



**OREGON CHAPTER  
OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**  
PO Box 2378  
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**April 5th, 2017**

**TO: Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Representative Nancy Nathanson, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means**

**FROM: Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society**

**SUBJECT: Full funding for the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest  
Restoration Program**

The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society is writing to express our strong support for full funding of the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program at \$4.4 million in the 2017-2019 biennium budget. This investment, as demonstrated in the last two biennium, is critical to increasing the pace, scale, and effectiveness of wildlife habitat restoration on Oregon's federal forests.

The Wildlife Society is an international organization founded in 1937, representing nearly 10,000 professionals, including scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, consultants, conservation officers, students and others who manage, conserve, and study wildlife populations and habitat. In Oregon, the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ORTWS) represents nearly 400 such professionals from many areas of public and private enterprise.

Our mission is to promote wise conservation and management of wildlife resources in Oregon by serving and representing natural resource professionals. A central purpose of ORTWS is to aid public discussion of natural resource management in our state by communicating best available science, and supporting scientifically sound management policies to entities engaged in management decisions.

Early North American wildlife science entailed basic studies of species' natural history and status. More recently, research targeted causes of decline in imperiled species and proposed management solutions. With a more refined understanding of species at risk, *implementation* became the next frontier of conservation science; using hard-won knowledge to actively restore wildlife habitat. The goals of wildlife habitat restoration include reinforcing populations of concern, conserving and restoring biodiversity, and building ecosystem resiliency in the face of climate change, wildfire and other human-caused disturbances. Wildlife scientists agree on the importance of such restoration initiatives, unfortunately, few opportunities exist.

Notably, the Oregon Department of Forestry's Federal Forest Restoration Program supports one of the most significant large-scale wildlife conservation opportunities in the West. Through collaboration, the program seeks to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, reduce risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, and produce timber supply for mills and forest products companies. Since the legal stalemate of the 1990's, this dynamic, collaborative approach to restoration offers a paradigm-shift for wildlife professionals. While legal protections remain, collaborative restoration offers a unique opportunity to avoid legal deadlock and proactively plan and implement resilient wildlife habitat at an unprecedented scale.

Federal Forest Restoration Program has also facilitated improved relationships between diverse stakeholders and agency partners through investments in collaborative capacity and technical assistance. Elements of the program, including Collaborative Support Grants, provide financial resources and expertise to collaboratives that would otherwise not be available to these community led groups. ORTWS considers such technical support as essential to guiding collaborative projects with best available wildlife science, resulting in restoration projects that benefit wildlife.

In the 2015-2017 budget, the legislature invested \$5 million in this unique program and expanded it statewide. That investment paid off and has been leveraged more than 2:1 by the U.S. Forest Service in priority treatment areas across Oregon. In the next biennium there is an opportunity to build upon these successes by incorporating the program in the ODF base budget and developing and implementing the Good Neighbor Authority agreement that Governor Brown recently signed. The increased investment and use of new tools will support additional partnerships between state and federal land managers and enable greater returns and benefits to the State of Oregon and participating partners.

We appreciate the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Federal Forest Restoration Program over the past two biennium and strongly encourage you to continue to support this groundbreaking effort. Full funding for the Federal Forest Restoration Program at \$4.4 million in the 2017-2019 biennium is integral to improving the health and resilience of our federal forest lands, protecting unique habitat for fish and wildlife, and restoring public lands for the benefit of all Oregonians.

Thank you for supporting this important program.

Respectfully,  
ORTWS Board of Directors