



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

March 12, 2019

FROM: The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society

TO: Ways and Means Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Support for SB 5510

Chair Witt and committee members,

The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society is writing to express our **strong support for SB 5510**. Adequate funding of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is critical for the future of the state, and the wildlife resources that so many Oregonians depend on for recreation, quality of life, and their livelihoods.

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 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.

ODFW manages over 850 species across the state, including both game species and non-game wildlife populations and their habitats. Management of fish and wildlife resources results in improved economies across the state, contributing over an estimated \$4 billion in sales and wages, and greater than 50,000 jobs. The majority of these economic benefits are seen in wildlife viewing, highlighting the importance of non-game species in Oregon. In order to fulfill the responsibility of management for on behalf of Oregon citizens, full implementation of the Oregon Conservation Strategy must be a major goal for the agency.

The Oregon Conservation Strategy is Oregon's [State Wildlife Action Plan](#). These plans serve as the blueprint for conserving our fish and wildlife and preventing endangered species. The Oregon Strategy was developed by a partnership of numerous agencies, conservation groups and industry stakeholders and represents a collaborative and proactive strategy for maintaining and restoring Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Core targets of the Oregon Conservation Strategy include, but are not limited to:

- Monitor and proactively conserving at-risk species
- Maintain and restore critical habitats and the wildlife they support

- Assess and manage the impacts of climate change and wildfire risks
- Assess and manage the impacts of population growth and development pressures on Oregon's wildlife and habitats
- Expand recreational resources, outreach, and other programs, to a broader spectrum of Oregon citizens
- Continue to build and strengthen hunting and fishing opportunities and programs

Current limits on revenue prohibit the necessary expenditures toward key aspects of this strategy; including priority habitat conservation, sensitive species monitoring and evaluation, climate challenges, and more.

POP 114 - The request for 3 additional conservation strategy biologists is a great step in fulfilling the agencies responsibilities for management of all wildlife in Oregon. Only about half of the wildlife species of concern (threatened, endangered, or sensitive) are currently being monitored. The increase in monitoring will inform proactive conservation efforts to improve populations and provide certainty to decision making process.

ORTWS recommends the continued funding of wildlife conflict specialists through USDA-Wildlife Services in what is currently termed the "predator control program." Loss of professional assistance to ranchers, farmers, and communities increases the risk to wildlife with the loss of implementation of non-lethal deterrents by trained personnel. Maintaining trained staff on the ground is critical to improve the interactions of local communities to live with wildlife in a sustainable manner.

As a whole ODFW is dealing with an increasingly complex management environment, including larger populations, stressed natural systems, increasingly fragmented landscapes, human wildlife conflict, and climate change. *The proposed funding is critical to maintain current levels of management for fish and wildlife that are so important to Oregonians quality of life and the economies of communities across the state.* The inadvertent removal of 4 interagency coordination positions must be restored to the ODFW budget, to help manage the complicated interactions across all state and federal agencies, insuring best practices in development that maintain and improve fish and wildlife conservation.

On behalf of ORTWS Members and Board, thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or to engage in further discussion.

Respectfully,

ORTWS Board of Directors

ORTWS Contacts for SB 5510:
Chris Parta, ORTWS Legislative Liaison chris@partaoregon.com