



President's Testimony at Feb. Commission Hearing for Steelhead Management Plan

- Good morning, my name is Rich Simms, President of the Wild Steelhead Coalition. The Wild Coalition is the an organization dedicated to increasing the return of wild steelhead to the rivers and waters of the Pacific Northwest. The WSC as also provided a leadership role by organizing the Steelhead Summit Alliance, which brings organizations together to work together on steelhead issues.
- At the outset, I want to commend the Department for making the protection and recovery of healthy wild steelhead populations and their habitat the primary goal, and for proposing policies more protective of wild steelhead than its existing policies. This is a significant advance and we wish to acknowledge it.
- I also want to recognize the time and effort put into the State Management Plan by Department staff. We recognize that this is a difficult task and we appreciate their hard work and willingness to share their views and listen to our concerns.
- Our primary message to you today is that while the draft plan is a good start and signals a turn in the right direction, it needs to be significantly improved if it is to achieve the goal of healthy wild steelhead populations.
- There are several major flaws in the draft plan regarding habitat, artificial production and fishery management that must be corrected. Other Wild Steelhead Coalition members in attendance this morning will speak to those flaws in more detail.
- The Wild Steelhead Coalition does not take this matter lightly. WSC members have been deeply engaged at every step in the formulation of the draft plan. We provided extensive comments on the draft Science Paper and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We attended and testified at the public meetings on the DEIS. And we have invested hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to make sure the best scientific information informs the plan.
- And the evidence clearly shows we need urgently major management changes if we are to restore healthy wild steelhead populations in our state. Those changes necessary changes go beyond what is recommended in the draft plan.

- In closing, we are looking to the Commission for leadership in instituting the changes necessary to turn our wild steelhead populations around and move them toward recovery. And we ask you to start by directing the Department to address the major flaws in the draft plan before you approve it.
- Thank you for your attention and consideration.