

FR: Native Fish Society

TO: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: Comments on HB 4072 - Amend bill to include new Winter Steelhead Fee Authorizations adopted in the Rogue South Coast Multi-Species Conservation Management Plan

Chair Marsh and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kirk Blaine, I am the Southern Oregon Regional Coordinator for Native Fish Society¹ and I live in Roseburg. I am testifying today asking you to amend HB 4072 to include the new winter steelhead fee authorizations adopted by the ODFW Commission in the Rogue South Coast Multi-Species Conservation Management Plan. These special authorizations have been identified as key funding elements in order for fisheries managers to adequately manage wild steelhead populations in southern Oregon.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have the necessary funds to monitor adult wild steelhead populations in the Rogue River and South Coast watersheds. Because of this funding gap, ODFW and stakeholders agreed that special authorizations for this region would solve this problem and the ODFW Commission adopted these authorizations in December 2021. The Rogue South Coast Steelhead Validation will be required to fish in the region by all sport anglers both resident and nonresident. A Rogue South Coast wild steelhead Harvest Card will be required for anglers wishing to harvest wild winter steelhead, something that is currently not being monitored in southern Oregon.

As an organization, Native Fish Society holds a vision to restore abundant wild fish free-flowing rivers and thriving local communities. Monitoring is the first line of defense to ensure we're not overfishing these iconic steelhead populations. These authorizations are critical and must be passed this legislative session so they can be implemented in the 2023 license sale year.

Amending HB 4072 to include these authorizations will allow ODFW to monitor and restore abundant wild steelhead in southern Oregon, ensuring catastrophic or slow declines of these populations do not occur. These fish are an economic driver for this region and help fund many small rural communities. Without proper monitoring, we could devastate the economy and the ecosystem.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to the committee amending this bill to include these authorizations ensuring we conserve and protect the fish and communities of southern Oregon.

¹ The Native Fish Society is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to restore abundant wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving local communities across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Blaine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kirk Blaine
Southern Oregon Regional Coordinator
Native Fish Society
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