



Office of Governor Kate Brown
State Capitol Building
900 Court Street NE, 160
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of the tens of thousands of anglers across Oregon who make up our membership and the businesses that make their livelihood serving these anglers, we ask once again for your leadership. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and its Commissioners are proposing to roll back the bi-state Columbia River fish management reforms, which will have significant negative consequences for ODFW, our economy, and our fisheries.

In 2012, Oregon and Washington agreed to a bi-state plan to improve the management of Columbia River basin salmon fisheries. That plan, which was affirmed by the Oregon Legislature when it passed Senate Bill 830 in 2013, seeks to improve the conservation of wild salmon, prioritize mainstem recreational fisheries, transition non-selective gillnet fisheries to off-channel areas, and improve the viability of the commercial industry through enhanced selective fisheries.

Unfortunately, ODFW proposes to abandon nearly all the objectives of the plan before they take effect next year. In doing so, the Commission is putting one objective – enhancing the economic viability of commercial fisheries – ahead of the other foundational components of the plan. In fact, proposals currently before the Commission would undo this careful bi-state compromise in favor of increasing gillnet industry profits by 50-percent or more above the plan's economic baseline of \$3.86 million. This effort to radically rewrite the economic assumptions underlying the reforms will undo the bi-state plan, reignite significant controversy over continued non-selective mainstem gillnetting and set up a potential conflict with the State of Washington – throwing Columbia River fisheries into disarray.

These efforts are being driven by ODFW Commissioner Bruce Buckmaster. As you know, your appointment of Mr. Buckmaster – a gillnet industry advocate and lobbyist - generated significant controversy last year. Despite promises to the contrary during the appointment process, it has become apparent that Mr. Buckmaster's main goal is to undo this compromise plan. The sportfishing community, which is ODFW's largest customer and source of revenue, is largely powerless to counter Commissioner Buckmaster's advocacy on the Columbia River reforms.

175,000 Oregon anglers purchase fishing licenses and the \$9.75 Columbia River Endorsement, which was established by SB 830, to fish for Columbia River salmon and steelhead each year. These Columbia River anglers generate over \$13 million annually to fund ODFW staff, programs, and the implementation of the bi-state reforms. By comparison, the Columbia River commercial gillnet industry provides less than \$300,000 in annual fee revenue.

Additionally, these anglers commit thousands of hours delivering salmon eggs for classrooms of children to study, catch and deliver fresh fish to local food banks, rebuild dilapidated boat ramps and parks on our historical rivers, protect our navigable water ways, and countless other conservation and education projects. These hours are on top of the licensee's fees, tag fees, parking fees, etc. we pay in order to enjoy our natural resources and that directly benefit the hardworking people at the ODFW.

Columbia River recreational fisheries generate over \$30 million in economic activity and thousands of jobs in rural and urban communities across our region. There is little debate that the economic value of a Columbia River sport-caught salmon easily exceeds the value of salmon caught and sold commercially. We recognize the economic contributions commercial fisheries make to coastal communities, however, it is important to put that into context. Out of 209 Oregon gillnet permits, only 85 permit holders had landing values exceeding \$10,000. Only four permit holders had landings greater than \$50,000.

But, at a time when ODFW and the Legislature are grappling with how to fund fish and wildlife management in Oregon, rolling back this bi-state plan is a terrible message to send our members and customers who will not continue supporting this agency. In fact, while we appreciate and respect the work by the Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and related Outdoor Recreation and Education (as proposed in HB 2402), our community cannot support any recommendation that charges anglers more money to increase funding for an agency that consistently disregards the needs and expectations of its largest constituency.

We respectfully request that you weigh in with the ODFW Commission and urge them not to abandon the bi-state reform plan.

Sincerely,

Liz Hamilton
Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Bob Rees
Executive Director
Association of NW Steelheaders

Grant Putnam
President
NW Guides & Anglers Association

Dave Schamp
Board Chairman
Coastal Conservation Association