



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

March 28, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Senator Kathleen Taylor and Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Committee

Email: [jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Re: **HB 5035** – Department of State Lands Budget – **Support**

The Department of State Lands is critical to the management of many of Oregon's public assets: Not only for the Common School Fund lands and the management of the actual Fund, but for the protection of the waters of the state.

**The League has strong positions on water quality. We particularly note that Oregon has a goal of no net loss of wetlands.** We were pleased to hear that, because of the work of the department, over the last two years, we saw an increase! Oregon recognizes the role of wetlands in water quality and in flood management among other values. The waters of the state are an important public asset. Management of activities in these waters must be done carefully and with full application of state and federal regulations.

We have watched the reorganization of the Department and believe that the opportunities for linking decision making is a positive for both the general public and for those applying for permits. **We support POP 106 to continue implementation of SB 912 (2015) as we did in 2017.** Much work has been done among the various private parties, as well as the department. When a contentious issue has found a possible solution, we should grab it—or, in this case, fund it!

**We also support POP 104 to enable an Environmental Protection Agency grant to continue to implement the Oregon Wetland Program Plan.** We participated in the Wetlands Work Group Co-Chaired by Reps. Brock-Smith and McLain and appreciated the high-quality conversations and the diverse set of participants who were heard during those meetings. **We support HB 2438 with -2 and -4 amendments we hope will be sent your way that address the need for an additional staffer to help with the Land Use Notification (LUN) processing. You have heard of the current increase in those LUNs and the enhanced mapping will see an even greater increase. This bill also provides for assistance to the Mid-Willamette Valley Regional Wetlands Consortium** to complete work on providing wetlands answers to 19 industrial sites in the region. This pilot will also require a manual to be used by other local governments in the future. Having these sites more market-ready could eventually provide employment opportunities that will pay for the cost of this pilot since I believe these are requested as General Funded positions.

The **Portland Harbor Cleanup** effort must continue. The Portland League of Women Voters in particular has been an active commenter during the decision-making process. We are pleased that we are moving from discussions on how to clean up this important public place to actually beginning the cleanup! We look forward to when the harbor can offer the opportunity for both recreational and economic uses. We support the state's diligence in protecting the state's liability and **we support the department's request (POP 101)** for continuing this important work.

**The League has been a longtime supporter of the South Slough Reserve**, an incredible special place for research, for educational opportunities and for recreation. We support the ongoing efforts to maintain

this asset and encourage the department to seek further federal funding to expand the reserve as willing sellers appear, to continue repairs as needed and continue to work with the local tribes nearby. As mentioned by the Director, this special asset is also helping us better understand **the effects of climate change** on our many state estuaries—in fact, estuaries all along the West Coast. The Director has provided you with a [recent report](#) on this issue. This session **we support the three POPs (108,109 & 110) requested for the South Slough.**

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.**

**The League engaged in the discussions around the Elliott State Forest for the past few years.** We respect that balancing the requirement to provide monies to the Common School Fund, while managing a variety of state lands is a continuing challenge. On December 9, 2014, the League provided testimony to the Department related to the Elliott State Forest, in part: *“LWVOR acknowledges that this is a very difficult issue because of an outdated arrangement that couples a pristine forest ecosystem to school funding. Our schools and protection of our forests are both important and one should not have to be chosen at the expense of the other.”* We continue to support Governor Brown’s efforts to find a final public ownership solution. We appreciated the legislature’s action in 2017 to begin to protect the Elliott’s environmental assets including the remaining native forests, the old growth forests that are disappearing from our landscape, protecting the wild salmon and imperiled wildlife and safeguarding the Elliott for public recreational and educational opportunities. **We support the agency’s working toward a Habitat Conservation Plan to be able to provide timber jobs by restoratively thinning the second-growth tree farms which are a part of the Elliott while also protecting endangered species who live there. We support POPs 105 and 114 to continue moving forward on the Elliott.**

We believe that the other forest lands and massive acres of rangeland provide diversity in the Common School Fund’s portfolio. The stock market has been a friendly vehicle these past few years, but that has not always been the case. **In the early 2000s and again in 2009 the fund experienced a loss—each loss much greater than the 3 years of timber proceeds lost on the Elliott.**

We support the agency’s efforts to turn the recently acquired lands in Central Oregon into profitable Common School Fund assets by either selling or entering into development contracts for these lands. The adopted Master Plan should guide the department.

As you can see, this department has a wide variety of responsibilities. Administrative leadership and staff support for their multiple missions has been impressive. Requests for an additional Unclaimed Property Claims Examiner (POP 113), for information system (POP 103) and procurements management (POP 107) should also be considered. We are also interested in the legislature’s response to **SB 454** that would move the Unclaimed Property Division to the State Treasury.

We want to recognize the value of this agency to Oregon—to its children and to our natural assets. Your consideration of the various requests in this budget is appreciated.



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