



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

This exhibit includes information on the Salmon Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) and one item that requires Commission action, the restructuring of the STEP Advisory Committee (STAC).

Recognizing that volunteers could play an important role in the restoration of native stocks of salmon and trout, the Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program in 1981.

Since that time thousands of volunteers have assisted Oregon's fisheries through their involvement in STEP. They have donated money, materials, equipment, and countless hours of time and labor. STEP volunteers have completed stream habitat restoration work, conducted surveys, helped with education projects, and hatched and reared several million salmon and trout eggs—all because they care about fish and fish habitat.

STEP's goals include:

- Rehabilitate and improve natural habitat and native fish stocks.
- Insure that harvest does not exceed fish population's reproductive capability.
- Provide for citizen volunteer participation in achieving the ODFW fish management objectives.
- Support public education programs.

The Salmon and Trout Advisory Committee (STAC) is currently made up of 13 Oregon citizens appointed by the governor to provide recommendations concerning the implementation of salmon and trout enhancement projects. STAC members are appointed to represent the various districts throughout Oregon.

In addition to the advisory committee, 11 ODFW STEP Biologists work closely with the numerous STEP affiliated Oregon fishing organizations, providing technical expertise as well as organizing and overseeing the efforts of these dedicated volunteers.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Issue 1: STAC meetings are open to the public and considered "public meetings" under the Oregon Public Meetings laws. Notice of upcoming meetings is provided on request, listed on the ODFW website, and distributed via news release to statewide and local media. Issue 1 was discussed at both the April 10, 2020 and September 25, 2020 meetings.

ISSUE 1

Restructure Salmon Trout Enhancement Program Advisory Committee

ANALYSIS

The Department is seeking to restructure the Salmon-Trout Enhancement Program Advisory Committee as the costs associated with the meetings have become unsustainable. ODFW funds meeting costs through a federal Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) grant and agency allocations from this source have been flat for years, resulting in revenues being unable to keep up with rising costs. Reductions are being sought from nearly every SFR funded program and this proposal is one action to address the need for about a \$1 million budget reduction to SFR funded programs in Federal Fiscal Year 2021 (10/2020 to 9/2021).

Travel costs for STAC meetings are currently budgeted with SFR funds at \$26,000 per year, however estimates show that actual costs are likely to be closer to \$31,000 per year. Out of necessity due to budget short falls, the proposed restructuring will allow the STAC to continue to work in an effective and efficient manner on a budget of about \$15,000 per year.

Staff are proposing two actions to reduce costs. First, is to reduce the size of STAC from thirteen to seven members. Several options were investigated and seven members was selected as the best option. This option will maintain a functional board and make the size of STAC consistent with other ODFW boards and the Commission. Second, the number of in-person meetings will be reduced to two per year with associated travel being centralized and targeted. Additional meetings will be conducted virtually, as needed.

This request is being brought before the Commission as ORS 496.460 establishes that “The committee shall be of such size and have such geographical representation as the commission determines appropriate.”

Currently, STAC has 13 members assigned by territories as identified in Attachment 2. These territories are aligned to various geographic and geopolitical boundaries. While the territories are smaller they do not line up well with ODFW management boundaries and currently there can be one or two STAC members per STEP Biologist. The STAC is currently operating with 8 members due to recent vacancies. The request before you today is to reduce the board to seven members and define their territories as outlined in Attachment 3. The proposal is to create 6 local representatives and one state-wide representative. The statewide territory would provide an opportunity for partners or other individuals with a broader interest or expertise to serve on the committee. The local territories would consist of one representative for eastern Oregon (aligns with the ODFW region and pairs with the single eastern Oregon STEP Biologist) and five representatives in western Oregon (align with ODFW watershed management structure and pairs each with one or two STEP Biologists).

Staff recognize the larger territory will decrease the local connection with volunteers, but the smaller nimbler board size should help the board focus less on the micro view of “local” issues and more on the macro view of program development and other issues affecting STEP regionally or statewide. The larger territories should also make it easier to recruit committee members. Over the past decade it has become increasingly difficult to get even one interested candidate for each vacancy.

Staff discussed the need for this change and potential options at the April 10, 2020 and September 25, 2020 STAC meetings. At their September 25th meeting, the STAC made a motion to support the proposal. This resulted in a split decision of four yes and four no votes.

Based on discussion it appears that the supportive members understood the need and felt the board would find a way to function successfully after a reduction. The individuals opposed to the proposal seemed to feel that the resulting territories would be too large and they would not be able to interact at current levels with all of the groups or volunteers in the larger area. If the Commission agrees to the proposed reduction and realignment, staff will continue to work with STAC members to ensure a smooth transition. One such action will involve retaining institutional knowledge and experience by keeping current members in place until their current terms end. The transition will occur between now and January 2022.

OPTIONS

Option 1. Approve the proposed revisions to STAC size and territories as outlined in Attachments 3.

Option 2. Reject the proposal.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1.

DRAFT MOTION

I move to approve reducing the STEP Advisory Committee to seven members representing the territories identified in Attachment 3.

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 14, 2020