



March 16, 2021

Representative Brad Witt, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Re: Support for House Bills 2600 and 2913

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bills (HB) 2600 and 2913. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited (TU), a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. Trout Unlimited has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

TU supports both HB 2600 and 2913. HB 2913 ensures the continuation of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (Fund) and reestablishes a general fund allocation to the Fund to match private donations up to one million dollars. HB 2600 seeks to transfer to the Fund a small portion of funds received through the transient lodging tax. Collectively, both bills help ensure that the Fund will continue to meet its objectives which include supporting projects that protect and enhance the species and habitats identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy and expanding outdoor recreation opportunities.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is tasked with many important and varied functions including the conservation and management of fish, wildlife and habitat. ODFW's traditional source of funding (hunting and fishing fees and associated federal excise taxes) is not adequate to meet its needs over the long-term nor equitable as an increasing share of its workload is devoted to protection and management of non-game fish and wildlife. The HB 2402 Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and Related Recreation and Education (Task Force) was charged with considering more diverse, sustainable sources of revenues for ODFW. A main recommendation from the Task Force was the creation of an Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund to provide ODFW with a vehicle to receive revenues dedicated to particular goals. In response, in 2019, the Legislature created (through HB 2829) the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund along with an Advisory Committee to guide its disbursements.

The establishment of the Fund was widely acknowledged to be an important first step toward establishing a more diverse, sustainable funding stream for ODFW. However, it lacks a consistent source of revenue. ODFW and its partners have expended significant effort to secure private donations for the Fund resulting in over 400,000 in contributions to date. Those contributions should be matched by general fund dollars as was HB 2829's original intent. Additionally, allocating a small portion of the transient lodging tax to the Fund will help ensure

it has a stable source of funding moving forward which in turn will help ensure ODFW has sufficient resources to sustainably manage Oregon's fish and wildlife resources into the future. Healthy and sustainable fish and wildlife populations are critical components of Oregon's environment, economy and way of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bills 2600 and 2913. TU looks forward to engaging in continuing discussions on this legislation.



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