



April 4, 2013

Oregon House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee  
HB3437 Public Hearing  
Testimony of Oregon Wild

Representative Witt, members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Rob Klavins. I am the Wildlife Advocate for Oregon Wild. We are a conservation organization that represents over 10,000 members and supporters who support our mission to protect and restore the wildlands, wildlife, and waters that make Oregon such a special place.

Due to the nature of this hearing, I think it's important to recognize that Oregon Wild was founded in 1974 in part by a group of elk hunters concerned about the loss of big game habitat. Our membership, staff, and board still include people from around the state who are avid hunters and anglers. However, our mission is broader than that. We work to ensure healthy populations of all native wildlife. That includes keeping common species like elk and meadowlarks common. It also means working to restore wildlife like wolves and salmon that need some extra help retaking their place on the landscape.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) has a broad mission to conserve wildlife for all Oregonians. However, most of the budget is still directly tied to the steadily declining dollars from hunting and fishing license sales. 88% of the species managed by ODFW are neither hunted or fished, yet less than 5% of the agency's funding comes from Oregon's general tax dollars and the lottery.

Interest in wildlife is a major driver behind Oregon's flourishing outdoor recreation economy. According to the Outdoor Industry Association and others, that industry generated nearly \$13 billion in consumer spending, 141,000 direct jobs, and \$955 million in state and local tax revenue in Oregon. Only about 10% comes from hunting and fishing. ODFW is facing very serious challenges, but they require real solutions.

We agree – and believe most Oregonians would agree – that funding for the agency from the majority of non-consumptive wildlife interests should be dramatically increased. However that won't be the case if they feel the agency is co-opted by a single user group.

Along with the funding leverage, the most vocal in the hunting and fishing community have also long enjoyed disproportionate power over the agency. Folks who care about songbirds, otters, wolves, and wolverines have rightfully felt left out for a long time.

To be clear, hunters and fishermen deserve a seat at the table, but so too do birdwatchers, business owners, scientists, and those physically or financially unable to hunt and fish. We all have a stake. We all deserve a voice.

To solve ODFW's legitimate funding problems, we have to build a broad consensus around the agency's mission, use of good science, and accountability to all Oregonians.

We need to build a broad public consensus that:

1. What ODFW is doing is important and relevant.
2. ODFW represents the values of *all* Oregonians – most of whom are more concerned about songbird decline and habitat loss than filling an elk tag.
3. ODFW's decisions are grounded in sound science.
4. Everyone from an elk hunter in Eugene to a birdwatcher in Burns sees value in funding the agency.

A bill that imposes a litmus test on Oregonians to even be considered for a seat at the table takes things in the opposite direction.

Wildlife in Oregon are managed for all Oregonians, not just those lucky enough to live near the state's big wild places or those who choose to hunt or fish.

We urge the committee to shelve this discriminatory legislation and instead work with a broad coalition of stakeholders for meaningful, long-term solutions to the very real challenges faced by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. Excluding the vast majority of Oregonians through divisive legislation isn't the way to do it.

The problems we face aren't unique to Oregon. However, if we focus on common ground and collaborative solutions, Oregon can come to unique solutions that can serve as a model to states around the country. That's the conversation we should be having and we hope we can be a part of it.