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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Commission Fails to Hold ODFW Accountable, Punts Decision on Imperiled North Umpqua Summer Steelhead Until April**

North Umpqua River, Idleyld Park, Oregon - On February 18, 2022 the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to deny the North Umpqua Coalition's petition for declaratory ruling based on the forthcoming ODFW analysis of wild Summer Steelhead health in the North Umpqua Basin which is due out next month. The Department's upcoming show and tell on its assessment, with limited public comment, is no substitute for a formal hearing on our petition. The North Umpqua Coalition is deeply concerned about this decision and the continued inaction of ODFW staff and the Commission to fix a dubious hatchery program that threatens to continue despite the lowest return of wild Summer Steelhead on record.

In 2014, the ODFW Commission adopted [The Coastal Multi-Species Conservation Management Plan \(CMP\)](#), which sets management guidelines, objectives, and conservation thresholds for Oregon Coastal fisheries populations including Summer Steelhead in the North Umpqua. Among the guidelines in the plan are limitations on the negative impact hatchery fish can have on naturally spawning wild fish. Appendix III of the CMP States, "The proportion of hatchery Summer Steelhead that comprise natural spawners in the North Umpqua Summer Steelhead population area is targeted for a level of 10% or less for the majority of the wild spawning areas." Clearly explained in the petition of the declaratory ruling submitted by the North Umpqua Coalition, ODFW's own data indicates that 33% of the fish spawning in naturally in the North Umpqua basin are hatchery fish.

"Today, the Commission proved that the Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan ("CMP") is an empty promise. By denying our petition, the Commission refused to hold ODFW accountable for failing to meet the goals it set in the CMP to protect wild Steelhead from hatchery fish. The CMP is a publicly developed plan and the public should hear all the facts about its implementation. Apparently, that's not going to happen at the Commission level," says Rob Kirshner, Legal and Policy Director for The Conservation Angler.

The status of wild Summer Steelhead is dire. 347 wild Summer Steelhead passed Winchester Dam last year. That's just 8% of the desired abundance goal and only 29% of the critical abundance goal set in the CMP. Only 59 fish were observed in holding pools in the prime spawning tributaries of Steamboat Creek and Canton Creek.

It's still unclear what the department plans to do with the hatchery Summer Steelhead smolts currently rearing at Rock Creek Hatchery. The department has not been transparent about their intentions and have failed to respond to any of our requests to be informed.

The North Umpqua Coalition requests that ODFW comply with its own conservation management plan that it and numerous stakeholders crafted in order to conserve and restore wild Summer Steelhead populations.

“What good is a conservation management plan with goals and objectives if the managing agency does not comply. It clearly shows complacency and disregard to the conservation of these imperiled fish. A huge disrespect to all the previous generations of conservationists who have fought to protect and conserve the North Umpqua River and its Wild Summer Steelhead,” says Kirk Blaine resident of Roseburg and the Southern Oregon Regional Coordinator for Native Fish Society.

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The North Umpqua Coalition is working to conserve and restore the North Umpqua River and its imperiled wild Summer Steelhead population. Working together, their vision is focused on restoring an all wild Steelhead North Umpqua, making it the only river in Oregon with a population of both wild Summer and wild Winter Steelhead. This advocacy has been made possible through a grant from the Flyfisher Foundation of Oregon.