FEBRUARY 13, 2017

CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO CLOSE LEABURG HATCHERY-JEOPARDIZE MCKENZIE FISH STOCKING

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) intends to change the way it operates its hatchery program resulting in the closure of the Leaburg Trout Hatchery and the end of funding for trout stocking in the McKenzie River near Eugene, Oregon.

A February 7, 2016 letter to MRGA President Steve Mealey from ODFW Deputy Fish Chief Bruce McIntosh indicated the ACOE plans to terminate its 60-year Cooperative Agreement implementing federal mitigation hatcheries in Oregon. Hatchery fish production will be put out for competitive bids. McIntosh said the area hardest hit will be the Willamette Basin: “Recreational trout fishing will be eliminated from the Detroit, Foster, Cougar, and Middle Fork Willamette Reservoirs and possibly the mainstem McKenzie River”.

With the defunding and closure of Leaburg Hatchery, trout production will be contracted to small business for up to 100,000 pounds of fish. There is no intent to meet the full mitigation responsibility of 277,000 pounds, reducing trout mitigation by 64%. McIntosh went on: “…the economic repercussions will be significant to those businesses and communities that rely on sport anglers and anglers”.

In response Mealey stated, “this arbitrary and surprising action by the ACOE will have a devastating impact on recreational fishing here on the

McKenzie and elsewhere in the region; fishing opportunity for young and old alike, many of whom caught their first fish on the McKenzie, will be greatly reduced– this must not be allowed to happen.” He also noted that the arbitrary and bureaucratic action intended by the ACOE is contrary to the harmonious partnerships federal agencies are expected to develop and maintain with their state, local, and private neighbors.

For nearly 90 years McKenzie River guides in their famous McKenzie Drift Boats have helped people throughout Oregon, the nation and the globe experience the magic of the McKenzie River with both its stocked and wild rainbow trout. Roughly 40% of the 90 mile McKenzie River is stocked with catchable trout allowing anglers of all ages to catch and keep rainbows. The long-standing guide’s tradition of a noon lunch of freshly caught fried trout is a unique McKenzie experience. “The action planned by the ACOE will end the famous legacy of the McKenzie River Guides as we have come to know it,” Mealey stated.

The MRGA believes that the ACOE as a federal agency subject to the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) must complete an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the intended action to change management of its mitigation hatchery program before implementing the action. MRGA takes this position because it believes the intended action is a “major federal action” with significant social, economic and environmental consequences, which requires an EIS before implementation.

The ACOE intended action affects seven mitigation hatcheries in the Willamette, Columbia and Rogue Basins which were constructed and implemented beginning in 1951 to mitigate for the lost production and/or habitat associated with the construction of federal dams in these basins.

***RESPONSE:***

***Fed’s (Army Corps of Engineers) built the wrong design dam in 1951. River temperatures were permanently and irrevocably changed. Miles of Salmon spawning habitat was lost as the river was blocked. As a result Salmon runs of over 100,000 per year have disappeared. In 1950 the limit on Native trout was 100 per day. Today the limit on Native Trout is 0. Growth of invasive moss, algae and aquatic weeds has boomed*.**

**NOW, the Corps wants to just walk away from the disaster they have created. NO WAY.**

**Waterprotectors to the rescue!**