

Chair Wahl and respected commissioners.

My name is Leonard Krug, and I'm the President of the Oregon Anglers Alliance. We represent thousands of recreational, and commercial licensed anglers, STEP volunteers, outdoor organizations and Oregon businesses.

I'd like to clear up some of the common misconceptions about south coast winter steelhead. I'll explain why it is unfair to compare them to other populations, and **WHY** it makes sense for anglers to maintain the **privilege of personal choice** for practicing Catch & Release, **OR** harvest.

Now, ODFW, NOAA, and NMFS research support the opinion that wild winter steelhead in **ALL** of these streams are at a very low risk and that recreational angling has little or no effect on the viability of these fish. Habitat and ocean conditions are the primary limiting factors.

1. On the south coast, ODFW will tell us that angler opportunity is limited to only about 15% of the overall habitat, and that there is more than enough Essential Fish Habitat as well as escapement available.
2. Plus, we do not have commercial fisheries for these fish.
3. We do not have dams.
4. We do not have any major habitat issues.
5. We do not have Tribal Fisheries.

The south coast district has more than 80 miles of **Non-defined Direct Ocean Tributaries**. Many of these provide habitat for steelhead and all are closed to angling. Plus, there are several Catch and Release streams. Out of all of these streams, there are only **a small handful of streams** that allow harvest of winter steelhead.

C&R; The New River, Floras Cr., Brush Cr., North fork CA Smith River, and just a few miles away, the Applegate River.

Now, if these fish were at risk, we would be the first to raise our hand and request a complete closure, **NOT** Catch & Release.

Because studies indicate that mortality rates for C&R of winter steelhead are at about 10%. ODFW Staff biologists and anglers will tell you that Catch and Release fishing means releasing some dead fish. The vast majority of the **public does not agree with releasing dead fish**. The State spent **Natural Resource Funds** on polls, to determine that the vast majority of the **public does not agree** with adding **more Catch and Release** only streams.

The south coast is unique in that aside from the Rogue, **it has only one** winter steelhead hatchery program.

If the State were to forfeit the privilege of wild winter steelhead harvest, then the vast majority of the public has requested that harvest be replaced with hatchery fish.

And finally, many of our local businesses are struggling or have even closed due to Covid. We respectfully request that the commission use caution when considering any regulation change that is based solely on social issues or a perceived crisis, that would place further financial burdens on local businesses.

Leonard Krug President, Oregon Anglers Alliance