



January 21, 2023

RE: HB 2527 ODFW Wildlife Tax Deferral Program

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is a publicly funded local government special district whose mission is to provide resources, information, and expertise to inspire people to actively improve air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and soil health. We work with property owners to make improvements to their land for both productivity and for habitat benefits.

When property owners with marginally productive land choose to manage their land for habitat preservation, they risk losing their agriculture or forestry tax deferrals. Most landowners cannot financially justify the loss of their existing tax deferrals for actions that benefit the public good: fire resilience, healthy wildlife, water quality improvements, cultural values, and the iconic beauty of our Oregon landscapes.

The ODFW Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management program ("WHCMP") can solve the issue of loss of tax deferrals for property owners who choose to transition to managing for habitat; however, this program has been unavailable to new enrollees for the past five year in ODFW's North Willamette Watershed due to a lack of ODFW staff resources.

The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is a member of a coalition of 8 Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Districts, ODFW, and regional partners working to make this program available again. WHMCP is the right tool to solve the deferral issue and offset the cost of maintenance. It provides landowners the necessary flexibility to manage their lands for critical habitats when they want to, which is a public benefit that results in greater land resiliency and climate mitigation.

We strongly urge you to vote yes on HB 2527.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "TPRiggsby".

Terri Preeg Riggsby  
Chair and Zone 5 Director

cc: West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors; Oregon Association of Conservation Districts