



April 14, 2015

Chairman Brad Witt and Honorable Members of the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE
Hearing Room D
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 3529 - Establishes Wildlife Public Education Advisory Council to Advise State Fish and Wildlife Director on Public Education about Wildlife.

Position: Support

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, and as an Oregon resident and licensed hunter and angler, I write today to express our organization's support for House Bill 3529, legislation that would establish a Wildlife Public Education Advisory Council to advise the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Director on public education concerning wildlife.

Since 1989 the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing & shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

While sportsmen and women are well aware of the numerous economic and conservation benefits provided by our outdoor pastimes, oftentimes the general public is not. Many do not realize that sportsmen and women, for over 75 years, have served as the backbone for conservation funding in the United States through the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). Under this unique, "user-pays, public-benefits" model, sportsmen and women fund conservation and wildlife management through both the purchase of hunting, fishing, and

trapping licenses, as well as through federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing tackle, and motorboat fuel. The excise taxes raised through such sales fund state fish and wildlife research, hunter education programs, land acquisition and easements, shooting range development, angler access are construction, and private and public habitat management projects, along with many other services critical to the professional management of fish and wildlife resources and to the advancement of our outdoor heritage. Given the totality of the contributions of hunters and anglers, coupled with numerous efforts in recent years to severely restrict or outright eliminate specific forms of hunting and angling, it is absolutely critical that sportsmen and women and state fish and wildlife agencies work together to help educate the general public about the immense conservation and economic benefits provided by the pursuit of our outdoor pastimes. Such benefits include abundant fish and wildlife populations, access to public lands and clean waters, improved fish and wildlife habitat, wetland protection and its associated water filtration and flood retention functions, improved soil and water conservation, shooting ranges, and boating access facilities that are available for the enjoyment of the entirety of the American public — hunters and non-hunters alike.

Colorado's "Hug a Hunter" program, as well as the recently created Michigan Wildlife Council, serve as examples of the efficacy of state wildlife councils to better inform and educate the non-hunting and angling public on the innumerable benefits provided by hunting and angling by using contemporary marketing and educational outreach tools. Unique, educational approaches of this sort will be essential to ensuring that hunting, angling, and trapping opportunities exist for future generations. These activities keep public fish and wildlife populations healthy, facilitate habitat management and conservation, generate revenue for public agencies and private businesses, and support jobs.

With these factors in mind, we urge the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources to support House Bill 3529.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zach Widner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zach" being more prominent than the last name "Widner".

Zach Widner
Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation