

for Thursday April 2, 2015 Subcommittee hearing re ODFW budget SB 5511

Oregon State Legislature, Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair

Dear Senator Devlin and Representative Rayfield:

I am writing to **Support funding for the Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program (WOSRP)**. I ask you to restore \$2 million in funding for this program in the ODFW budget.

The WOSRP has not been proposed for funding in the Governor's proposed ODFW agency budget. This, in my opinion, is a very short-sighted and unfortunate decision that I ask you to remedy.

The program directly implements the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and other species conservation programs, including the newly developed Oregon Coastal Coho Conservation Plan, which is resulting in the habitat focused actions that are rebuilding populations to the level that is necessary to delist coho and re-build a robust fishery. It is especially poor timing to remove funding for this program, when there is a federal plan (NOAA) developing a strategy for de-listing. They are currently developing the criteria, and with no funding for this program in the budget, it is doubtful continued habitat progress can be made that is sufficient to secure the de-listing.

When I heard that Oregon chub were the first fish species ever to be de-listed from the Endangered Species Act (because of habitat protections in the Willamette Valley that were secured and working!), I knew with continued work on habitat here on the coast we'll could do the same. Now that work is jeopardized.

While I support the WOSRP's work coast-wide, I am most familiar with the work of the program in Newport, Oregon. In my work with area watershed councils, I have seen how much work gets done by the staff in this program. The Habitat Biologist position is the one I most frequently interact with and it is essential to the work that gets done on the ground. ODFW works with watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, the U.S. Forest Service, private landowners and industry to get things done on the ground where it makes the most difference. I know how much we leverage the work of WOSRP personnel. The habitat biologist provides essential direct and matching support without which our grants that bring have brought almost \$10 million dollar into the local economy (to support labor, contracts, purchase of supplies and materials that we need to do our restoration work) would not be possible.

The Oregon Plan was supposed to be a three legged stool and the WOSRP was an essential part of such a stool: internal work by ODFW to improve habitat, support for the work of watershed councils technically, and making sure that existing rules and regulations were being followed so we don't go backward in habitat progress (the WOSRP isn't regulatory, but reviews and comments on permits to make sure projects are done in fish and water quality friendly ways). Each of these WOSRP is important and I hope you restore its funding to the full \$2M needed.

Sincerely,

Fran Recht

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