



The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
The Honorable Chris Gorsek and Sherrie Sprenger, Vice-Chairs
Oregon House Committee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem Oregon 97301

March 14, 2019

Dear Chairman Witt and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources,

Thank you for this opportunity to share perspective on House Bill 2829. My name is Don Moore, I am the director of the Oregon Zoo and I'm here to support establishment of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.

Oregon is a wildlife wonderland. The misty spout of a gray whale, a summer evening flutter of bats and the squeak of a pika in the Columbia Gorge are priceless. All of these animals need our help. But for most of Oregon's wildlife -- nearly 90 percent of all species living here -- there is no dedicated stream of conservation support. Funding comes largely from license fees from hunters and anglers which are used to manage species that are hunted or fished.

Conservation organizations like the Oregon Zoo help make up for the lack of state resources by working to restore imperiled species such as the western pond turtle and the Oregon silverspot butterfly. Metro, the regional government that manages the zoo, is protecting and restoring thousands of acres of wildlife habitat through its voter-supported natural area programs.

But these efforts are not enough. Too often, conservation action comes only after a species is listed under the Endangered Species Act. As you well know, by that time, recovery is more challenging and costly, with greater human impacts.

The thing is we've had tools in place for years. The Oregon Wildlife Conservation Strategy was adopted in 2006 and updated in 2016. Although Congress mandated that every state wildlife agency develop such a conservation plan to avoid species across the country reaching threatened or endangered status, federal funding to implement these plans has not been secured. So Oregon's Conservation Strategy has languished while we've explored ways to fund this crucial work.

Yet our state conservation strategy, developed under the guidance of a broad group of stakeholders representing outdoor recreation enthusiasts, landowners, tribes, and conservation organizations, provides critical guidance to effective conservation. In addition to identifying Oregon's most threatened species and habitats, the strategy provides an array of actions that can be taken by public and private organizations and private landowners and the incentives to do so. But it needs stewardship to be effective.

Thankfully, House Bill 2829 begins to address this. It serves as Oregon's commitment to its rich biodiversity by establishing a secure annual funding stream dedicated to non-game wildlife conservation. While the Oregon Zoo will continue to advocate for federal funding, we anticipate that once secured, it will require a state match. This bill establishes a repository for federal funding when that day comes, will serve as the state match and also provides a mechanism for accepting private donations.

House Bill 2829 provides a structure to assure the funds are invested appropriately by establishing an Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee and an annual reporting requirement.

The Oregon Zoo recognizes the importance of making a personal connection to nature. Each year, through our new Education Center, we introduce 1.5 million visitors to opportunities to explore nature and learn new skills in the outdoors. We welcome the support of this bill in encouraging outdoor activities and we welcome opportunities to partner with organizations that provide these experiences.

As a scientist, angler, educator and wildlife advocate, I support a permanent source of state funding to protect species in the greatest need of conservation action. The Oregon Zoo supports passage of HB 2829.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Don Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Don Moore
Director, Oregon Zoo