



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

March 12, 2015

To: Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
WaysandMeans.NaturalResourcesSub@state.or.us

Re: HB 5037, Budget for the Department of State Lands - Comments

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League has strong positions on water quality. We particularly note that Oregon has a goal of no net loss of wetlands. Oregon recognizes the role of wetlands in water quality and in flood management among other values. With this in mind, we offer the following comments:

We have watched the reorganization of the Department and believe that the opportunities for linking decision making is a positive for both the general public and for those applying for permits. The waters of the state are an important public asset. Management of activities in these waters must be done carefully and with full application of state regulations and in recognition of the myriad of federal regulations that also govern these waters.

To that end, the League has supported increased oversight of suction dredge mining. And we supported the Territorial Sea Plan with a role for the department in activities within our territorial waters.

The Portland Harbor Cleanup effort must continue. We are hopeful that a positive outcome that actually cleans up the harbor, and offers the opportunity for both recreational and economic uses of the harbor, can occur in the near future. We support the state's diligence in protecting the state's liability, but we look forward to the day when the arguments about who pays has been settled and, instead, cleanup is actually occurring.

The League has been a longtime supporter of the South Slough Reserve, an incredible special place for research, for educational opportunities and for recreation. We support the ongoing efforts to maintain this asset and encourage the department to seek further federal funding to expand the reserve as willing sellers appear.

The League has watched the State Land Board struggle with balancing the requirement to provide funds to the Common School Fund while managing a variety of state lands. The Elliott Forest, of course, is the most well-known. On December 9, the League provided testimony to the Department related to the Elliott State Forest, in part: "*LWVOR acknowledges that this is a very difficult issue because of an outdated arrangement that couples a pristine forest ecosystem to school funding. Our schools and protection of our*

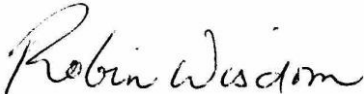
forests are both important and one should not have to be chosen at the expense of the other.”
We encourage the State Land Board to continue working toward a resolution that preserves the old growth forest while carefully managing the rest of the forest.

We understand the request under POP 105 that would allow irrigated agriculture on 750 acres of rangeland in southeast Oregon. We do want to be sure that the water used does not affect access to water by private landowners in these years of high drought and limited water supplies. But this is an example of the change in management of Common School Fund assets. And the goal of a 7% return on investment is one the State Land Board should keep its eye on, as well as you all in the Legislature. The stock market has been a friendly vehicle these past few years, but that has not always been the case.

We have been impressed by the department’s search for additional ways to provide revenue to the Common School Fund. The Master Plans for the relatively newly acquired lands in Central Oregon should allow for increased revenue to the Fund. But, again, this new management can put them in competition with the private sector. That’s a conundrum since these are the assets received and any quick sale would not be prudent fiscal management.

This department has a wide variety of responsibilities. Administrative leadership and staff support for their multiple missions has been impressive. We ask the legislature to support their varied missions on behalf of all Oregon.

Sincerely,



Robin Wisdom
President



Peggy Lynch
Natural Resources Coordinator