

Counter-argument to Steelhead Proposal

April 27th, 2018

My name is Leonard Krug. I'm a native southern Oregonian, a Salmon, Trout, Enhancement Program Volunteer, and a life-long passionate fisherman.

There has been a petition drafted by a small special interest group to require the release of all wild winter steelhead in all of our southwest zone coastal streams. This will affect the E. Fork Coquille the Sixes, Elk, Rogue, Pistol, Chetco, Winchuck Rivers, as well as Euchre and Hunter Creeks.

This petition has no biological reasoning, no science behind it, and is based solely on fear, guilt, and half-truths. This petition has no resident, age, or license requirements for its signatures.

Their strategy, is to quietly gather support and to suddenly present it at a Fish and Wildlife commissioner meeting. This has worked for them on occasion before, and it may work for them again, unless we can show a united opposition. **This petition is divisive**, and pits fishermen against each other!

If this petition is passed, it will have a negative impact on our economy. One of their agendas is to reduce the number of anglers on "their" rivers. The petitioners refer to the CA Smith River and its regulation changes to require release all wild winter steelhead, that resulted in many CA anglers coming to Oregon to fish. People come here to fish because we have an extremely high abundance of steelhead that may be harvested. Curiously, the Chetco River is arguably better fishing than its neighbor the Smith, since the Smith changed over to the mandatory release regulation.

The opposition miss-informs people that if passed, the state will then ramp up hatchery production to compensate for the lack of harvestable fish. This is the farthest thing from the truth as **there are no funds to increase hatchery production**, much less build new rearing facilities.

The petitioners state that since the Umpqua River was put under these regulations, they are able to catch and release the same steelhead over and over again, up and down the river. That is because the Umpqua has roads, on both sides of it, from the ocean to Toketee Falls. What they don't tell you is that (with the Exception of the Rogue River) **less than 10% of our steelhead habitat in these streams are even accessible to fishermen** due to vast private timberlands, the lack of roads, and the extreme rugged topography.

When we release fish, (and we do. Creel census reports show that almost 50% of wild steelhead are released) they get released into what is basically wilderness! They do not get caught again! **Example; The Chetco has 180 miles of available steelhead habitat. Only about 12 miles of it are accessible to fishermen.**

The petitioners claim that the Umpqua River has more steelhead in it than the Chetco River!

This is the only thing that we can agree on because what they don't tell you is that the **Umpqua has 2043 miles of steelhead habitat on it. The little Chetco by comparison, has only 180 miles of habitat.** That's like comparing Euchre Creek to the Rogue River.

The petitioners claim that "everybody is on their side! I'd like to quote the Coastal Multi-Species Conservation Plan, by ODFW, June 2014 Page 65;

The Oregon State University opinion survey commissioned by ODFW, showed that;

"The support for anglers for wild winter steelhead harvest was nearly five times greater than those who opposed it." That's 80%!

The petitioners try and demonize anglers for harvesting and eating a wild winter steelhead, stating that they're contributing to the "population collapse!"

To quote the CMP 2014 page 65 again; "These populations persisted for many generations while being harvested at higher levels than identified in this plan. ODFW expects that the abundance of these

populations will continue to primarily be driven by changes in marine survival and will not be significantly affected by harvest."

***" ODFW analysis indicates that wild winter steelhead populations can support harvest without affecting the populations viability."**

The petitioners claim that 40 or 50 years ago there were many more fish in our streams. What they again fail to tell people is the whole truth, that we had hatch box's in most streams, rearing ponds in volunteer's backyards, and many more hatcheries throughout the state. We will not go back to those practices for all of the obvious reasons.

The petitioners claim that the southwest zone steelhead status is not well understood, that there is no management plan for this zone. Again, what they don't tell you is that this zone has been managed quite well without the petitioner's harassment. What they don't tell you is that there was a winter steelhead status report done in 2004, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has studied them and given them a pass, that these regulations have been in place since 2002, that there are many scientific studies open to the public that have been created on these fish, AND that there is a Conservation Multi-Species Plan scheduled for this year, to add further credibility to our already very credible opinion.

We as fishermen have compromised over and over, from a 40-fish harvest tag, to a 20-fish tag, to what is now a maximum of 1 per day, 5 total wild winter steelhead per year. They are slowly taking away one of our rights at a time.

I'm simply requesting that you not only sign the signature document of support, but provide a letter to our F&W Commissioners declaring;

We strongly recommend that our ODFW Commission rule to maintain our current steelhead regulations, to respect the opinions and science of our F&W biologists, and to use their life's work of studying, monitoring, and assessing this topic to continue to allow harvest of wild winter steelhead in our southwest zone coastal streams. We would further add, that these past rulings that have gone against our biologist's recommendations for wild winter steelhead harvest, be reviewed for possible reversal. To rule in favor of these miss-guided idealists is a dis-credit to not only the public, but also to our system of management, and all of the hard-working people responsible for maintaining it.

Please submit your letter to me in person, or mail to;

Coalition for Oregon fishermen
PO Box 6314,
Brookings, Oregon 97415

I will ensure that it gets delivered in one large package with the proper timing.
Gratefully,
Leonard Krug 541-659-0976