



MEASURE: HB 2669  
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HOUSE TRANS & ECON DEVEL  
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SUBMITTED BY: Quinn Read

#### MEMORANDUM

TO: House Committee On Transportation and Economic Development  
FROM: Quinn Read, Wildlife Coordinator, Oregon Wild  
DATE: March 23, 2015  
RE: HB 2669 -- Establishes Oregon wildlife conservation registration plate program to support Nongame Wildlife Fund

On behalf of Oregon Wild's 15,000 members and supporters from across the state, we would like to thank you for scheduling this hearing on HB 2669 to establish an Oregon wildlife conservation registration plate program and to direct proceeds to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for the purpose of conserving nongame wildlife. Oregon Wild's mission is to protect and restore Oregon's wildlands, wildlife, and water as an enduring legacy for all Oregonians. We enthusiastically support this measure and submit the following comments for consideration and incorporation into the record.

ODFW is grappling with a \$32 million budget shortfall. This reflects a long-term downward trend in funding for the agency, leaving it without resources to meet its conservation mandate. To date, ODFW has relied largely on revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. This approach focused the agency almost exclusively on programs that benefit game species, at the expense of its larger mission to protect all of Oregon's native fish and wildlife.

However, for the last two decades, public participation in consumptive uses of fish and wildlife has steadily declined. With less money from license fees and few alternative sources of revenue, ODFW's budget gap will only grow. This puts the agency in the unenviable position of raising license fees for hunters and anglers, and asking the public to support the use of general fund dollars for the agency without a commitment to non-game wildlife conservation.

To help ODFW address its budget deficit and to ensure long-term financial sustainability, Oregon Wild is working with a coalition of conservation, hunting and fishing groups to identify new sources of revenue. Wildlife watching is one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation, however, the agency currently has no mechanism to generate revenue from this constituency. As part of an overall budget reform package, we believe that the agency must create pathways to allow people interested in conservation of native fish and wildlife -- both game and non-game -- to help pay for the conservation programs they care about.

While it will not solve ODFW's budget shortfall, we believe the creation of an Oregon wildlife conservation license plate is a positive incremental step forward. It provides a way for people who care about wildlife to contribute to conservation programs and to advertise their support for those programs. It also provides resources for ODFW to implement non-game species conservation activities and thus increase public trust in and support for the agency. We also believe an image of an endangered wolf is appropriate because Oregon's wolf conservation plan is one of ODFW's biggest successes with respect to non-game wildlife. Not only that, the story of OR-7, the Oregon wolf who continues to make headlines for his long-distance travels, has become a symbol of Oregon's leadership in protecting threatened and endangered species.

Revenues from a wildlife conservation license plate would likely be modest, but not inconsequential. The state's endangered salmon license plate has brought in over \$9.5 million since its inception. Unfortunately, that program suffered from improper oversight and misuse of funds. With adequate oversight and proceeds directed solely to ODFW's non-game wildlife conservation fund, this program could avoid the problems of other plates and help build momentum toward diversifying the agency's funding model and supporting its broader conservation mission.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.