

January 17, 2017

Michael Finley, Chairman
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Kurt Melcher, Director
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Dear Chairman Finley and Director Melcher,

I understand that this Friday, the ODFW Commission will take up rules on the bi-state agreement on reforms of Columbia River fisheries. I want to express my strong support for these reforms and let you know I am deeply concerned about this issue spilling over into the Legislature. As you may remember, one of the underlying principles behind the bi-state agreement was to avoid countless battles in the Oregon and Washington legislatures, something we've seen over the last decade.

Last weekend, I understand that the Washington commission affirmed the bi-state agreement by using adaptive management consistent with the fundamental principles of the reforms. As a concerned member of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources, and an ardent supporter of ODFW, I ask you to simply do the same. Washington voted overwhelmingly to move forward on the spring and summer fisheries, while allowing for two more years of mainstem gillnetting in the fall above the Lewis River. This reasonable compromise continues to keep the promise to the gillnetters (by maintaining the economic baseline established in the bi-state agreement), while keeping the promise to sports anglers who invested more money in the Columbia River endorsement, license fees and smolts out of tributary fisheries

If the Commission rolls back the reforms from where Washington landed, I expect significant push back from angry constituents in the conservation and sportfishing communities who don't understand how a deal negotiated in good faith between all parties (including gillnetters) could fall apart so quickly. Beyond the obvious upheaval caused by non-concurrent regulations, I fear it will be difficult to sustain the \$4 million in general fund and Columbia River endorsement fees funding the agreement – particularly in what is expected to be a tough budget year.

I understand that angler groups are already voicing concern over supporting the recommendations from the Alternative Funding Task Force, money this agency badly needs moving forward. I've also been asked to draft legislation to eliminate the remaining two cycles of the sportfishing license fee increase as a potential remedy should Oregon violate the agreement. I honestly hope to avoid these discussions and move on to more important matters about the future of our fish and wildlife.

As public officials, we are often placed in the unfortunate position of choosing sides. Luckily, this is a different situation. Avoiding a costly ballot measure and attempting to resolve decades of acrimony, Governor Kitzhaber initiated a bi-state reform agreement over five years ago. This included gillnetters and anglers, processors, and guides, ODFW staff and conservation groups. Legislators in

both the House and the Senate followed suit, negotiating language and sacrifices, on both sides, in order to pass a bi-partisan piece of legislation – SB 830. In the end, not everyone got everything they wanted, but it was done through a thoughtful process to prioritize the economics of recreational fisheries, support conservation, all while maintaining the viability of the gillnet industry. Washington largely honored these important principles. I respectfully ask you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Fred Girod
State Senator

cc. Honorable Governor Brown