



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

April 2, 2015

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Senator Richard Devlin and Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Committee  
[WaysandMeans.NaturalResourcesSub@state.or.us](mailto:WaysandMeans.NaturalResourcesSub@state.or.us)

Re: SB 5511, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Department Budget (ODFW) - COMMENTS

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League supports the mission of the Department “To protect and enhance Oregon’s fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.”

The League was privileged to have been invited to participate in the agency’s extensive External Budget Advisory Committee meetings this past year, in part because of our participation in the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and the nexus between ODFW’s work and clean abundant water for all.

We listened and learned from other stakeholders about the services provided by the department in a wide variety of areas. Although we are not fond of fee increases, we accepted the need in order for the department to provide the services required for our hunting and fishing population. We worked together to design the increases in a way to try to keep out-of-Oregon participants coming while being sure Oregonians also can continue to participate, all the while remembering our goal of keeping the important services these fees provide to these constituencies.

However, we also believe the General Fund has a responsibility related to the general public’s interests, so we supported a substantial infusion of General Funds to assure the public’s interest in Oregon’s fish and wildlife is addressed. We will be supporting the General Fund request in the Oregon State Police budget for the Fish and Wildlife division as well. These troopers are important to rural Oregon not only for their enforcement duties to ODFW, but for the day to day public safety service they offer to these underserved populations.

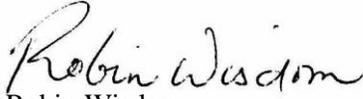
The Oregon Conservation Strategy has never been funded to a level which would implement this important plan. This session there is legislation proposed to increase water conservation and storage projects. ODFW’s scientists provide important data needed not only for implementing the Strategy, but for important economic development projects. The League supported the designation of marine reserves and protected areas along our coast. The on-going studies of those areas by ODFW scientists are critical to knowing their value and how best to manage ocean aquatic populations.

We ask your support for **POP 101** to support field staff and scientists on behalf of the general public. We support **POP 102** to support activities with a nexus to the increased hunting and fishing license/fees. But we would NOT SUPPORT using General Funds to backfill the agency budget should the fee increases in **SB 247** not be approved. This budget is the best balance of a troubling situation with the agency budget. We are searching for additional answers for the future, such as supporting **HB 3315**, which will allow future legislators to consider the cost to the agency for work done by ODFW staff on behalf of a variety of permitting activities of other agencies.

To be clear, **we support the ODFW scientists and their job to assure our wildlife is protected for future generations.** But why should hunters and anglers bear the burden of their cost instead of those who do business in this state, such as the mining and wind farm companies? Should the general public pay that price? Those are questions for the next legislature. But, for now, the budget provided you is the best solution for 2015 and we recommend approval.

Thank you for considering our comments. Let us know if we might answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Robin Wisdom  
President



Peggy Lynch  
Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: Curt Melcher, ODFW Director  
Richard M. Whitman, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director