

From: Bill Bakke
Sent: Wednesday, October 04, 2006 10:25 AM
To: Baugh, Zenobia
Subject: Supporting Deschutes River Steelhead Productivity Project #20079900

NFS

NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Conserving biological diversity of native fish and protecting their habitats

October 4, 2006



RE: Support for funding of Deschutes River Steelhead Project # 20079900.

Recovery of ESA-listed summer steelhead and the fishery it supports depends upon this research project, for it will evaluate the relative reproductive success of hatchery stray steelhead and wild native steelhead in the Deschutes Basin. Based on this research the appropriate management decisions can be made to resolve this problem.

Resolving this problem is endorsed by the Independent Scientific Review Panel. They say this project is scientifically sound and "addresses a fundamental uncertainty regarding the extent and effects of out of subbasin strays on wild steelhead populations."

The issue of out-of-basin hatchery steelhead strays is recognized in the Deschutes subbasin plan, NMFS hydro Biological opinion and the hydro court ordered remand, so the issue is real and requires action. To take action, however, means that this project must be funded.

It is therefore inconsistent with the Council's commitment to adaptive management, subbasin planning, and hatchery reform and recovery of ESA-listed species to continue to reject funding for this project.

This project will address the biological impacts of hatchery strays on wild steelhead. It will identify the degree of straying and its impacts on the reproductive success of native, wild steelhead. Since these hatchery strays pose a serious problem for the maintenance of genetic health and the productivity of wild ESA-listed steelhead in the Deschutes, funding this project is necessary for the recovery of this species in the Columbia River Basin. The viability of the wild steelhead continues to be at high risk

due to these strays and this project is needed to determine how this risk can be reduced or eliminated.

The NFS supports this project because it is needed. We are working to protect stream flows in the basin, consulted with PGE on hydro relicensing to protect fish and flows in the river. We participate on a habitat board administered by PGE and have purchased riparian lands and water rights in the basin important to native steelhead and their reintroduction above the dams. This investment is over \$4 million. I have worked with ODFW to adopt fishing regulations that protect juvenile steelhead and salmon as well as resident trout in the basin, leading to a widely popular catch and release fishery by thousands of anglers that call the Deschutes their home river.

The Deschutes River is one Oregon's most important and popular summer steelhead fisheries. People come here from around the world to fish for wild summer steelhead. The dollars they spend is important to the local economy in Oregon towns such as The Dalles, Maupin, and Madras. So a lot is riding on the future for wild steelhead in this river and a lot of citizens consider it vital work that must be done. This project will go a long way toward resolving serious problems that will decide what kind of future these fish will have.

A decision by the Council to fund this project means you and the region are taking effective action to resolve serious issues confronting wild steelhead in the Deschutes River. At stake is the potential extinction of wild steelhead and the fishery that relies upon those fish, including diverse economies these fisheries support in local communities.

Please fund this project.

Sincerely,

Bill M. Bakke, Director

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