



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish & Wildlife

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January 25, 2023

**To: The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources**

Senate Bill 65

Shaun Clements, Deputy Administrator Inland Fisheries
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide background relevant to Senate Bill 466 and has no position on the bill.

The Department owns or operates 31 hatcheries statewide, releasing approximately 41 million fish annually. Of these, approximately 36 million are salmon and steelhead and the remaining 5 million are trout. The Department stocks salmon and steelhead to supplement wild production where stocks are weak or have been extirpated, as mitigation for lost habitat, or to augment fisheries to relieve demand on wild fish. In contrast, trout are stocked purely for recreational purposes and serve as a good entry into fishing for new anglers and youths.

The Department has invested considerable research and survey effort in the past decade to optimize the stocks of trout used (different stocks perform better in different locations), the size of fish released, and the timing and location of release to improve angler satisfaction. Angler surveys indicate that anglers are highly satisfied with the quality of trout stocked by the Department and would like to see more frequent stockings and stocking of larger fish. In particular, the Department's trophy trout program is very popular.

Because of the large scale of its hatchery production, the Department is able to minimize production costs. This is particularly true for trout, which have much simpler rearing requirements and do not incur many of the additional costs associated with anadromous fish production (e.g., operating collection traps or collecting brood in the wild and marking of fish). Additionally, because of the geographic spread of hatcheries across Oregon, the Department is able to rear fish in proximity to their intended release site, thereby reducing transportation distances and cost and ensuring fish are less stressed when stocked. This leads to higher survival, greater angler satisfaction, and allows the Department to stock lakes throughout the fishing season to help maintain fishing opportunities for the public.

SB 65 would require the Department to divert 20% of its trout production budget to purchase trout through contracts with private aquaculture facilities. The Department has previously contracted with private producers for trout production. However, this was phased out due to a lack of available funds and the significantly higher cost to purchase fish than to produce them "in-house". Without new additional funds to procure fish from private producers, the Department would have to reduce the number of fish stocked and the number of locations stocked to account for the higher cost/fish and transportation impacts on fish quality.

It is also of note that there are only two known companies in Oregon that can rear and distribute trout. Requiring the Department to dedicate a portion of its trout production dollars to this small pool of vendors will restrict the Department's ability to negotiate terms favorable to Oregon anglers in terms of pricing or size of fish. Additionally, much of the Department's trout production is funded by Federal grant dollars, which carry many restrictions and a high reporting burden. A private company contracting with the State would have to comply with those Federal regulations or the State risks losing that funding.

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