



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a 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.*

March 9, 2023

To: **Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

Re: **HB 5037 – Department of State Lands Budget – Support**

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.** This agency has a role in many of those state resources.

The Department of State Lands is critical to the management of many of Oregon's public assets: Not only for the Common School Fund (CSF) lands, but for the protection of the waters of the state. The League has strong positions on water quality. We particularly note that **Oregon has a goal of no net loss of wetlands.** Oregon recognizes the role of wetlands in water quality and in flood management among other values. **The waters of the state are an important public asset.** Management of activities in these waters must be done carefully and with full application of state and federal regulations. This session we are **supporting HB 2238** as we did before the State Land Board. It is past time to review the agency's removal-fill permit application fees. We understand that fees are currently only covering about 25% of the cost of processing. **The League supports a shared system as we believe the public also needs to be represented in the application process.**

**We also support POP 104 to increase staffing in the removal/fill program.** With the increased focus on housing and on new industrial lands, it will be important for the agency to help determine which wetlands need to be set aside and not counted as "developable" lands. **We support POP 109 to carry forward EPA grant funding for the removal/fill program.**

**The Portland Harbor Cleanup effort must continue.** The Portland League of Women Voters in particular has been an active commenter during the decision-making process. We look forward to when the harbor can offer the opportunity for both recreational and economic uses. We support the state's diligence in protecting the state's liability and **we support the department's request (POPs 101 and 102) for continuing this important work.**

The League has been a longtime advocate for the South Slough Reserve, an incredible special place for research, for educational opportunities and for recreation. Coos County League members have been volunteers for many years. We support the ongoing efforts to maintain this asset and **encourage the department to seek further federal funding** to expand the reserve as willing sellers appear, to continue repairs as needed and continue to work with the local tribes nearby. As mentioned by the Director, this special asset is also helping us better understand the effects of climate change on our many state estuaries—in fact, estuaries all along the West Coast. This session **we support continuation of the federal fund grants in POP 112 and for POP 107 to enhance visitor experience.**

The League supported [HB 3114](#) (2021), a bill that provided funding for the Oregon Ocean Science Trust (OOST), an entity under this agency so **we support a continuation of that funding under POP 111.**

On December 9, 2014, the League provided testimony to the Department related to the Elliott State Forest, in part: *“LWVOR acknowledges that this is a very difficult issue because of an outdated arrangement that couples a pristine forest ecosystem to school funding. Our schools and protection of our forests are both important and one should not have to be chosen at the expense of the other.”* We support the agency’s working toward a Habitat Conservation Plan to be able to provide timber jobs that will allow restoratively thinning the second-growth tree farms as assumed in OSU’s research plan while also protecting endangered species that live there. **We support POP 108 to continue moving forward with the new Elliott State Research Forest (ESRF) Authority that was created. A prospective Board has been appointed to complete the work assigned under [SB 1546](#) (2022).** The Board will hold its next meeting March 10. (You can follow this work on the agency’s [website](#).) **We believe this should be the last funding request as the new Authority, with a management contract with Oregon State University, will balance research with a limited harvest and grant funding to pay for on-going needs of the ESRF.**

We believe that the other forest lands and massive acres of rangeland provide diversity in the Common School Fund’s portfolio. The stock market has been a friendly vehicle these past few years, but that has not always been the case. In the early 2000s and again in 2009 the fund experienced a loss—each loss much greater than the 3 years of timber proceeds lost on the Elliott.

**We support POP 113 and applaud the Governor for recommending the use of Monsanto settlement funds to help address the many abandoned and derelict vessels populating our waterways. This is a serious public health and safety issue in Oregon’s waterways.**

Lastly, but equally important is addressing the agency’s 1999 information system. **We support POPs 105 and 106 as they complete the Stage Gate process set up by this legislature to modernize their IT system and staffing to assure that the new system works for the agency and the public.**

As you can see, this department has a wide variety of responsibilities. Administrative leadership and staff support for their multiple missions has been impressive. **We appreciated the enthusiasm with which the department director shared the agency’s many programs.** We recognize the value of this agency to Oregon—to its children and to our natural assets. Your consideration of the various requests in this budget is appreciated. **We urge your Support for HB 5037 and the POPs requested.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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cc: Vicki Walker, Director, Dept. of State Lands ([Vicki.Walker@dsl.oregon.gov](mailto:Vicki.Walker@dsl.oregon.gov))