

# RBFF State R3 Program Grants Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife- Community Fishing Ambassador Program

## Overview

When we set out to recruit fishing ambassadors from around the region, we were looking for people who are passionate about fishing, their favorite fishing areas, and taking others out with them. Our goal was to bridge the gap between who we could reach on our statewide social media and the communities our ambassadors live in and influence through their social media and groups. We gave them loaner fishing equipment to help overcome some of the obstacles to getting others into fishing, and we provided training opportunities and conducted meetups in their communities. The ambassadors are all influential on their individual social media platforms and are willing to help educate the public about fishing and fish management in Oregon.

## Partners

Fishbrain, Cabelas, HHOutfitters, TFO Fly Rods, Fisherman’s Marine

## Benefits

Authenticity is important and communicating from behind a logo is challenging. Recruiting our Community Fishing Ambassadors provides an authentic link to fishing communities around the state. It provides a timely resource for communicating through important issues, recruiting new anglers into workshops and volunteer opportunities. And it gives us close relationships in areas where we haven’t traditionally been tied in broadly to the fishing communities.

Many obstacles to entry are solved by providing loaner equipment like opportunity specific fly rods, waders and traditional fishing gear. Additionally, our fishing ambassadors keep us constantly supplied with photos, videos and testimonials to use for social media.

This program allows us a more natural means of communication with fishing communities than our limited social media reach. It’s grassroots, and the growth potential is exponential.

## Results

- Several ambassadors have been working with us in a similar capacity for a year or more, so we were able to grow this project based on existing interactions.
- We’ve seen a measurable increase in awareness in communities where our Community Fishing Ambassadors are influential and have managed to correct misinformation about fish management and create a better outlook for anglers.
- Our loaner rods and reels are being utilized to take new people fishing in unique locations like the Rogue, Coquille and Umpqua rivers.
- We’ve been able to reach into communities with low social media presence through our ambassadors.
- Number of phone calls to the agency have been reduced by providing the Fishing Ambassadors with good information to combat misinformation.
- We’ve seen an uptick in women interested in angling opportunities as a result of the visibility of our Community Fishing Ambassadors.
- Instagram has grown from 10,000 followers to 16,000 since the launch of the program.



Sara Ichtertz displays the loaner rods she plans to use to get more women into winter steelhead fishing near her home in Glide, Oregon.



**Support** “I support the Community Fishing Ambassador Program as an innovative way to reach communities and support fishing education, mentorship and communication beyond traditional social media and communication strategies. Our Ambassadors are a valuable part of recruiting and retaining anglers in Oregon.”- ODFW Director Curt Melcher



## Lessons Learned & Future Plans

- Finding the right fit is challenging but not impossible. It requires watching people and how they interact with their community on social media.
- By spreading good information to influencers, you can more quickly correct misinformation than through traditional communication channels.
- It’s faster and easier to recruit for fishing education workshops through influencers.
- We would like to expand the program to cities and towns all over the state.
- We would like to continue to upgrade and replace equipment, create new classes of ambassadors yearly, give our region or species specific fishing gear.
- Increase our meetups in larger cities and towns and create thousands of volunteers.
- We plan to hold meetups, seminars and other events with the purpose of encouraging more participation in new types of fishing, i.e. fly fishing, and signing people up for dedicated email newsletters pertaining to their choice of outdoor pursuit.



## Methodology

- Utilizing social media, we searched for potential social media influencers to recruit at Community Fishing Ambassadors.
- The criteria were they must have a passion for fishing, a willingness to or a history of sharing their experiences with others. They cannot be professional guides or be overly sponsored by industry. They must have an authentic approach to fishing and teaching others.
- We started by asking them to do an Instagram Takeover to introduce themselves, which we conducted by simply having them pick 10 photos or photos and videos to share over a 10-day period with short blurbs explaining them.
- We interviewed our recruits about what kind of equipment would help them succeed in sharing their love of fishing with others and order those kits accordingly.
- We ordered T-shirts and Tech-shirts as well as hats and water bottles with the program logo. There will only ever be one run of each color and style, so everything is unique to this group of recruits.
- We established meetups with several of our ambassadors and introduced them to local district fish biologists, signed them up as volunteers and trained them in fishing education.



Schwag for the Community Fishing Ambassador Program included a tech shirt and a T-shirt, in addition to a custom-made fishing hat for each of our ambassadors.



## Contact Info

Tim Akimoff – Social Media Coordinator  
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife  
[Timothy.A.Akimoff@state.or.us](mailto:Timothy.A.Akimoff@state.or.us)  
503-947-6021



Community Fishing Ambassador Sara Ichtertz takes a photo of a beautiful Rogue River summer steelhead that was caught by ambassador Chris Clogston during a meetup in Medford, Oregon last summer.