

I'm writing about the exciting Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund and the two bills in the House that seek to extend the wonderful work being done in our communities through this Fund. I have donated to it as have many other individuals and organizations, — committing to habitat restoration projects in Oregon. That HB 2600 would transfer a small portion of the money received from the state transient lodging tax to the OCRF, is appropriate since one of the main attractions to our state is the draw of wildlife viewing.

HB2913 would appropriate \$1 million from the General Fund to the OCRF for the 2021-2022 biennium and release those funds in increments as 1:1 match to private donations received. This is a fair proposal to fund an important program for rural citizens to utilize in on-the-ground work to enhance wildlife habitat. I have seen tourist dollar reports that show people coming to Oregon for the outdoors experience and spending dollars, lots of them, for “wildlife viewing”. Providing citizens and organizations with the means to enhance wildlife habitat, means that rural landowners may be able to participate in expanding the quality and quantity of viable habitat for Northwestern Pond turtles, Coho Salmon projects, and more, for sensitive and threatened species. Engaging with people on private land holdings is also an educational process informing people about the needs of certain wildlife and that these projects should not be limited to public landscapes. By supporting this program you are saying “yes” to building wildlife enhancement that then feeds back into our economy. I support passage of both HB 2600 and HB 2913.