



Good morning, Chair Wahl, Vice Chair Zarnowitz, Commissioners, Director Melcher

I am David Moskowitz, Executive Director of the Conservation Angler.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak with you on the record during the Public Forum. This is an important public engagement opportunity.

I am speaking on behalf of the North Umpqua Coalition which includes

The Steamboaters
The North Umpqua Foundation
Umpqua Watersheds
Wild Steelheaders United
Trout Unlimited
Pacific Rivers
Native Fish Society
The Conservation Angler

The North Umpqua Coalition formed just over a year ago in 2021 – spurred by ongoing declines in wild summer steelhead returns and alarmed by the 2020 Archie Creek Fire and the excessive salvage and hazard forest harvests.

Local residents and wild fish advocates formed and have sustained advocacy and science organizations for decades including The Steamboaters (1966), The North Umpqua Foundation (1983) and Umpqua Watersheds (1995).

TNUF formed the FishWatch to protect the wild steelhead resting in the Big Bend Pool on Steamboat Creek in 1992 and this volunteer effort persists to the present time.

The NUC organizations and membership have over 50 years of experience protecting wild North Umpqua Summer steelhead. From stopping dams, to stopping destructive logging, to stopping poaching, NUC's members are committed to protecting wild summer steelhead - and we are committed because these fish are so special.

Whether you are an angler, hiker, river runner, rockhound, old growth hugger, native plant lover or simply enthralled by moving water tumbling through narrow canyons and over dozens of unique waterfalls, the North Umpqua has it all.

I hope to take us all on a trip down to one of the most famous rivers in the entire world - the North Umpqua.

Headwaters of the North Umpqua is Maidu Lake in the Mount Thielsen Wilderness – a few short miles from the headwaters of another notable river- the Deschutes – Mt. Thielsen gives birth to two magnificent river children.

The North Umpqua is quite unique as one of two Oregon rivers that reaches past the coast range (Rogue, Umpqua) to the crest of the Cascades.

The North Umpqua and its summer steelhead are world-famous – anglers from all over the world have called it home – Princes, Presidents, movie stars, titans of business, to writers from Zane Gray to Jack Hemingway, Jimmy and Roslyn Carter to Governors from Tom McCall to John Kitzhaber to Ted Kulongoski, to American heroes like Frank Moore to the quiet, watchful sentinel Lee Spencer – the long time guardian at the Big Bend Pool – whose commitment to the wild summer steelhead has led him to adopt a fly fishing habit of swinging a fly without a hook – content to have his angling relationship with these wild fish be no more intrusive than feel their tug - to simply know they are returning to the wild river of their birth.

Three of the North Umpqua’s most famous anglers and stewards have held seats on the Oregon Commission that you now occupy – Frank Moore, Dan Callahan, and Jim Van Loan.

The North Umpqua has the longest summer steelhead fishing season in Oregon – from May through November.

It draws anglers from around the world – some find the Steamboat Inn to be their exquisite headquarters – perhaps they lodge with Norm at the quintessential Dogwood Inn – but most of these anglers are everyday anglers - from the frozen Midwest steelhead rivers to the western trout bums – with all their worldly possessions in their old Subaru or pickup truck – camped out at Susan Creek and everywhere legal and illegal in between – regardless, all of these anglers are there to wake up in darkness and creep over slick boulders to one of a hundred named runs – where thousands of previous anglers – both famous and unknown – cherish the chance to swing a fly over the most famous coastal summer steelhead in the world – strong free-rising wild summer steelhead that power their way from the Ocean – traveling over 100 miles of the main Umpqua River before they reach crystal clear cold North Umpqua itself – and some rise to your fly through water so clear it appears no different than the canyon air around you.

This fishery was closed - for the first time ever – in August 2021.

The summer hatchery program began in 1958. The highest return was 15,337 hatchery summer steelhead past Winchester in 1987. The hatchery summer steelhead goal is to produce 5,000 returning hatchery adults for the “fishery.” However, it has been 22 years since more than 5,000 hatchery fish returned past Winchester and this goal, albeit as arbitrary as it is, has been reached but 5 times in 30 years.

Continuing to convert the NU from a wild steelhead stronghold to just another hatchery river will not only sacrifice an irreplaceable steelhead population, but it will also end the rich legacy of this river for angling and conservation. That legacy is at risk and it will not be averted by continued releases of hatchery summer steelhead.

The Commission is facing this inflection point and it would be a shame not to take action when you have the chance.

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