

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Fisheries Biologist Letter of Support for the River Democracy Act (S. 192)

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley,

November 14, 2022

We the undersigned fisheries biologists applaud the introduction of the River Democracy Act of 2021 and thank you for your leadership in protecting Oregon's rivers, streams, and freshwater ecosystems. As biologists we are uniquely qualified to identify opportunities that will greatly benefit our state's fish species and their habitat, and are committed to do our part in promoting the conservation of both. We believe that the River Democracy Act will provide positive outcomes for both human and fish populations.

According to the American Fisheries Society, approximately 40 percent of freshwater fish species in North America are imperiled due to habitat loss, invasive species, water quality, and climate change. Habitat loss is mentioned first and foremost because it is such a significant problem, but fortunately it is solvable in many instances. Protecting more high-quality habitat, as the River Democracy Act intends, is one major solution.

Maintaining the free flowing nature of ecologically important rivers and streams is a cornerstone of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Allowing for the protection of many "sizes" of waterways is another. We commend Senators Wyden and Merkley for including many important headwater streams in the River Democracy Act. Though less exciting than a picturesque whitewater river, these essential tributaries comprise nearly 80% of Oregon's stream network. They provide critical spawning and rearing habitat for our state's most beloved (and vulnerable) fish species, attenuate high water temperatures by sending cold groundwater downstream, add complexity and biodiversity to river systems, and play an incredibly important role in the overall health of our watersheds, fish populations, and human communities.

Please take action to ensure that this bill passes before this congress adjourns, and know that we stand behind your efforts.

Sincerely, the undersigned –

Amy Stuart, Fisheries Biologist, ODFW (Retired)
Bill McMillan, Fisheries biologist (retired), Wild Fish Conservancy
Cindy Deacon Williams, Biologist
Daniel Diggs, Retired Assistant Regional Director Fisheries US Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Region
Douglas DeHart, Ph.D., Fisheries
Gary Marston, Science Advisor, Trout Unlimited
Haley Ohms, Ph.D., Salmon Biologist, Trout Unlimited
Helen Neville, PhD, Senior Scientist for Trout Unlimited
Howard Schaller, Ph.D., Retired Project Leader US Fish & Wildlife Service
Jack Williams, Ph.D., Emeritus Senior Scientist, Trout Unlimited
James Martin, Retired Chief of Fisheries, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jay Doino, Biologist
Jeff Jackson, Fish Biologist
Jeff McEnroe, Fish Biologist - Roseburg BLM
Jeffrey Dose, Fisheries Biologist
John McMillan, Science Director, The Conservation Angler
Kathryn Kostow, Retired Fish Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kelly Burnett, Ph.D., Fisheries Biologist
Kirk Schroeder, Fishery Biologist
Liz Perkin, Ph.D.
Matthew Sloat, Ph.D., Science Director, Wild Salmon Center
Nick Chambers, Master's Student, Aquatic and Fishery Sciences
Randy Frick, Fisheries Biologist
Richard Nawa, Biologist
Rod Sando, Chair of NSIA Science and Policy board, former Director of Idaho Fish and Game
Tim Elder, Ph.D., Southern Oregon Program Manager, Wild Salmon Center