



## **The Conservation Angler One Page Summary Supporting A Robust Budget for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for the 2021-2023 Biennium**

The Conservation Angler supports a well-funded Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and believes funding sources need to support its predominant mission to prevent the serious depletion of any indigenous species.

Therefore, establishing the Habitat Conservation Division must be the agency's absolute top priority for new programs in the 2021/23 budget. TCA supports funding to reestablish the Habitat Division using General Fund (GF) (POP 112)

- The funding proposed in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) reflects a fund shift to support this program using Federal Funds (FF) instead of the GF. TCA is concerned there are no actual funds in the FF bucket – it is appropriate to apply GF dollars to fund the leadership for this Division as it addresses issues of statewide concern.
- TCA recommends that creation of the Habitat Division go beyond the Governors Recommended Budget to establish planned field biologist capacity that requires additional GF for the seven regional habitat biologist positions called for in ODFW's ARB for Habitat Division's original design. The GF needed is \$1,467,894.

TCA supports a similar fund shift for the Fish Division's conservation and recovery staffing intended to be GF supported but have been shifted to FF (POP 090).

- These 17 FTE were shifted to an empty FF bucket - TCA urges that these critical fishery monitoring, evaluation, and observation positions be restored with a GF allocation of \$1,797,188. (POP 090)

TCA supports the use of Other Funds (OF) to fund hatchery operations.

- Fish hatchery operations, staffing and maintenance should be funded by License Funds (OF) and not by GF, and TCA supports shifting hatchery operations away from the GF.

TCA supports adding back the funding for a Klamath and Willowa fish re-introduction biologist. (POP 103 & 118)

- The GRB did not include a funding package that would fund ODFW fishery staff who provide coordination on salmon and steelhead re-introduction on the Klamath River in SW Oregon and the Willowa River in NE Oregon. TCA supports funding ODFW staff to liaison with tribal and other biologists for these reintroduction efforts – particularly since ODFW's own administrative rules require natural recolonization as a first priority.

TCA supports the reduction of FTE for Rock Creek Hatchery on a tributary to the North Umpqua River and urges the Legislature to require that ODFW conduct a transparent public process to consider all alternatives for Rock Creek Hatchery, including not rebuilding the facility or reorganizing the programs formerly operated at the hatchery.

- Rock Creek Hatchery suffers frequent water and disease issues that prevents safe operation and leads to fish losses – both for wild broodstock and juveniles. The existing operational issues will be exacerbated by the September 2020 fires. ODFW must conduct an open process evaluating all options before funds are expended.

TCA supports due diligence by Oregon before it accepts conveyance of Leaburg Hatchery on the McKenzie River.

- As congressional conveyance of Leaburg Hatchery requires the facility to be used as a hatchery in perpetuity, it does not make sense to accept the conveyance when ODFW has not evaluated the overall hatchery plan for the Willamette River spring chinook – an ESA-listed species, or whether it is the best site on the McKenzie River.

TCA does not support POP 121 aimed at producing more hatchery chinook salmon in the Willamette and in the Columbia Rivers purportedly to increase forage food for Southern Resident Killer Whales. This method of increasing prey species for Orcas raises large hatchery interaction issues for wild fish as well as attracts additional predators such as seals and sea lions and is unproven to produce additional large salmon due to ocean productivity issues.

TCA supports general obligation bonds for the \$10 million maintenance package - even though bond payments will be made with GF dollars and are used for hatchery repairs – TCA has testified in support of the regional office upgrades.

## **Conservation Angler Comments to the Ways & Means Natural Resources Subcommittee on HB 5009 (ODFW)**

TCA believes that ODFW's budget must reflect the agency mission and the pressing statewide needs

Job No. 1= Better stewardship

Job No. 2= Integrate and implement Climate change policy

Job No. 3 = After evaluating the priorities and need for every facility, a plan for better infrastructure

Job No. 4= Better License and Fee Structure where consumptive activities are funded by license holders and industries

Job No. 5= Closer connection between General Fund expenditures and wide-ranging public benefits

Job No. 6 = If ODFW takes care of the habitat and the fish, the fishing will like take care of itself.

**Better Stewardship:** ODFW must identify high priority habitats for protection and restoration and explain the functions the particular priority habitat provides for wild fish and include conveyance of the location and the habitat qualities that a specific habitat provides to other state and federal agencies so that the agencies with actual habitat management authority can make decisions that do not degrade the qualities and functions provided by the specific habitat.

Since ODFW only retains authority over fish passage and water diversion screening, it would be more impactful if ODFW were to identify how the agency will take action to apply fixes to the priority fish passage and diversion screening issues that create the biggest limitations to the productivity or contentedness of high quality or high priority habitats, given budget reductions. TCA supports ODFW efforts to prioritize the fish passage and diversion screenings and urges action to address those lists.

ODFW will see the benefits of creating a Habitat Division allowing additional work with resource staff from other state and federal agencies as well as people working on private lands to ensure land and water development and management does not limit wild fish and wildlife productivity and abundance.

ODFW's budget should support wild fish that will increasingly rely on Cold Water Refugia during their migrations. This has relevance in the Columbia River as well as in other watersheds such as the Umpqua, Rogue, and smaller coastal rivers. Migrating wild fish will face warm water, low flows, and focused angler pressure statewide. The cold water refugia issue should be elevated within the Habitat Division and considered a primary Climate Change Policy action to increase migration survival in the Columbia and within the climate change risk-reduction scenarios statewide.

### **I. Administrative Division:**

The Conservation Angler believes that the Administrative Division to be functioning well and Division Staff have been accessible and transparent. TCA appreciates the clarity and creativity of the Division's work during the COVID-19 precautions beginning last year, and their ability to help the agency pivot well during this most extraordinary year.

### **II. Deferred Maintenance:**

TCA supports the bonding authorization as proposed in HB 5505. This bond package will bring key ODFW regional offices forward to more functional status. Excellent staff do good work at the three offices proposed for renovations.

**However,** ODFW's practice to declare every facility as "essential" must receive scrutiny as to the condition, function, relationship to program priorities as well as the deferred maintenance needs for each piece of infrastructure on a scheduled basis to ensure that the expenditure supports critical mission-driven objectives. It defies logic to continually rank each facility or physical asset in this manner without careful fiscal and ecological assessments. This is especially true for ODFW's hatchery programs and considering climate change and wildfire risks and impacts.

### **III. Oregon State Police – Fish and Wildlife Division**

The Conservation Angler supports the high-quality enforcement and educational/informational contacts OSP makes on behalf of all Oregonians. TCA supports enhanced funding and programs supported by multiple funding sources to provide extra enforcement resources to protect Oregon's fish and wildlife. These are, sadly, essential operations.

#### IV. 2021-23 Policy Option Packages:

1. Jordan Cove Energy Project Liaison work aligned solely to avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating for natural resource impacts.
  - ✓ TCA supports this work, but it must include protecting stream and river crossing habitat.
2. Increase Chinook salmon forage for endangered Orca via General Fund:
  - ❖ TCA remains opposed to this request. The impact and effects of additional hatchery chinook production in the lower Columbia and Upper Willamette has not been evaluated for its impact on ESA-listed Upper Willamette River Spring Chinook or on lower Columbia River tule chinook, nor on the likely predator attraction impacts on co-migrating ESA-listed wild steelhead, chinook, chum and coho salmon.
3. Willamette Water Reallocation and Place-based Planning & Mitigation as General Fund requests.
  - ✓ TCA supports this funding to enable ODFW to staff this work via Fish Division or the Habitat Division.
4. Shellfish and Estuary Assessment was a General Fund request to meet the need for more frequent stock assessments in major bays and estuaries supporting recreational and commercial fisheries.
  - ❖ TCA supports frequent stock assessments for conservation and management purposes and would be inclined to support this request, however, we believe that shellfish and estuary assessments *should be funded by the existing Shellfish Fund which is paid for by shell-fishers - both recreational and commercial.*
5. Klamath Reintroduction and Monitoring Biologist and position authority to utilize PCSRF funding to continue Klamath reintroduction work.
  - TCA supports ODFW Biologist working on Klamath salmon and steelhead re-introduction *but only if the work aligns with administrative rules requiring focus on natural re-colonization of chinook, coho and summer steelhead for three life cycles. TCA also believes that PCSRF funds must be focused on wild fish conservation work and not hatchery work.*
6. Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program provides technical assistance on habitat restoration projects.
  - ✓ TCA supports this, particularly as part of the proposed Habitat Division.
7. Deferred Maintenance/Major Construction supports deferred maintenance needs involving ODFW office facilities.
  - TCA supports this program. ODFW Staff deserve good offices to work in. TCA continues to believe that not every ODFW structure or facility should be classified as "critical" absent a prioritized evaluation of facilities and current priority activities.

In conclusion, The Conservation Angler supports funding to establish the Habitat Division – supporting both leadership positions, position shifts from existing habitat programs in the Wildlife and Fish Divisions, as well as seven new positions proposed in the Agency Recommended Budget (ARB).

These positions will support and strengthen ODFW’s longstanding commitment to habitat restoration and improvement and to lead proactive, focused, and consistent statewide efforts to protect, restore, and enhance habitat for Oregon’s fish and wildlife. This will focus resources on the challenges that climate change presents. HD represents an important “third leg of the stool” in the agency organizational structure: Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat.

**TCA supports the creation of the Habitat Division and we believe it should be the number one priority POP. The Habitat Division should be on the very top of everyone’s Top POP list.**

## **Policy Bills with Budget Implications**

The Conservation Angler recommends that several bills referred to the Ways and Means Committee deserve careful consideration as to their budget and policy implications for ODFW:

1. Seeking Removal of Columbia River Endorsement sunset on January 2, 2022.
  - ❖ TCA is opposed to removing this sunset but does support SB 59-A as currently amended.
2. Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (HB 2913)
  - ✓ TCA supports efforts to remove the sunset to ensure program success.
3. Decreasing Daily Angling/Shellfish Combination License from \$32.50 to \$23.00, with “May Charge Up to Fee Amount” language added in ORS 497.061
  - ❖ TCA opposes this change proposed in HB 2067
4. TCA supports HB 2386 which would establish Independent Science Review Process at OSU
5. TCA opposes HB 3150 to establish SW Oregon Hatchboxes – this is a bad bill for wild salmon and steelhead
6. TCA opposes HB 3087 which would establish the Oregon Wildlife Council – an unnecessary advisory panel.
7. TCA opposes HB 2661 to expand Northern Pikeminnow Bounty Programs without an analysis of need.
8. TCA opposes HB 3328 which would create an income tax provision for ODFW, while creating a tax credit for license buyers.
9. TCA opposes HB 2067 that would allow ODFW to adjust license fee changes outside Legislative limits.

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*The Conservation Angler is a nonprofit wild fish and rivers advocacy organization working for wild fish and wild rivers.*

- ❖ TCA’s advocacy focuses on the protection, scientific study, and conservation of iconic wild fish populations and the habitats that support them throughout their Pacific range using all legal, administrative, and political means to prevent their extirpation and to foster a long-term recovery of wild stocks to fishable and harvestable abundance.
- ❖ TCA believes in the productivity and resiliency of wild fish and we trust their ability to persist, survive and thrive in their natural habitats. Wild fish provide a full suite of benefits to the planet and to human communities - so long as their full and complete ecological needs are met throughout their range - from natal stream to ocean pasture and back again.
- ❖ Our practical experience and sound scientific research have proven that as long as wild fish management regimes conservatively manage harvest and do not impose artificial propagation from hatcheries, wild fish will thrive and prosper.