



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
OREGON

May 3, 2021

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair
Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources 900 Court St. NE, HR E
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ian Isaacson and I am the Board Co-Chair for the Oregon Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (OR BHA). OR BHA represents approximately 1,600 members in this state and seeks to ensure Oregon's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands, waters, and wildlife. OR BHA would like to convey support for HB 5009 but would like to offer further comments on two parts of this bill specifically.

- 1) OR BHA **strongly** supports the creation of a Habitat Division within ODFW. Creation of this Division would provide an additional and necessary level of organization and capacity for ODFW to implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy. This plan seeks to prevent further degradation to the ecologies that sustain our populations - human and wildlife alike. It would also fill data gaps that should never have been allowed to exist, restore and maintain critical habitats, assess the impacts of climate change to help build climate-resiliency into our systems, grow Oregon's recreational resources and bolster the foundations of conservation in this state for all Oregonians to experience the natural world as it was intended.

In addition to the positions being diverted into the Habitat Division from other current Fish and Wildlife Divisions, the Agency Requested Budget (ARB) appropriates General Fund moneys for an additional nine Regional Habitat Biologists. This expanded capacity in the Habitat Division is **vital** to ensure that ODFW is capable in carrying out their mission to meet current conservation challenges and build resilient structures to ensure our ecologies are protected for future generations of all Oregonians, fish and wildlife.

Unfortunately, the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) only proposes the addition of two of these positions, and that they be funded through Federal Funds, not General Funds. **OR BHA recommends an amendment to HB 5009** that changes the GRB to include the requested nine Regional Habitat Biologist positions, and that those positions be fully funded through the appropriation of General Fund moneys. This amendment is important as no Federal Fund monies have even been identified to pay for the two additional positions in the GRB. In addition, the fact remains that concerns over natural resource conservation funding are well established, and ODFW's current Federal Fund mechanisms are already stretched thin. By shifting these much needed positions to the General Fund, it creates an avenue for **every**



Oregonian to be investing in the natural resources that furnish our outdoor lifestyle, fuel our economy and allow our conservation heritage to thrive.

- 2) OR BHA also **strongly** supports the Minam River Wildlife Area Acquisition. Access has emerged as a priority issue for Oregon's hunters and anglers. A lack of access is cited by sportsmen and women as the number one reason why they stop pursuing their passions or why many folks don't even attempt to enter into the heritage sporting community to begin with. OR BHA applauds the dedication by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, in partnership with ODFW, to spearhead this exciting land acquisition opportunity. The addition of the Minam River Wildlife area not only provides increased access to the hunters and anglers of this state, it also secures vital contiguous habitat that supports both game, and non-game species alike. OR BHA passionately request that this committee commit to appropriate the necessary funds in this budget cycle to ensure this new wildlife area becomes a reality in this biennium.

On behalf of the ORBHA Board and our membership, thank you for your time and consideration.

With Gratitude,



Ian Isaacson

Board Co-Chair, Oregon Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers



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