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### Thoughts from Tom Wolf to ODFW Commission

Chair Finley and Commission members-

My name is Tom Wolf with, with Trout Unlimited and I have been working with, testifying before and advising ODFW for the past 25 years. During that time, I have testified on more issues, sat on many task forces and been involved in many ODFW issues. I have appreciated the years of work with the ODFW Commission and staff on protecting and restoring Oregon's wild native fish populations. Now, as I am one month from retiring and spending my retirement fishing in many of Oregon's waters which I love, I just want to share a list of concerns thoughts I have which I believe ODFW should be focused on.

Before I start on this list, let me just preface this by stating that I have nothing but respect and admiration for ODFW staff. They are asked to do an impossible task complicated by 2 huge and sometimes conflicting goals. 1. They are asked to protect and restore native wild fish and wildlife species, many times under the boundaries of state and federal endangered species laws.2. They are asked to provide recreational opportunities for various recreational and commercial user groups. This means that they must protect wild fish yet continue to run hatchery programs. This is a difficult task that is complicated by funding crises and lack of support from legislature at times. So recognizing this, I offer the following comments.

1. ODFW should continue to look into, as far as fisheries go, making protecting and restoring wild native fish found in the waters of our state their top priority. As we continue to face many challenges for wild native fish from climate change, habitat destruction, urban growth, human population explosions and challenges from invasive species, it will take bigger efforts than ever to ensure the continual protection and growth of our native fish populations. I urge ODFW to make to make protecting and restoring native fish your number 1 priority.
2. Concurrently I urge the ODFW Commission, working with others, to continue to pursue creating other funding levels for ODFW. Without other levels of funding to offset and compliment the money from license sales and federal money, true conservation of native fish and wildlife species will be hard to accomplish. The Commission should also look at working with other state

NR agencies to ensure that a large-scale funding product that will insure that all of Oregon's Natural Resource agencies will have sufficient funding to accomplish their conservation goals.

3. ODFW should continue to receive public input -and in fact improve the whole process. So many of the ODFW task forces are just seen as rubber stamps to what the agency wants. I feel that the state would benefit in their management of fish and wildlife management-and certainly improve your public image. ODFW, is seen too often as an agency who doesn't consider the needs of its citizens. I don't believe that is planned but rather is an unintentional consequence of how ODFW conducts its business. I think improving ODFW's image should be a prime goal of ODFW and improving their task force system is a way to accomplish this. As long as users do not feel that the agency is listening to them, the public will not truly buy into supporting ODFW in some of their conservation goals.
4. ODFW must continue to consider reforming and changing their hatchery practices. ODFW has been doing, much to their credit, has been doing some changes. But there should be a concerted effort to do even more. The research done on improving hatchery management practices, both done at Oregon Hatchery Center and other places, should be incorporated into current hatchery management practices to produce hatchery salmon that is less harmful and more compatible with wild fish.  
But even more importantly, there must be a continued effort by ODFW to get rid of inefficient hatcheries and change practices so there is less dependence on hatchery fish. To insure the future survival of wild salmon and steelhead, there must be a shift from our dependence on hatchery fish and more reliance on wild fish which spawn in the wild. I recognize that hatcheries will always be part of the solution when it comes to providing salmon for harvest but we also must recognize that hatcheries are also part of the problem. This is a difficult ask but hatchery reform must be a ODFW priority.
5. ODFW must continue to work on their communication levels. It has improved over the years but there still needs be a better job sharing with the public what ODFW does. In particular, ODFW's work on doing restoration projects needs to go out to public better.
6. ODFW, if they are going to continue to pursue catch and release to protect wild fish, should require hooks to be barbless. If fish are played with constant tight lines, barbless hooks are just as efficient as barbed hooks. And it is much easier to release wild fish with barbless hooks, especially for inexperienced anglers.
7. There should be a concerted effort by ODFW to protect the Columbia River white sturgeon population. The numbers of spawners, in particular, are down in number. The Columbia River white sturgeon population, at one time, was the largest white sturgeon population in the world. The population is going down and there needs to be an effort to stabilize and recover this population.
8. ODFW needs to expand efforts to restore and protect non-game fish and wildlife. ODFW has a good tool in the Conservation Strategy but the efforts behind this plan need to be strengthened. Protecting non-game fish and wildlife has always been part of ODFW's mission- ODFW just needs to make this a more concerted effort on their part, which to be fair, is driven by funding- or lack of funding. I think there will be a concerted effort by many groups to get funding for Conservation Strategy-ODFW just needs to be prepared to use that funding wisely.

9. ODFW must, as outside funding is raised, look at lowering, or at the very least, not raising the cost of fishing and hunting licenses. The cost now is very high for people struggling economically. With other funding obtained, the cost of running ODFW can be shifted off the shoulders of hunters and anglers, thus making sure that people don't stop hunting and angling in Oregon because of license costs.
10. ODFW must also keep non-resident hunting and angling license fees as low as possible. Bringing in people from other states to hunt and fish helps money both to the state and to local rural economies. It is a win-win for Oregon.
11. Continue to reach out to non-hunting and angling community to look at ways to both involve them in ODFW matters and to get money from them. With the percentage of hunters and anglers only at 20-25% of Oregon's population, the vast number of Oregonians don't hunt or fish. Yet they too care about the future of our fish and wildlife. They need to be included in the conversations ODFW has about protecting and restoring them.
12. There must be more funding acquired to have more enforcement for fish and wildlife violations in Oregon. The number of fish and wildlife, with our population constantly growing, has been the same for 30 years and is much too small to deal adequately with all the enforcement issues that go along with managing our state's fish and wildlife population.

In closing, I just want to state that I respect ODFW staff and the Commission. But frankly, and unfortunately, ODFW is a bureaucracy that has developed the weaknesses of that time of organization. To be fair, most large groups, including my group Trout Unlimited, develop the traits of bureaucracy over time and lose that ability to be creative and just strive not to fail.

ODFW needs to shake off the shackles of this tendency to not be creative and strive to be a creative organization that uses all its tendencies to drive to both restore and protect fish and wildlife in Oregon and provide recreational opportunities for all Oregonians.

And that drive to change must come from the Commission. You must strive to make the agency more creative and free that form the tightrope which is the burden of bureaucracies. Only with your leadership, whether to obtain varied funding to do ODFW's mission, working with Director on strategy or goals or just being creative, leadership must come from you. Knowing you as I do, I feel you are up to the challenge and I urge you to take up that challenge as it is good for our native wildlife and good for the state of Oregon.