



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

ISSUE 1

The Commission is being asked to appoint two new members to fill the vacant seats on the Fish Screening Task Force; one new member to represent Agricultural interests and one new member to represent Fishing or Fish Conservation interests.

BACKGROUND

The Fish Screening Task Force (FSTF) is a board comprised of seven members appointed by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission as per ORS 496.085. The primary role of the FSTF is to offer guidance to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) on the development, implementation, monitoring, technology, funding, and reporting of the Fish Screening Program. The FSTF is composed of three representatives from the Agricultural sector, three from Fishing or Fish Conservation, and one from the Public-at-Large. Members of the FSTF serve a two-year term, which can be extended for up to three consecutive terms. Currently, there are two vacant positions on the task force: one for an Agricultural representative and one for a representative from Fishing or Fish Conservation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The position for a representative from the agricultural sector was first announced in a department news release in May 2024. This announcement was shared by KTVE21 news. A few interested candidates reached out for more information, but no applications were submitted.

The agricultural representative vacancy was announced again, along with a fishing and fish conservation representative for the FSTF that had become vacant in the interim and two new vacancies for the Fish Passage Task Force (FPTF), in an ODFW news release in June of 2025. The announcement was posted on ODFW's X account on June 24th. This announcement was shared by KDRV news on their website and Facebook page. The vacancy announcement was also shared by the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Vacancies for the FSTF were discussed at multiple FSTF and FPTF public meetings, including the joint meetings on October 4, 2024, and May 29, 2025; the FSTF meeting on December 5, 2025; and the FPTF meetings on March 7, 2025, and October 16, 2025.

ANALYSIS

During the FSTF vacancy recruitment process, the department initially received one application (Attachment 2). At the same time, the Fish Passage Program was recruiting for two positions on

the FPTF. After those selections were made, the Fish Screening Program contacted some of the candidates who were not chosen for the FPTF to gauge their interest in serving on the FSTF. As a result of that outreach, one additional candidate applied (Attachment 2). Following is a summary of both candidates:

- Mr. Harry Bither, the Irrigation Director of the Threemile Canyon Farms, applied for the position representing Agricultural interests. As Irrigation Director at Threemile Canyon Farms, he works closely with local farmers and irrigators, giving him a strong connection to the irrigated agriculture community. His experience includes designing and managing pumping stations on the Columbia and Umatilla Rivers, where he oversees fish screen maintenance and dredging requirements. These responsibilities have provided him with practical knowledge of fish screening systems and their interaction with agricultural operations.

Mr. Bither is motivated by a desire to ensure the agriculture community has a voice in fish screening decisions and to learn more about how screens function in different environments. He values collaboration, listening to diverse perspectives, and achieving efficient, effective, and sustainable outcomes. His hands-on experience with irrigation infrastructure and salmonid-focused design processes positions him to represent agricultural needs while contributing to balanced, science-based solutions for Oregon’s waterways.

- Mr. Alex Hardison, a Conservation Nonprofit Communications Manager, applied for the Fishing or Fish Conservation vacancy. Mr. Hardison brings experience as the Crooked River Steward for Native Fish Society, where he advocates for sustainable water management and habitat restoration. His background includes navigating regulatory frameworks, collaborating with irrigators and agencies, and serving on boards, giving him strong skills in policy, communication, and consensus-building.

Mr. Hardinson is motivated by a commitment to reduce fish entrainment and improve survival of native migratory species. He views fish screening as a critical but often overlooked conservation tool and hopes to contribute his watershed-scale perspective and policy expertise while learning more about fish screening implementation and funding strategies. His focus is on balancing ecological needs with practical water use solutions to sustain Oregon’s fisheries and communities.

Staff reviewed the application materials, interviewed each candidate, and determined that they both met the requirements for each of the vacant task force positions. Additionally, each candidate showed clear enthusiasm to actively contribute to the work and goals of the Fish Screening Task Force.

OPTIONS

1. Appoint Mr. Harry Bither to represent Agricultural interests on the FSTF and Mr. Alex Hardison to represent Fishing or Fish Conservation interests on the FSTF.
2. Reject the appointment of one or both candidates, re-solicit new candidates, and proceed without a full task force until filled.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Option 1. Staff recommends the Commission appoint Mr. Harry Bither and Mr. Alex Hardison to the FSTF.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to appoint Mr. Harry Bither, as a representative for Agricultural interests and Mr. Alex Hardison as a representative for Fishing or Fish Conservation interests on the Fish Screening Task Force.

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 20, 2026