

Remarks by David Moskowitz, The Conservation Angler  
April 2022 Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission Meeting

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## Columbia River Steelhead - 2021 and 2022

The Conservation Angler appreciates the recent public outreach by ODFW Columbia River Fisheries Staff and multiple District Biologists

TCA has been following the development of 2021 Oregon Legislative Disaster Aid for the Steelhead Sportfishing Economic Sector - still in development by Travel Oregon and yet to be released.

This economic relief package was noted as “one-time” relief. There is a time-limit with the aid expiring in Fall 2021. The scope of businesses eligible for aid has not been released but we hope that it includes the many small businesses that support the guiding, outfitting and steelhead fishing industry.

Given the Pacific coast-wide decline of both winter and summer steelhead, Oregon and other states must confront the reality that there are biological limits that should be considered in managing this sport fishing industry sector in the present and near-term

### 2021 Emergency Steelhead Rules

Regarding the 2021 Emergency Regulatory Steelhead Fishing Rules, TCA would like to see a more thorough and rigorous presentation of any metrics that may be available to estimate the angler effort and encounter rate in Oregon’s steelhead rivers. Based on personal communications with various staff, early indications showed significant decreases in both effort and encounters.

It will be essential to review all metrics in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the additional emergency regulations during the 2021 and 2022 wild steelhead migration to home waters.

### 2022 Steelhead Regulatory Proposal

- TCA is still evaluating the proposals.

- We appreciate the intent to close angling for chinook and coho if steelhead angling is closed.
- ODFW should publish readily available and long-term wild steelhead abundance estimates for the Deschutes, John Day, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Grand Ronde and Imaha Rivers.
- ODFW staff noted they used a 5% mortality rate for released steelhead - this raises several questions:
  - How do you calculate a mortality rate for steelhead encountered more than once?
  - Does this mortality rate account for fish encountered in warm water temperatures,
  - whether the fish is caught in a boat-based fishery or shore-based fishery or account
- Major Concern No. 1: Since the early portion of the summer run steelhead is primarily wild, how can fisheries be classified as targeted fisheries for hatchery fish when wild fish consistently make up a higher portion of the catch - even when there are more hatchery fish in the river?
- Major Concern No 2: Given the low wild run size, ODFW and WDFW must employ real-time observational tools to monitor the Non-Tribal commercial and sport fisheries - the use of old models and estimation tools is inappropriate when the stakes are at their highest.
- Acknowledgement:
- TCA would like to thank the FWC and ODFW Staff for implementing permanent regulations establishing Thermal Angling Sanctuaries at Eagle Creek, Herman Creek and the Deschutes River.
- They work and there is data to prove it.
- TCA will continue its advocacy in WA to establish TAS at multiple rivermouth fisheries to protect wild steelhead.

- **ACTION ITEMS**

1. Expand the Deschutes TAS (25% is unprotected)
2. Provide simple long-term wild steelhead abundance tables
3. Commission coordination with WDFW on a conservation-based bi-state tributary steelhead regulatory approach to avoid unintended consequences of angler effort shifts.