

Chair Wahl, Director Melcher, Commissioners, my name is Bruce Buckmaster, a resident of Astoria, a former ODFW Commissioner and currently an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board member. As co-chair of OWEB's Water & Climate Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ODFW Commission and staff for their leading role in addressing Climate-Smart policy issues throughout the department.

For thirty years I have been a community advocate for preserving the traditional fishing industry of the Lower Columbia River and the cultural vibrancy that it embodies. I remember working on the Bishop's Pastoral letter of 2001 in which twelve regional Roman Catholic Bishops called on "all people of good will" to become better caretakers of waters, land, and communities within the Columbia River watershed. They called for a new regional cooperation to eliminate, "both economic greed that fails to respect the environment and ecological elitism that lacks a proper regard for the legitimate rights and property of others."

The first time that I testified before the Oregon Legislature was to oppose a bill that would remove the word "equitable" from ODFW's mandate for establishing policy. It was to be replaced with the word sustainable. Passage would have opened the way for communities to be subjected to policies without regard to fair treatment. Fortunately, the Bill was defeated.

During my thirty-year involvement on the issue, I have heard every pseudo-scientific, economic, and societal argument in support of reducing or eliminating the traditional fishing community's harvest opportunity rebutted by ODFW staff, economists, and plain common sense; and for that I am grateful. I have heard young traditional fisherman mocked for showing emotion as they pled to maintain their jobs and their way-of-life. In a working group I heard a fishing tackle company employee state that when the traditional fishing industry was gone it would not be remembered after five years.

Historically, the traditional commercial fishers have supported ODFW policies deemed necessary for conservation as long as the actions were apportioned equitably. What I have not heard is one Lower River proponent either state or infer that sport fishing opportunity was less important than traditional harvest. The argument has always been that Traditional harvest is AS important.

I know you've heard the message in many forms many times... We have come to realize that as far as implementing 'sustainability' is concerned, our traditional fishers have somehow become the worst off for it: it has actually led to less available to go around. Diminishing income has affected the numbers of those among us. Our children's hopes and plans to follow in our footsteps have been weakened and hollowed out. Intergenerational equity for the traditional fishing industry has been severely damaged. We are losing livelihoods and eroding our cultural heritage. In our case, the way 'sustainability' has been implemented has NOT

delivered a balance between environment, community, and economy. Meanwhile, the sportfishing industry has not been equally affected.

The recent passing of HB 4077, containing definitions of “environmental justice community” and “fair treatment” with respect to the “disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences” has caused me to question if we should now be counted among those considered an “environmental justice community”. Yet, I believe it is less the environment’s lack of natural resources and more the absence of just policy that has failed to successfully achieve the intent of sustainability. Two things ARE clear, though: (1) There are fewer of us, and (2) there will continue to be fewer of us unless something changes.

We do not want to be lost and then forgotten. All the logic or evidence we can muster hasn’t saved us. So, we respectfully request that the ODFW Commission initiate an agenda to consider a Columbia River Policy which includes a clear mandate for social justice.

Thank you.

Testimony presented to ODFW Commission
in Astoria, Oregon
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