim is to restore the Klamath River's anadromous fish runs, once the third-largest such runs in the U.S. (estimated at 880,000 returning adults/year on average), to a status much closer to full ecological health.

Once these Klamath dams are down in 2023, more than 420 stream-miles of once fully productive salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat will once again be accessible for the first time in more than 100 years. This is expected to more than double current salmonid populations from the Klamath River. This will also greatly improve ocean salmon fisheries in both northern California and Oregon. In fact, about half of all fall-Chinook salmon harvested offshore Oregon today originate from California, a large portion contributed by the Klamath River.

But before Oregonians can harvest the full benefits of restored Klamath salmon runs, Oregon must first manage the successful reintroduction of salmon and steelhead back into the upper Klamath Basin above the current location of the dams, which lies primarily in Southern Oregon.

Budget item POP 103 provides key funding to continue a limited duration ODFW biologist position to help further critical components of the salmon and steelhead restoration plan for the Klamath Basin. Reintroduction of anadromous fish back into the upper Klamath basin is a principal goal of the Yurok, Karuk, and Klamath Tribes, the Office of the Governor, many conservation organizations and commercial fishing industry interests such as ours. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission formally approved a reintroduction plan for the Klamath in 2008, and ODFW is now required to develop and complete the implementation phase of this plan.

The ODFW fish biologist position funded by item POP 103 is charged with further developing and implementing that Klamath Basin reintroduction plan, and with assisting with monitoring of the effects of the plan upon its completion. This also requires the collection of baseline stream information and data starting this year needed to assess the effectiveness of that reintroduction. This baseline information as well as annual reintroduction monitoring after dam removal will be very important to the PFMC's management models for west coast salmon

fisheries generally, which are controlled by Klamath fall-Chinook run abundance metrics up and down the coastline under legally mandated “weak stock management” obligations.

In short, the faster that fish reintroduction process moves forward, the more abundant Klamath fall-Chinook will be along the Oregon coastline for harvest sooner, and the less restrictive Klamath-driven weak stock management constraints on all Oregon ocean coastal salmon fisheries will become. This minor but key staffing investment will thus translate into more jobs and dollars in economically depressed Oregon fishing-dependent coastal communities indefinitely into the future.

The individual who holds the position currently has done an exceptional job developing the plan and coordinating the interests and needs of the diverse stakeholders engaged in this effort. Klamath basin stakeholders have been working together for decades to resolve fish and water issues in the basin, and achieving successful reintroduction of anadromous fish is crucial to maintaining this progress.

Loss of this position will set Klamath basin fish reintroduction efforts back significantly. Unfortunately, POP 103 was not included in the Governor’s Recommended Budget (GRB). It is PCFFA’s understanding that the POP’s omission from the GRB was simply an error that was the result of a misunderstanding, and that the Governor’s Office supports its inclusion in the legislatively adopted budget. Accordingly, PCFFA strongly recommends that the ODFW’s POP 103 position be included and fully funded.

Sincerely,
Glen H. Spain



NW Regional Director
Pacific Coast Federation of
Fishermen’s Associations (PCFFA)