



American Fisheries Society Oregon Chapter

OR Chapter AFS: PO Box 8062 Portland, OR 97207-8062 www.orafs.org

Date: February 12, 2018

To: The Honorable Helm, Representative
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

RE: Letter in Support of HB 4015 – Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund

Dear Vice-Chairs McClain and Sprenger and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (ORAFS), we are writing to express our support for House Bill 4015, to establish the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund. ORAFS is comprised of nearly 600 fisheries and aquatics professionals from federal, state, and tribal agencies, colleges and universities, diverse private employers, and retirees. ORAFS was established in 1964 as a chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Our mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of Oregon fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems for long-term public benefit by advancing science, education and public discourse concerning fisheries and aquatic science and by promoting the development of fisheries professionals.

Despite the incredible diversity of fish and wildlife in Oregon, populations of many species are in decline. Freshwater animals have been particularly affected and many fish species are now rare or imperiled. Without concerted attention, our growing wildlife crisis will almost certainly lead to many more species qualifying for protection under federal and state endangered species laws. State and federal agencies have been battling the decline of fish and wildlife for decades, but evolving threats and insufficient funds have limited the ability of these agencies to adequately address the crisis.

We encourage you to support HB 4015 to create the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund to address the immediate threats to Oregon's natural resources. Oregon's diverse ecosystems and natural beauty will continue to drive human population growth in the state, leading to additional pressures on fish, wildlife and their habitats. Investing in conservation makes a difference. Now is the time to ensure that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has sustainable funding sources to take immediate actions to address the increasing complexity and costs of conservation and management. Additional resources would also allow ODFW to more capably implement the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategies, complementary efforts by the state to promote actions that seek to conserve ecological functions and resources associated with Oregon's fish and wildlife, their habitats, and nearshore marine ecosystems.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed bill.

Respectfully,

Shivonne Nesbit

Shivonne Nesbit - President, ORAFS, president@orafs.org