

Exhibit F

Restoration and Enhancement Program Project Approval and Board Appointments

Supplemental
Public Correspondence received as of
December 12, 2023

December 8, 2023

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302
ODFW.Commission@odfw.oregon.gov

**Re: Support for Siletz River pHOS Study
(December 15, 2023 Meeting, Agenda Exhibit F)**

Dear Chair Wahl, Vice-Chair Zarnowitz, and Members of the Commission,

Trout Unlimited (TU) is a national organization dedicated to conserving coldwater fish and their habitats. The TU members in and around Corvallis are affiliated with our Corvallis Bluebacks Chapter.

The Bluebacks Chapter of TU supports the Siletz River Basin pHOS Study recommended for funding by the Restoration & Enhancement Board, but we have two reservations about implementing it.

The conservation of wild steelhead in the Siletz River is a key issue for our members. In fact, it's one of the topics that galvanized TU members in the Corvallis area to forming our own Chapter a decade ago. The Siletz is a special basin for steelhead on the Oregon Coast because it's one of the very few coastal streams that has both *wild winter and summer* steelhead runs.

For years, our Chapter has monitored and tracked the presence of hatchery steelhead in the upper Siletz via snorkeling surveys (see image below). In 2015, Bio Surveys, LLC conducted an adult steelhead resting count survey in the area above Siletz Falls (from the confluence of Warnicke Creek to the Falls); they observed a total of 271 steelhead, 42 of which were fin-clipped, which indicated that 15.5% of the counted steelhead above Siletz Falls were of hatchery origin.



Bluebacks Chapter members have conducted snorkel surveys of the upper Siletz River for years, often documenting the presence of hatchery steelhead in the upper basin and its tributaries.

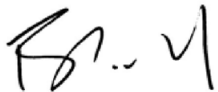
While supportive of the study, we offer a couple respectful critiques of the proposal, as follows:

1. **The proposal seems to *anticipate low pHOS* (percent hatchery origin fish on spawning grounds) and therefore an opportunity to increase hatchery release numbers, but gives less attention to the implications of a study that shows high pHOS.** The proposal states that results of the study will inform revisions to the Coastal Management Plan (CMP) in 2026, and will therefore provide an opportunity to increase hatchery releases. However, the proposal does not elaborate the management strategies ODFW might pursue if pHOS *exceeds* the 10% goal. If the proposal anticipates the possible management implications of low pHOS (i.e., increased stocking of hatchery smolts), then we respectfully request that proposals like this also anticipate and provide similar detail on management implications of high pHOS. The *CMP Wild Fish Monitoring Summary (2014-2021/22)* report¹ shows that the 9-year average pHOS for Mid Coast Stratum winter steelhead was 13% in 2022 (p. 66), and our Chapter would not be surprised if this study shows pHOS in the Siletz exceeds the pHOS limits set in the CMP. In the current project proposal, all we can discern is that high pHOS would result in a “review of release strategies” (p. 7) and that “if pHOS values are above the 10% threshold the district would look at other options to reduce pHOS instead of reducing the current 50,000 smolt release.” The study proposal should not take options off the table for future management decisions.
2. **If the study’s technicians operate the trap at Siletz Falls and therefore improve the trap’s effectiveness, it could result in lower pHOS on the Siletz during the study period.** The trap at Siletz Falls does not prevent all hatchery fish from passing above the Falls. The *CMP Wild Fish Monitoring Summary (2014-2021/22)* report provides a helpful summary of this issue at p. 82; for summer steelhead, ODFW’s snorkel surveys in 2014 and 2015 “showed pHOS to be 5% and 20%, respectively.” The proposal explains that the study staff would participate in trapping at Siletz Falls. This raises the question of whether trapping at Siletz Falls during the study will prevent a greater percentage of hatchery fish from reaching spawning grounds in the upper basin than in previous years (i.e., having a “hand on the dial” of how many fish reach spawning grounds and then counting those fish, rather than just observing and counting fish). We simply encourage that the study design estimate pHOS based on how many fish reach spawning grounds in a typical year, and avoid the risk of counting/estimating pHOS that is artificially low.

The Bluebacks Chapter of TU supports the study, and we share the Department’s goal of ensuring that pHOS doesn’t exceed 10% in the Siletz.

Thank you for considering these comments, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Frederick (Rick) Colwell
Chapter President
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¹ Available at: https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/crp/docs/coastal_multispecies/2014-2021%20CMP%20WFMS.pdf



Restoration and Enhancement Program
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

December 8, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Deschutes Redbands Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) and its 720 members in the Deschutes Basin, we want to convey our highest recommendation for Dr. Fred A. Cholick as a candidate to serve on the Fish Restoration and Enhancement Board. We believe that Dr. Cholick is abundantly qualified for the board position given his background in biological research and his experience as a former university president. His resume conveys a strong commitment to fisheries management and fishing, as well as highlighting his interpersonal skills. Our Chapter is particularly focused on protecting and restoring the cold-water fisheries in the Deschutes Basin, making Dr. Cholick an excellent candidate.

We thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Fred A. Cholick as a candidate for the ODFW Restoration and Enhancement Board.

Sincerely,

Steven Goldberg, President
Deschutes Redbands Chapter – Trout Unlimited
16 N.W. Kansas Ave.
Bend, OR 97703