



**OREGON CHAPTER
OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**
PO Box 2378
Corvallis, OR 97339

April 10th, 2017

TO: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

FROM: Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HB 3228 – Modifying the State Wildlife Policy

Chairman Clem and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society is writing to express our strong support for HB 3228 that provides important clarity to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Policy (*Oregon Revised Statutes* 496.012).

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. The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ORTWS) represents over 500 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 support scientifically sound management policies.

Like many other state natural resource agencies, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) contends with a bewildering trust responsibility to manage fish and wildlife and their habitats across private, state, and federal ownership boundaries. Moreover, this duty includes the stewardship of both game and non-game wildlife populations held in the public trust, while relying almost solely on management revenue from sportsman. ODFW, like many fish and wildlife agencies, has struggled to reconcile their diversifying responsibilities with the interests of their primary revenue source.

While fish and wildlife management initially focused on managing a sustainable yield of game and sport-fish, the interests of sportsmen are better served by modern conservation science. Best available conservation science over the last half-century indicates managing for native biodiversity and functional ecosystems provides the most effective long-term

benefit. Beneficiaries of modern ecosystem management, not only include sportsmen and many other outdoor user groups, but Oregon's economic growth which is inextricably tied to the integrity and stability of our natural areas. Specifically, modern wildlife conservation science seeks to:

- Monitor, identify and conserve indigenous species of concern and their habitats
- Proactively conserve and/or restore priority habitats
- Build functional and resilient ecosystems capable of persisting in the face of climate change effects, catastrophic wildfire, and other human-caused impacts

Recognizing this evolving responsibility, the USFWS developed the State Wildlife Action Plan Grant Program encouraging states like Oregon to develop a conservation plan based on this modern understanding of fish and wildlife management. ODFW subsequently developed the [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#) in collaboration with 200 external technical experts and a diverse Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The Strategy represents a collaborative and proactive strategy for maintaining and restoring Oregon's fish, wildlife and their habitats. While the Oregon Conservation Strategy includes numerous objectives, two are of overriding importance:

1. Identify, monitor and proactively conserve priority species of conservation concern
2. Maintain and restore critical habitats and the wildlife they support

Unfortunately, the current State Wildlife Policy does not adequately prioritize ODFW resource management in-line with the stated priorities in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. The current State Wildlife Policy suggests that the management to prevent the serious depletion of any indigenous wildlife, and to provide the optimum recreational and aesthetic benefits of wildlife are of equal importance. HB 3228 is in step toward resolving this issue by clarifying that wildlife resources should be protected, maintained and restored for their intrinsic values, ecosystem functions and long term benefits. Clarifying the State Wildlife Policy through passing HB 3228 would align the policy with some of the most important objectives contained within the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue so pivotal to fish and wildlife resources in Oregon.

Respectfully,
ORTWS Board of Directors

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