

Rich Zellman
Public Forum

Hello, my name is Rich Zellman. I'm a full-time fishing guide in Southern Oregon and Northern California. And I'm here today to voice my support for wild steelhead release in Southern Oregon.

There are many reasons to release wild steelhead, most importantly the future.

- I think I can safely say most everyone here would like to enjoy fishing for steelhead into the far distant future.
- Some may have kids, they'd like to share steelheading with.
- At 39, I'd like to be fishing for them until my body won't let me anymore.

There is very little data on the run sizes of the south coast steelhead populations.

- But, as a guide who is always on the water when the rivers are in shape, I can tell you that last year I saw the worst fish numbers I've seen in the 18 years of fishing them.
- Steelhead stocks don't rebound from one year to the next. Steelhead runs up and down the northwest coast are plummeting.
- This is not a time to allow harvest. These stocks need to be confidently understood.

My clients come from all over the states and as far away as Singapore to catch and release wild steelhead on the South Coast.

- Very few, if any locally. This means, lodging, dinning out multiple time a day, fishing licenses, grocery store stops, gas and so on.
- All to catch and release wild steelhead - a truly renewable resource if they make to the spawning grounds.

Steelhead have become one of the most popular game fish throughout the northwest and beyond.

- Most people don't live on or near steelhead rivers and again, this means money coming in from out of the area to the south coast.

I also guide just south of the border on Northern California's Smith River. This river has been a "no kill" fishery since 2011 and I have yet to see a drop in angling pressure, only an increase.

- Anglers are there to catch and release wild steelhead as there are very few hatchery fish in the Smith. There is far more to steelheading than taking one home.

Those who know me, have probably heard me say: **we have the best of what's left. Let's keep it that way.**