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**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

Supporting Senate Bill 247

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports SB 247, increasing fees to support the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget. If this bill does not pass, ODFW will be forced to cut critical positions. OEC is especially concerned about the proposal to cut the entire water program. If this program is cut, it will have repercussions that extend far beyond ODFW.

The water program staff review water right and water development proposals that could impact flows needed for fish and wildlife, and they identify needed in-stream flows. As the state adapts to climate change and experiences the particularly low stream flows we are seeing this year, these positions become even more important. These ODFW staff play a critical role in implementing Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy and in reviewing proposals for water storage and conservation projects. Cutting these positions could hold up the tens of millions of dollars in bonding for water projects requested by the Water Resources Department, since ODFW is required to consult with them to determine how the proposed projects would affect in-stream flows. At this time when the state is considering increasing its role in water supply development, ODFW needs to increase, not eliminate, its scientific capacity to assess stream flow needs for fish and wildlife. Cutting the water program at this time makes absolutely no sense.

We urge you to support SB 247 and not to cut ODFW's water program.