

March 20, 2023

Representative Ken Helm
Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water:

As former chairs of the Fish & Wildlife Commission, we are writing in support of HB 3232. This legislation will allow greater use of more selective commercial harvest gear and re-invigorate collaboration with Washington to transition to more sustainable fisheries of the future.

In 2013, Oregon and Washington implemented the “Kitzhaber Plan” calling for the development and transition to alternative gears allowing selective harvesting of hatchery fish and safe-release of threatened and endangered wild salmon. In the years since this commitment was made, alternative gears have been successfully developed and authorized.

However, our mutual pledge to move toward sustainability is now hampered by Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission rules that arbitrarily cap use of alternative gears at a mere 2% of the assigned commercial allocation. This limit creates a nonsensical roadblock for fishers who voluntarily would prefer to harvest more selectively. The market is demanding sustainably caught fish. They command a higher price. The cap on sustainable alternatives has a detrimental impact on Washington’s ability to move forward towards a more and more selective fisheries.

During our time as chairs of our Commission, we placed great value on concurrent policymaking for our shared river. We saw how policy conflicts disrupted progress. Passage of HB 3232 would facilitate concurrency by offering flexibility and opportunity. We have a diverse suite of fishing gears. We have diverse salmon runs with differing levels of health and abundance. We have diverse and growing set of challenges and causes of decline. Above all else, we should not be arbitrarily locked into the old means of harvesting fish and locked into the old ways of managing harvest. HB 3232 provides flexibility. It expands the opportunity to use forward thinking tools. It offers room within the existing commercial allocation to use newly developed alternative gears. It does not force such use.

We urge you to support HB 3232.

Sincerely,



Miranda Wecker

Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission 2009-20015



Larry Carpenter

Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission 2018- 2020