

Andy Marks and Ed Wickersham testified before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee yesterday in Olympia. The committee is chaired by Representative Brian Blake. Representative Blake had presented a bill last week to move forward with selective commercial gear testing on the Columbia River. Brian Blake opened the hearing by announcing to all that he would withdraw his bill (HB 2696) and instead use the hearing as an opportunity for a workshop and a beginning for a process to develop selective commercial salmon fisheries. CCA presented testimony in support of the need for selective commercial fishing gear but offered suggestions for improvement in the bill as it was written. CCA offered testimony asking the committee to ensure that the bill was driven by the need for recovery of our salmon and steelhead, was guided by HSRG science, it must include the entire state and be a transparent collaborative public process. CCA also applauded WDFW for their leadership this last fall in beginning to test selective commercial gear as well as the commercial fishers who were working with them. The committee was urged to support the Departments efforts and timeline. The testimony was well received by the chairman and his committee members. Somewhere between 40 and 50 CCA members attended the hearing to demonstrate our interest in the need for science based selective commercial fisheries to aid in recovery of our salmon and steelhead. Our thanks to our membership that took the time and effort to attend the hearing and conduct themselves in a respectful manner. CCA was well represented.

Several folks testified from the commercial fishing industry, including Ed Owens, Irene and Kent Martin, John McKinley, Marty Kuller, Darin and Bruce Crookshanks. They had criticism

for CCA and those that would rush to adopt selective gear before it was adequately tested. They defended the continued need for gillnets and tanglenets and their selectivity. Most important was that they unanimously supported the need for selective commercial gear to take salmon. All supported Blake's bill.

Sara LaBorde with WDFW testified in favor of the bill and the need for selective commercial gear reform and continued support for their current testing initiative on the LCR. She recognized the support CCA had provided in moving that program forward.

Representative Blake's withdrawal of his bill, his initiating dialog on selective commercial gear reform, and the open manner in which the hearing was conducted are all very positive signs that we may have a significant opportunity to move forward with our goals. Our thanks go to chairman Blake and the committee members.