



**CCA**

COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON

January 19, 2010

Good afternoon Chairman Blake and members of the committee.

My name is Ed Wickersham, chairman of CCA Washington's government relations committee and I am pleased to join Andy Marks here this afternoon representing more than 5,000 CCA Washington members to testify concerning selective fishing reforms and HB 2696. While we do have concerns with HB 2696 as drafted, we are pleased that Representative Blake is bringing this important issue before this committee.

As you know, we face some serious challenges as we attempt to restore and recover our remaining wild salmon and steelhead populations. Over half of our region's historic salmon and steelhead runs are already extinct. More than half of the 28 species of West Coast salmon and steelhead currently listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act are found in Washington waters. CCA supports the extensive efforts underway to restore habitat, improve hatcheries, and make dams more fish-friendly. CCA members have been particularly focused on the need to implement fully selective fisheries to protect and promote conservation of our wild salmon stocks.

In order to achieve recovery we need to establish self-sustaining populations of wild fish. Recent congressionally-chartered reviews of Pacific Northwest salmon recovery efforts by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) have found that we need to reduce mortality to wild salmon while also reducing the proportion of hatchery fish that stray into our streams and rivers and spawn with wild salmon and steelhead. In addition to protecting and restoring our habitat, it is critical that we move swiftly to develop fisheries capable of meeting this dual challenge. Below is a brief summary of some key points to consider:

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- Hatchery strays comprise the major portion of the spawners returning to the natural spawning areas (70 to 90 % in many streams) of the ESA listed populations. This greatly exceeds the rates needed to achieve recovery.
- HSRG has concluded that the productivity of wild salmon in our existing habitat would double if the hatchery strays were adequately harvested by targeting the marked hatchery fish while protecting the co-mingled wild populations.
- Therefore, to a significant degree we are limiting the benefit of the many millions being spent on habitat restoration and inhibiting the recovery of ESA listed stocks at the same time.
- Suitable commercial fishing methods “corral” rather than entangle salmon. Corraling allows the sorting and healthy release of non-targeted stocks whereas entangling does not. Examples of promising gear for selective fishing include beach seines, purse seines, and pound nets or traps. Gillnets, the commercial gear currently in predominant use, are intrinsically non-selective and unsuitable for targeting hatchery stocks while protecting co-mingled wild salmon stocks.

WDFW has initiated the testing of selective commercial gear on the Columbia River this last fall. The preliminary tests of this gear, purse seines, beach seine and a net trap look very promising. You should know that the Colville Indian Nation has tested selective gear on the Upper Columbia River with excellent results. Last summer the Colville Nation caught about 2,400 Chinook salmon. Almost 1,200 wild fish were released with only 4 mortalities.

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Harvest reform must be guided by the best available science and the needs of the resource. I believe WDFW, and the commercial fishers working with them, must be supported in their efforts to develop truly sustainable selective commercial fisheries. The process should encourage transparency, collaboration and dialogue where various stakeholders and the public are engaged in achieving meaningful reform. CCA looks forward to working with Chairman Blake, this Committee, WDFW and other stakeholders to accomplish this.

Our society at every level has spent billions of dollars to facilitate the recovery of our salmon and steelhead and yet we have made little headway to this point. As you deliberate I hope you will keep these suggestions in mind and will support the Department for its initiative to facilitate the transition to modern sustainable fisheries as soon as possible. We must save these fish.

Thank you and I will be glad to answer any questions you might have.

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