



Oregon

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To: The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources, and Water



House Bill 3232

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The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) appreciates this opportunity to provide information relevant to the House Bill 3232 and has no position on the bill.

ODFW is supportive of alternative gear mark-selective fisheries as formalized in Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs 635-500-6730, -6765) and has significant experience testing and evaluating alternative commercial gear types for potential application in Columbia River non-tribal commercial fisheries.

Rules related to alternative gear mark-selective fisheries stem from a request in 2012 by then Governor Kitzhaber to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to address the “perennial conflicts” between Columbia River recreational and non-tribal commercial fisheries. The Governor’s request recognized the importance and economic value of both recreational and commercial fisheries to the State, including the importance of adaptive management, while acknowledging the need for management in a conservation-based framework.

Consistent with this guidance, Oregon and Washington adopted a new fisheries framework that included redirecting Columbia River commercial fisheries toward non-gillnet gear types focused on harvesting hatchery-origin Chinook and hatchery coho salmon. To that objective, Oregon and Washington implemented testing, and in some cases commercial implementation, of a variety of potential commercial gears including beach and purse seines, pound nets, hook and line or troll gear and extensive economic modelling.

In late 2016 and early 2017, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission completed a comprehensive review of all available information. This review indicated that alternative gears did not appear capable of fully replacing the value generated by the gillnet fishery due to differences in catch rates and stock composition, as well as much higher capital costs. Given these considerations, the Commission adopted rules establishing a sub-allocation of Endangered Species Act (ESA) impacts

of the most limiting salmonid stock in the fall management period for use by alternative gear types with the intent to limit the effect on the existing fall gillnet fishery. Allocation of ESA impacts refers to the allowable mortalities on listed salmon species assigned to a fishery – it is not a cap on the allowable catch.

This sub-allocation equates to $\leq 6.7\%$ of the commercial allocation which was approximately the average amount used in commercial seine fisheries implemented during 2014-2016. Since adoption of the sub-allocation in 2017, alternative gear commercial fisheries have not occurred due to low returns of upriver summer steelhead which tend to be handled at higher rates with alternative gear types. However, alternative gear fisheries are being considered for fall 2024 as part of Washington's Emerging Commercial Fishery process.

The alternative gear sub-allocation was established following extensive economic modelling and public process with a goal of balancing opportunities to explore new harvest techniques while maintaining the value of existing fisheries. HB 3232 would remove the alternative gear sub-allocation without an assessment of the need to do so and the resulting effect on existing fisheries.

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