



# OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

## Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

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### **Testimony on HB 5009 - Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Budget**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) budget. The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA), and our 10,000 members around the state, support the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife and the critical work the agency does for the state's fish and wildlife, as well as habitat and research investments.

OHA's mission of "Protecting Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and hunting heritage," echoes the department's mission to "Protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations." OHA values the department, its staff, and the continued shared work of investing time and energy in Oregon's fish, wildlife, and habitat.

ODFW's budget is an important investment by the state in our natural resources. We would like to offer a few recommendations as the department's budget is considered:

#### **Habitat Division**

Re-creation of the Habitat Division has been identified as a priority by the agency and in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). However, the reduction of staffing from the Agency Recommended Budget's (ARB) 7 positions to 2 positions makes the creation of the Habitat Division a mere re-structuring of current staff in lieu of added capacity.

#### **OHA Recommendation**

We recommend the inclusion of the funding of the 5 Habitat Biologists in POP 100 and POP 101 to accomplish the intent of creating a robust Habitat Division within the department. These positions are funded primarily by federal Farm Bill funds with less than \$200,000 coming from lottery funds within the state portion. Additionally, the 2 positions in the GRB include a recommended fund shift from General Fund to federal dollars. However, these positions, and the Habitat Division as a whole, will benefit all Oregonians and therefore should be paid equitably by all Oregonians through the General Fund.

#### **Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund Match for this Biennium**

The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund was created over the course of several legislative sessions and investment from numerous stakeholders, including OHA. The commitment inherent in its creation was the General Fund match of \$1 million dollars to match other funds raised from private citizens and organizations. When those funds were swept last year, the intent to replace them and match fundraising amounts was stated on the record.

#### **OHA Recommendation**

Currently, the fund is on track to raise an estimated \$675,000 by the end of the current biennium. OHA urges this committee to match those funds **within the current biennium** to make the fund whole, as originally intended upon its creation.

### **Package 090 Analyst Adjustments**

The recommendation listed in **Package 090 Analyst Adjustments** to shift funding for numerous positions from General Funds to federal funds should be reconsidered. Many natural resources positions are funded by several mechanisms and include required funding matches by state dollars. If state dollars, i.e. General Fund, are removed, the matching federal funds are also removed. Additionally, some federal funds are often restricted and cannot be used for staff costs.

### **OHA Recommendation**

OHA recommends re-examining this adjustment and providing the current established amounts from the state.

### **OHA Support the Minam River Wildlife Area Project**

OHA also encourages the authorization of the spending limitation required to facilitate the Minam River Wildlife Area Project in the 21-23 biennium. This two-phase project will acquire 15,573 acres of critical fish and wildlife habitat to be managed by ODFW.

### **OHA Support Access and Habitat Program**

OHA supports **POP 102**, the expenditure limitation for the Access & Habitat Program. This program has been very successful over the last 18 years in supporting landowners who invest in habitat improvements and offer hunting access on their private lands. OHA chapters continue to be very involved with local A&H projects to assist landowners in habitat work, land clean-up, and wildlife recovery projects.

### **For more information contact:**

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