



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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Senator Jeff Golden, Chair
Senator Fred Girod, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
S-421 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Golden:

As follow up to the public hearing on SB 65 last week, committee members were interested in better understanding the Department's consideration of private trout purchases within its overall hatchery program.

The Department's overarching goal is to provide the highest quality angler experience. Feedback from anglers indicate that there are a number of factors that impact the quality of their experience including reliability and frequency of stocking, the size and quantity of fish stocked, fish behavior (which varies among stocks), distance to drive to access fishing opportunities, and supporting infrastructure.

Over time, the Department has taken a number of steps to improve the angler experience, including:

- Conducting Tag Reward research throughout the state to understand the performance of different trout stocks in terms of their return to anglers over time,
- Conducting surveys of anglers to understand preferences for fish size and quantity (e.g., fewer large trophy fish versus larger numbers of smaller legal sized trout),
- Development of new, local broodstocks,
- Grants and projects for docks, restroom facilities, and other infrastructure investments to improve fishing opportunities and access to fishing areas, and
- Ongoing research into disease and drought resistant stocks.

Additionally, the Department utilizes a suite of 16 hatcheries and 30 transport trucks to maximize the number of locations that can be stocked across the State and minimize the transport distance. This results in high reliability of stocking dates and locations, reduces stress on fish associated with long transport distances, and allows the Department to stock multiple locations immediately prior to popular holidays such as July 4 and Labor Day weekends. Further, if any one hatchery is impacted by natural disasters or disease, other facilities can typically fill the gap.

The Department first utilized trout from private producers in 2010 in response to a pilot program

created by SB 834, directing the Department to spend 10% of its trout budget on private purchases. At the time, the Department funded the program by terminating the trout program at Wallowa hatchery. ODFW purchased trout from Desert Springs throughout the 2010's, but had to make several changes in the statewide trout stocking program to reduce travel and eliminate smaller stockings to accommodate Desert Springs. ODFW discontinued purchases in the 2019-21 biennium in favor of producing fish "in-house." In addition to considerations around reliability and frequency, ability to deliver desired size and quantity of fish, and feedback from anglers, an important factor in phasing out purchases from private trout producers was the higher cost.

Because the Department's hatcheries rear multiple species with multiple run timings (e.g., trout, Coho, spring and fall Chinook, summer and winter Steelhead), it is difficult to isolate costs associated solely with trout production. Each of these programs has differing needs and costs that are not accounted for by simply dividing the facility costs by the total poundage or total number of fish produced. To derive the true cost for trout production at a given facility, the additional labor and infrastructure costs associated with salmon or steelhead production (broodstock collection, marking, fish health costs, etc.) must first be considered. Additionally, although costs are often expressed in terms of cost per pound or cost per fish, neither metric is appropriate when comparing costs between facilities that rear different numbers of fish to different sizes. Instead, ODFW standardizes the costs between facilities by calculating the cost per inch length (of fish).

To minimize these confounding factors, it is simplest to examine costs at four hatcheries that primarily rear trout (Oak Springs, Wizard, Klamath, and Roaring River). The average cost per inch at these facilities was \$0.09 in 2019-21 (range: \$0.09-0.12/inch). This compares with an estimate of \$0.20/inch for fish produced at Desert Springs in 2019. Given this difference, and in the absence of additional funding, the Department determined that it was only able to meet the suite of angler and management needs by producing fish at Department-operated facilities. In doing so, the Department takes advantage of economy of scale, ability to maintain our own broodstocks (eliminates requirement to purchase eggs), sharing of fixed staffing costs across both trout and salmon/steelhead programs, and reduced transportation costs (rearing locally reduces miles driven to stock fish).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the committee has any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Debbie Colbert
Deputy Director of Fish & Wildlife Programs