



Oregon Association of  
Conservation Districts

March 13, 2019

To: House Committee on Natural Resources

[hnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Strong Support for HB 2829, the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund

To Chair Witt and Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2829. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express strong support for HB 2829, establishing the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as nonprofit, federal, and state partners like the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund would provide urgent support to achieving the goals of Oregon's Conservation Strategy and improving educational and recreational opportunities for Oregonians. **The result would be strengthening the recreational economy that generated \$5.1 billion in wages in 2017, and protecting the natural resources that underpin our state's economy, clean water, and resilience.**

The Oregon Conservation Strategy, implemented primarily through ODFW and partners, is crucial to protecting and enhancing the natural resources and wildlife that contribute to Oregon's economy, healthy communities, and recreational opportunities. Conservation of the Greater Sage Grouse is one example of how the Conservation Strategy has made Oregon a leader in partnership-based approaches that work with local communities to conserve wildlife while also protecting local economies and communities. **Approximately 200 landowners or managers have enrolled in agreements to protect the sage grouse in Eastern Oregon, and nearly 9,000 landowners across the state worked with SWCDs on similar conservation priorities in the 2015-2017 biennium.** The fight isn't over, though. Without support for building on our progress, Sage Grouse could decline and even become listed as an endangered species—introducing new burdens and risks to the communities that have worked so hard to conserve the species.

ODFW has done their best to support such local efforts, but their **current funding model is not adaptable to the increasing complexity of conservation as droughts, fires, invasive species, climate change, and extreme weather events threaten our landscape.** More than 50% of ODFW's budget is derived from fishing and hunting license fees and associated federal excise taxes, and less than 8% comes from the General Fund. This means revenue can be inconsistent because of changes in the popularity of hunting and fishing, and increased costs to outdoor recreationalists are sometimes necessary to maintain ODFW operations.

The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund would stabilize resources to implement the Conservation Strategy, and provide a **vehicle for leveraging contributions from other private and public sources.** Federal commitment to conservation has been demonstrated in the recent bipartisan reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF, SB 47), and additional federal resources from an existing revenue source are proposed in the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. The state's investment in the Conservation and Recreation Fund would be multiplied by matching contributions from federal and private sources, and by the benefits to our recreational and natural-resource based economies.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 2829 and the importance of achieving Oregon's conservation goals. **We encourage you to pass HB 2829 to follow through on the state's commitment to the Conservation Strategy, bring in resources from private, federal, and other public sources, and ensure Oregon continues to be the thriving, beautiful, resilient place that it is.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Anna H. Freitas  
Policy and Program Manager  
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts  
[anna.freitas@oacd.org](mailto:anna.freitas@oacd.org)  
(831)-334-1551