

February 26, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

The Deschutes River Alliance strongly supports Senate Bill 1509 and urges you to vote yes. We are a science-based organization that advocates for the health of the Deschutes River, and we see this bill as an extremely positive step forward for the health of the river.

Specifically:

- Overfishing causes environmental, economic, and social harm. Buyback programs, paying anglers not to fish, has emerged as a crucial tool in combating overfishing.
- By purchasing and retiring fishing permits or vessels, these programs decrease the overall fishing capacity, allowing fish stocks to recover and replenish.
- Columbia River stocks of steelhead and salmon are at or near their lowest levels since counts began at Bonneville Dam in 1938.
- Given the damage in the Columbia Basin to habitat from dams and development, deteriorating ocean conditions, and commercial, tribal and recreational angling pressure, reducing angling pressure, with minimal economic harm to fishing communities, is one way to provide immediate relief to imperiled salmon and steelhead populations.
- Recent seasons for steelhead have been met with closures and the threat of closures, adding economic uncertainty not only for those directly employed in the recreational fishing industry on the Deschutes, but for a wide array of businesses throughout central Oregon that benefit from angler-derived revenue.
- Retiring gillnet permits through a buy-back program on the Columbia would offer a modicum of protection for Deschutes River stocks of steelhead and salmon.

Please vote “yes” on Senate Bill 1509

Sincerely,



Sarah Cloud
Executive Director