



June 14, 2024

To: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
Fr: David Moskowitz, Executive Director
Re: Legislative Direction to Evaluate Oregon's Hatchery System

Senate Bill 5506 passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2023, included a Budget Note in ODFW's 2023-2025 Biennial Budget requiring the agency to contract for a third-party assessment of the operations, sustainability, and climate vulnerability of state-owned fish hatcheries.

Here is the actual language of the note, displayed below (underlined for emphasis):

ODFW 2023-2025 Biennium Budget Note

The Department of Fish and Wildlife is directed to procure a third-party assessment of the operations, sustainability, and climate vulnerability of state-owned fish hatcheries.

The department shall present a detailed and thorough report which must, at a minimum, include the following:

- Funding models and financial sustainability of state-owned hatchery operations, including consideration of facility maintenance costs.
- An economic cost-benefit analysis that includes:
 - o The total agency costs associated with producing hatchery fish at each facility.
 - o The estimated economic benefits associated with production of hatchery fish.
- A summary of how the ecological impacts and benefits of hatchery programs on wild fish are incorporated into federal and state planning and policy making.
- Climate vulnerability for a sample set of state-owned hatcheries. This assessment should include:
 - o The projected impact of climate change on the ability of each hatchery to rear and release fish.
 - o The likely impact of climate change on the viability of and need (augmentation and conservation) for hatchery programs.
 - o Recommendations to mitigate these impacts through hatchery program changes, such as the species of fish released, and other measures.

During the 2024 legislative session, the Department is directed to provide an update on the status of this report to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. The Department shall present a completed report during the 2025 session.

The 2023 Legislature provided \$1,000,000 in SB 5006 for ODFW to complete this analysis.

The Conservation Angler urged ODFW to engage with all partners in development of the scope of the request for proposal (RFPs) that were prepared in order to meet state contracting requirements for securing a third-party contract to meet the budget note's charge. This did not happen in an organized way, though we do appreciate the communications we did have with Dr. Shaun Clement during this process.

ODFW is beginning outreach to the public later this month – a phase of the evaluation that was not explicitly provided by the budget note – but TCA is hopeful that the results of the specific evaluations of the hatchery system will inform the public of the challenges facing Oregon's hatcheries – including costs, adverse ecological interactions, depressing wild fish recovery efforts, and meeting or adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The Conservation Angler urges the Fish and Wildlife Commission to apply itself deeply and completely and in concert with Department Staff and expert, knowledgeable partners as this process moves along. This should include the following:

- Please request regular updates from Department Staff so that the Commission and the public are well informed of the progress and the critical decisions that the assessment should highlight in the coming months.
- Please direct ODFW to provide for public review and comment on the final draft report that ODFW must develop for the 2025 Oregon Legislature.
- Direct ODFW to seek a peer-review assessment of the final draft report to the Legislature – in other words, ask for review of the final draft by outside agency and independent scientific and economic experts as might have been done when the Independent Multi-disciplinary Scientific Team (IMST) still was in place. As an alternative, ODFW could seek peer review from NOAA, WDFW, NW Power and Conservation Council (NPPC), Oregon State University (OSU), Oregon Hatchery Review Center (OHRC) and other independent experts.

To close, The Conservation Angler strongly urges the Fish and Wildlife Commission to NOT miss your opportunity to create a blueprint or roadmap to modify and secure Oregon's hatchery system investment for the next 100 years. The time is now.

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