

Testimony in support of HB 5020, March 2, 2023

Chairs and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the important work & necessary budgets at the Oregon Department of Forestry. I'm Casey Kulla, state forest policy coordinator at Oregon Wild.

At Oregon Wild, we agree with State Forester Mukumoto and Vice-Chair Pham that the most fiscally-conservative approach to wildfire prevention is community-focused, spending funds to thin and prepare neighborhoods to protect against the loss of lives, homes and businesses. As Division Chief Mike Shaw noted on Tuesday, large fires cost more; the federal government knows this, and they've allocated tremendous amounts of money to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires that might ignite on or spread to their land. That good news means we don't need to spend boatloads of Oregon tax dollars on that work through the 20 year landscape resilience strategy, the federal forest restoration program, the collaboratives, or the Good Neighbor Authority. Let the feds spend money way way out in the forest, and complement that by funding preparing homes and communities, the close-in work that people will notice and appreciate.

I appreciated Representative Owens' comments on Tuesday about the effectiveness of prescribed and managed fire, and I've seen the OSU Extension fire program work with private landowners to use fire on the land; thank you for funding that work. Please continue to fund efforts to get good fire on the ground.

Division Chief Josh Barnard said it well yesterday: the Private Forest Accord Habitat Conservation Plan and its conservation measures need your budget approval in order to achieve the federal Services issuance of an incidental take permit. With a tight budget, I urge you to honor the commitments you've made and see it through to completion. The Accord's mitigation fund, compliance monitoring, upcoming rule-making, and the science-driven adaptive management will given certainty for timber harvest while restoring fish runs and water quality.

Yesterday, Representative Holvey asked whether the Accord would bring us into compliance with the federal standards for non point source pollutants in coastal waterways. The money lost to communities for planning due to

non-compliance is real and ongoing, and the degraded water quality in coastal streams is also real and ongoing. The conservation measures in the Accord, including the requirement to properly vacate abandoned logging roads, should lower the pollution levels in coastal streams, but this may not be enough non point source reduction to meet federal standards.

Finally, Oregon Wild supports the completion of a conservative Western Oregon State Forest habitat conservation plan. That means a plan that will meet with the approval of the federal Services *and* achieve the riparian restoration and road management goals needed for bringing fish back from the brink of extinction. Thank you for your time today!

Casey Kulla
State forest policy coordinator
Oregon Wild