



Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

April 15, 2015

Trout Unlimited Support for HB 2402

Chair Witt and Committee members-

I am here representing the 2800 members of Trout Unlimited here in Oregon. My purpose before this committee is to state Trout Unlimited's support for HB 2402.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is facing a major funding crisis right now. The funding model which has served them so long, using license fee money, is no longer providing the money needed for them to serve their mission of protecting and restoring the fish and wildlife of Oregon. License sales, although they are fairly stable right now, have been declining for many years. ODFW has to deal with many issues that range from protecting endangered species, water quality and quantity, habitat and many other issues. The overworked ODFW staff has too many issues to deal with. And ODFW also needs to honor their other mission providing fishing, hunting and viewing opportunity for all Oregonians. It is a daunting, and sometimes overwhelming task.

HB 2402 would set a task force that would specifically long at the long term funding issues facing the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Those issues include-

1. Making sure that hunting and fishing license payees do not continue to provide a be the major funding source of ODFW budget and do not face continual raises of license fee process.
2. Finding a way to get money from ODFW's largest user group, the wildlife viewing community which currently does not contribute to the ODFW's funding scheme, except in a very minor way.
3. We need to long at the possibility of contributing more state General Fund to ODFW's budget, more than is being proposed in current ODFW budget. We need to look at the importance and need of increasing the general fund contribution to ODFW budget.
4. We need to look at ways to increase the number of hunting and fishing license fee owners. Increasing the angling population is a very important part of Trout Unlimited's mission.
5. We need to look at innovative ways to get extra funds into the ODFW agency which could include taxes on gear or implements, adding certain fees –not on hunting/fishing licenses-but other types of fees.
6. We also need to look at total ODFW budget and look at cutting out unnecessary and uneconomic parts.

And when we form this task force, we need input form many stakeholders but those who are looking at the whole package of improving ODFW funding so they can do their mission. This task force cannot and must not be composed of those seeking to just protect their group's special

interest. This task force must work together as a team working towards a goal that will help all of us in the long run.

In pursuit of that team idea, I would like to suggest that this task force include the members of the current ODFW funding task force put together by Rep. Witt. This current group has demonstrated an ability to work for the common goal of funding ODFW –despite our differences. Of course there will have to be others added but this current task force is a good start, drawing on all the good work they have done.

So in conclusion I humbly urge the committee, in light of the 20+ years I have been working on ODFW issues, to pass 2402 out of your committee. It is the start of a process to make sure ODFW continues to be able to fund the work they need to do in order to pursue their mission to protect and restore Oregon's wildlife for present and future Oregonians to hunt, fish, view and enjoy.

Sincerely,

Tom Wolf,

Executive Director

Oregon Council Trout Unlimited