



American Fisheries Society
Oregon Chapter
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April 19, 2006

Representative Peter DeFazio
United States House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Honorable Representative DeFazio:

The Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (ORAFS) would like to reaffirm our support of a wilderness designation for the Copper-Salmon area on the Elk River. In 1998, ORAFS sent a letter to you (attached) in support of this effort and we continue to believe this designation would be extremely beneficial to fish and their habitats.

The ORAFS is comprised of over 450 fisheries and aquatic science professionals from federal, state, and tribal agencies, colleges and universities, diverse private employers, college students, and retirees. The Chapter was established in 1964 as part of the American Fisheries Society. Our mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of Oregon fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems for long-term public benefit by advancing science, education and public discourse concerning fisheries and aquatic science and by promoting the development of fisheries professionals. Designating the Copper-Salmon area as wilderness is consistent with our goal of protecting Oregon's wild fish populations and their habitats.

The Elk River is truly a unique and valuable watershed from an ecological and societal perspective. The Elk River continues to support a diverse fish community, including Chinook and coho salmon, steelhead, sea-run cutthroat trout, lamprey, and resident species such as resident cutthroat trout, sculpin, and dace. These productive fisheries in turn support a valuable tourist economy in the local region. The runs of fall Chinook salmon and winter steelhead in the Elk River draw anglers to this area from all over the world. Fall Chinook and coho salmon also contribute to commercial fisheries in the ocean and the local economy (depending on regulations influenced by abundance of these and other Oregon and California salmon populations). The North Fork Elk River inside the proposed Copper-Salmon Wilderness has some of the highest potential Chinook salmon spawning habitat in the Elk River Basin.¹ A wilderness designation will help

¹ Burnett, K.M. 2001. Relationships among juvenile anadromous salmonids, their freshwater habitat, and landscape characteristics over multiple years and spatial scales in the Elk River, Oregon. PhD Dissertation, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. 244p

ensure these fishery resources remain productive and continue to provide important benefits for years to come.

From an ecological landscape perspective, some portions of the Elk River Basin are already afforded protection from unnatural degradation by having either wilderness protection or wild and scenic river designation. Designating the Copper-Salmon area as wilderness will greatly expand protection of the Elk River Basin (and minor portions of the Sixes and Coquille river basins) and really provide a meaningful benefit to fish and their habitats. So much of the time, protections are very limited in scope and do not provide as much ecological benefit as the Copper-Salmon designation would to the Elk River Basin.

We appreciate your efforts and urge you to continue supporting the proposal to designate the Copper-Salmon area as a wilderness area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry P. McPherson".

Barry P. McPherson
President, Oregon Chapter
American Fisheries Society

cc Senator Ron Wyden
 Senator Gordon Smith
 Representative Greg Walden
 State Senator Jeff Kruse
 State Representative Wayne Krieger
 Lucie La Bonté, Curry County
 James Auburn, City of Port Orford
 F. Joseph Margraf, Western Division AFS

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