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April 4, 2013

The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Testimony by
Stan Steele, President
Oregon Outdoor Council
House Bill 3437

The Oregon Outdoor Council commends the efforts of the Committee regarding the governance of Oregon's natural resources by holding this important public hearing considering the merits of House Bill 3437. The Oregon Outdoor Council comes before you today to discuss the concerns held by thousands of Oregon's anglers, hunters and trappers, outdoor recreationists and associated businesses regarding the composition and competencies of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Oregonians are spiritually connected to nature through their active participation in myriad outdoor sporting activities such as; snowshoeing the snow-covered high country of Oregon's majestic Cascade Mountains while running a martin trap line, watching Marbled Murrelets diving for forage fish while deep-sea fishing for halibut off of Yaquina Head or hearing the high pitched chirp of a Rock Pika while bugling for bull elk during early archery season. Our state's hunters, anglers and trappers have a long and honorable history of loving and caring for the lands, rivers and abundant fish and wildlife that make Oregon such a special place to live and raise our families.

HB 3437 recognizes the amazing fish and wildlife stewardship accomplishments of America's first and longest enduring conservationists by recognizing and rewarding those accomplishments with positions on the only commission that directly manages Oregon's fish and wildlife. The benefits that the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation has bestowed on all citizens of Oregon and our nation is

unsurpassed economically and ecologically by any other stewardship model in the world.

The seven Oregonians selected by the Governor must meet specific qualifications outlined in Oregon Revised Statute 496.090 such as (3) approval by the Senate, (4) commission appointees must reside in and represent their respective congressional district, one at-large commission appointee will represent the east side and one appointee will represent the west side of the Cascade Mountains, (5) they must be residents of Oregon (6) must represent the public interests of the state and make decisions affecting our wildlife resources for the benefit of those resources and provide for productive and sustainable utilization our wildlife for all groups of users.

The appointee qualifications that HB 3437 adds to Section 7 of ORS. 496.090 provide reasonable and prudent baseline qualifications for applicants to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission ensuring that Oregon continues to be a national leader in sound and equitable fish and wildlife management. Again, the concept and successes of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation must be clearly understood before arbitrarily rejecting the requirements placed on the Governor during the commissioner selection process by this bill.

In recent years there has been an intensifying angst among the sporting community regarding the commission appointee and commissioner reappointment process. Rumors of congressional seat switches being discussed in closed door meetings between government representatives and environmental advocates and the 2012 last second vetting of three commission appointees to representatives of the hunting and fishing community by the Governor's natural resource staff just minutes before their Senate confirmation is very disconcerting to Oregon's licensed sportsmen and women. Failing to promptly fill open seats on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and having commissioners remain on the commission for multiple months after their terms have expired leads many sportsmen and sportswomen to question the Governor's commitment to them and to this extremely important citizen fish and wildlife policy panel. ORS 496.090 (2) states that before the expiration of the term of a member, the Governor shall appoint a successor. If there is a vacancy for any cause, the Governor shall make an appointment to become immediately effective for unexpired term. The Oregon Outdoor Council would graciously assist the Governor and his staff in fulfilling the commission member requirements contained in the statute.

Contrary to the views of some in the environmental community Oregon's licensed hunting, angling, trapping and commercial fishing participants don't view the commission simply as a "Good Ol' Boys Club" that whimsically doles out unlimited tags allowing the indiscriminate taking of our fish and wildlife resources. This type of rhetoric is exactly why the distrust of environmental organizations is becoming so deeply rooted in Oregon's true conservationists and why we are very concerned about the commission selection process. Oregon's responsible consumptive and

non-consumptive users of our fish and wildlife resources believe that this flagrant mischaracterization of past commissioners, who were predominantly hunters and anglers, is just another example of the poor decision-making capabilities of those who want to ban hunting, fishing and trapping in Oregon. It is a strategy right from page one of the anti's playbook - control the process by politically taking it over and while doing so smear the accomplishments of respectable volunteer commissioners by labeling them as "Good Ol' Boys."

We acknowledge that the majority of Oregonians don't hunt, fish or trap and sportsmen and women have gladly stepped up to fund and provide millions of hours of volunteer labor working on non-game conservation projects statewide that enhance everyone's quality of life. Licensed hunters, anglers, trappers and commercial fisherman have more vested in the preservation of our natural resources than any other single constituency in the Oregon. To stress this point, we have taken the opportunity to attach a March 21, 2013 press release from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service announcing that sportsmen and sportswomen generated \$882.4 million in excise taxes in 2012 that will be apportioned to the states to fund fish and wildlife conservation and recreation projects across the nation.

Some of the critics of HB 3437 who wish to mislead the committee members state that the number of Americans who hold hunting and fishing licenses is steadily declining. This assertion is dead wrong. According to more reliable sources such as the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on August 12, 2012, nationally hunting increased 9% and fishing increased 11% since 2005. These ardent conservationists contributed more than \$145 billion dollars to our nation's economy and supported tens of thousands of jobs in industries and businesses connected to fishing, hunting and the observance of wildlife. With less than three percent of Oregon's general tax fund going into the operating budget of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to manage all of the state's species, game and non-game alike, it only seems fair to require our policy makers to have some skin in the game!

In celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Wildlife Sport Fish and Restoration Program it seems fitting to honor the contributions of Oregon's hunters, anglers, trappers and commercial fishermen by passing HB 3437 and ensuring the continued oversight of Oregon's fish and wildlife resources by those who continue to enjoy and fund wildlife conservation each and every day. Oregon's nearly one million hunters, anglers, trappers and commercial fishermen care about our natural resources, and we care about you. We are the proud and devoted stewards of Oregon's and our nation's wildlife!

Stan Steele, President
Oregon Outdoor Council

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces \$882.4 Million in User-Generated Funding to State Wildlife Agencies

March 21, 2013

Hunters, Anglers, and Other Recreational Users Provide Support for Critical Conservation Projects

More than \$882.4 million in excise tax revenues generated in 2012 by sportsmen and sportswomen will be distributed to state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies to fund fish and wildlife conservation and recreation projects across the nation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

These funds are made available to all 50 states and territories through the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration programs. Revenues come from excise taxes generated by the sale of sporting firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing equipment and tackle, and electric outboard motors. Recreational boaters also contribute to the program through fuel taxes on motorboats and small engines.

“The sporting community has provided the financial and spiritual foundation for wildlife conservation in America for more than 75 years,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “Through these programs, hunters, anglers, recreational boaters and target shooters continue to fund vital fish and wildlife management and conservation, recreational boating access, and hunter and aquatic education programs.”

“The financial support from America’s hunting, shooting sports, fishing and boating community through their purchases of excise taxable equipment and hunting and fishing licenses is the lifeblood for funding fish and wildlife conservation; supporting public safety education; and opening access for outdoor recreation that benefits everyone,” said Jeff Vonk, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. “Fish and wildlife can be conserved, protected and restored through science-based management and it is critical that all these taxes collected be apportioned to advance conservation efforts in the field.”

The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program apportionment for 2013 totals \$522.5 million. The Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Program apportionment for 2013 totals \$359.9 million. As a result of the statutorily required sequester, these apportionments have been reduced by 5.1 percent, or approximately \$39.2 million. Additional Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration grant funding to the states has also been reduced, for a total sequestration-related reduction of approximately \$44 million.

The Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program reimburses up to 75 percent of the cost of each eligible project while state fish and wildlife agencies contribute a minimum of 25 percent, generally using hunting and fishing license revenues as the required non-Federal match.

Funding is paid by manufacturers, producers, and importers, and distributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to each state and territory. For information on funding for each state, visit

http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2013/pdf/Master_apport_table_Final_2013.pdf.

The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs have generated a total of more than \$15.3 billion since their inception – in 1937 in the case of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program, and 1950 for the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Program – to conserve fish and wildlife resources. The recipient fish and wildlife agencies have matched these program funds with more than \$5.1 billion. This funding is critical to sustaining healthy fish and wildlife populations and providing opportunities for all to connect with nature.

Please visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program website at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/> for more information on the goals and accomplishments of these programs and for individual state, commonwealth, and territorial funding allocations.