

Oregon Chapter of the
American Fisheries Society

Statement of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society:

My name is Denny Lassuy, and I am President-elect of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The American Fisheries Society is a voluntary organization of fisheries and aquatic science professionals. The Oregon chapter has approximately 500 members from federal, state, and tribal agencies, higher education, and diverse private employers. In addition to educating our members about new scientific understanding, we provide information on fisheries issues to aid the public discourse on natural resource questions.

We wish to make two statements here this morning. They are not made lightly, and we feel comfortable in saying that there is no serious scientific division on them.

The first is that there can be significant genetic differences between locally-adapted wild stocks and hatchery-produced salmon. Such differences have been documented in numerous peer-reviewed publications in fisheries science journals and have been recounted by the National Research Council and other independent science panels. These studies have shown that traditional hatchery practices have caused losses of genetic variability and fitness (that is, the long-term capability for survival) in salmon populations.

The second statement is that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife was justified in this specific decision to terminate the Fall Creek hatchery stock of coho salmon. Their actions at Fall Creek Hatchery in the Alsea River Watershed were based on an open deliberative process, used solid scientific principles and are supported by the Executive Committee of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

We are fisheries scientists, not policy makers. We can only provide those who do make policy with scientifically credible information upon which to base their decisions. Oregon's decision to establish a wild fish policy is a result of the political process. Society and its elected officials will determine the wisdom of that policy. We can only say that if the current wild fish policy is to be carried out successfully, the practices of ODFW regarding surplus hatchery fish should continue to include all current options.

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