



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-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.

May 3, 2021

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

Re: **HB 5009** – Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Budget – **Support with Comments**

The League of Women Voters believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. The League supports the mission of the Department “*To protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.*” We believe that this agency plays a role in assuring abundant clean water for all, the goal of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. We believe that climate change will affect Oregon’s fish and wildlife and their habitats. Therefore, **ODFW must be funded not only with extractive fees and licenses, but by monies provided by the general public.**

The League is privileged to be a member of the agency’s External Budget Advisory Committee. **We believe the General Fund has a responsibility related to the general public’s interests** and participated in [HB 2402](#) (2015) to seek a funding source for the Oregon Conservation Strategy—without success--and [HB 3315](#) (2015) that authorized ODFW to invoice other agencies for work done by the agency on behalf of other agencies’ permits. You heard from our testimony on the Water Resources Dept. that they have now received a bill from ODFW of over \$100,000. We believed that the greater good for this project was a better understanding by management of the various demands made of agency staff. After all, any actual billing to other state agencies would—and now has -- simply moved the monetary demand from one agency to another—it does not provide new money for the services needed—unless the Legislature is willing to increase permit fees in those agencies for the work being done by the ODFW staff.

Tourism is an important economic strategy, especially in rural Oregon. Assuring opportunities for all interests should be considered to be very important for the health of these communities and ODFW’s work is critical to that success.

The League supported the designation of marine reserves and protected areas along our coast. The on-going studies of those areas by ODFW scientists are critical to knowing their value and how best to manage ocean aquatic populations. **Marine reserves review will need staff support to assure that we are gaining the most information possible from this important program.**

We are also concerned by **ocean acidification** and its effect on our important shellfish industry. Our climate IS changing and the effect on all fish and wildlife habitat needs to be acknowledged and plans made to mitigate those effects while also reducing greenhouse gases to slow those climate changes. That is why we support [HB 3114](#), a bill that would provide [\\$1.9 million](#) to multiple groups, including **\$470k to ODFW**. We support the **fee increase related to hydro**

projects ([HB 2143A](#)), 25% of which would be provided to ODFW. (*The Water Resource Department (WRD) estimates the fee increase will result in an additional \$759,344 Other Funds in the 2021 biennium. The fee revenue is split between WRD (9%), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) (25%), and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) (66%). WRD will transfer funds to ODFW and DEQ.*)

Rep. Holvey expressed concerns around the **Aquatic Invasive Species program**. We are grateful for his attention to this issue. Having been a part of the creation of this inspection program because the cost to infrastructure of having those invasives in Oregon is why we continue to support the program, both in the Marine Board (as collectors of monies through a fee) and ODFW related to hopefully catching any invasives that may arrive in Oregon—before they damage or destroy that infrastructure. The good news is that our neighboring states have created similar inspection programs which help our vulnerability. But **this program is critical to the health of our water infrastructure so your on-going oversight is appreciated.**

LWVOR supports the work of our Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division. Their presence in many rural areas of the state **provide public safety** beyond their work related to enforcement of fish and wildlife laws.

Although the League will not provide input on all the **Policy Option Packages** of the agency, we offer comments on the following:

POP 090: We express concern around the recommendation to fund shift 17 positions within the **Native Fish Conservation program**. **Those positions are critical to the agency and we need to be sure they continue** on behalf of Oregonians.

POP 103: Not in the Governor's budget, but extremely critical due to the drought in the **Klamath basin is 1 FTE (\$134,500 GF/\$124,500 OF) for a biologist** for this work.

POP 106: The League of Women Voters of Deschutes County has been involved in work related to water in the Deschutes basin. **This position (\$105k) meets the agency's obligations in their agreement with the Central Oregon Irrigation District.**

POP 112—with additional positions: The League supports **the establishment of a [Habitat Division](#)**, in part from programs in other divisions, but also **for 7 FTE (\$1,467,894 GF)**. As you saw in the agency's slide presentation, **more Oregonians enjoy passive enjoyment of our fish and wildlife than extractive enjoyment**. Both are important to Oregonians, but it's time to reestablish this division and we all should pay for those opportunities.

POP 114: Not in the Governor's budget, but it is important that basin water planning continue around Oregon and this agency has a role to play in **local water planning efforts: 2 FTE (\$472,885)**. Place-based planning has been successful but the voice of ODFW needs to be at the table during discussions and as solutions to water quantity and quality projects are considered. Some of these current 4 planning efforts are beginning to consider solutions to providing abundant clean water for all in each area.

POP 115: The League continues to focus on water and the need for multi-agency work around the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and the 100-year water vision. No more important project exists currently in Oregon than decisions on **reallocation of water in the Willamette Basin**. The fish need a voice and that voice is **3 FTE (\$700,248)** in this agency. It will be

necessary to quantify and track live-flow and stored-water releases for new instream rights for fish and wildlife and out-of-stream rights for municipal and agriculture users, as well as to manage who gets access to water during times of shortage.

POP 117: As this legislature focuses on forestry issues, this **1 FTE (\$240,625)** is required to help **address watershed restoration under the Good Neighbor Authority.**

POP 122: Not in the Governor's budget but, because we expect this legislature to provide monies to continue **repair and replacement of tidegates, ODFW needs this 1 FTE (\$375,000)** to assist in this important work.

POP 123: Not in the Governor's budget but, as we continue to work on **wetlands regulation** and the Dept. of State Lands' removal-fill permits, we support **1 FTE (\$224,655) to assure compliance with the Endangered Species Act.**

To be clear, we support the ODFW scientists and their job to assure our fish and wildlife is protected for future generations. We believe ODFW scientists have a very important role in assuring abundant clean water for all. We believe that fishers and hunters have a role in funding this agency, but the General Fund—the people's money—should also contribute.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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