

April 2, 2015

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

Support for the Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program

Senator Devlin and Representative Rayfield:

I am writing on behalf of the MidCoast Watersheds Council (MCWC) in support of full funding for the Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program (WOSRP), which has been eliminated from the Governor's proposed agency budget for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW). The MidCoast Watersheds Council has been working since 1994 to improve watershed health and restore healthy salmon populations on the central Oregon coast, from Cascade head to Heceta Head.

We are aware of ODFW's budget shortfall and recognize that difficult decisions have to be made, but we see WOSRP as a high priority, and urge your consideration of increased funding for the Agency to continue support of the WOSRP. The MCWC has been working since its inception to improve habitat for Oregon Coastal Coho, and are committed to restoring healthy populations and de-listing OC Coho. The WOSRP program is critical to this effort. WOSRP employs habitat biologists who design and implement restoration projects that improve habitat for Coho and other salmonids, necessary to population recovery and de-listing. In the process, the WOSRP biologists access funds from a variety of sources outside the ODFW budget, thus greatly leveraging their program. Many of the projects they design are located in streams on industrial timberlands, and the projects are implemented by the companies, generally at their own expense. The expertise provided by the WOSRP biologists is critical to these projects. WOSRP biologists also design and implement projects on non-industrial lands, with funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), federal agencies, and private foundations, often in partnership with Watershed Councils and/or Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Again, the WOSRP biologists' expertise is central to the successes of these organizations.

In conclusion, we believe that eliminating the WOSRP program is short-sighted in the extreme, and counterproductive to ODFW's mission of providing healthy salmon and steelhead stocks that will support large sustainable harvests for Oregonians. We urge restoration of full funding to this program.

Sincerely yours

Wayne Hoffman
Policy Director, MidCoast Watersheds Council