



Date: March 21, 2023

To: Ways & Means Natural Resources Subcommittee RE: Portland Audubon 2023-2025 ODFW

From: Willamette Riverkeeper

Re: Request to restore Wildlife Coexistence Package to the ODFW Budget

Dear Chairs Pham and Dembrow and Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

Willamette Riverkeeper is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting, restoring and promoting the enjoyment of the Willamette River. We respectfully urge the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources to **restore the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Budget** (SB 5509). This POP¹ was included in the proposed budget forwarded to the Governor by ODFW, but was not included in the Governor's proposed budget.

The Coexistence Funding Package would allocate \$2,077,403 to establish a program to promote wildlife stewardship, reduce and respond to human-wildlife conflicts and engage new audiences in wildlife conservation. Specifically it would fund 5 new wildlife coexistence biologist positions stationed around the state, a wildlife communications coordinator position to lead a Living with Wildlife Outreach Campaign and a small grant program to support Oregon's wildlife rehabilitation centers which serve on the frontlines of human-wildlife interactions.

This policy option package was developed by a task force established by the ODFW Commission in 2022 and which included two ODFW Commissioners, ODFW staff, Oregon State Police, and representatives from Portland Audubon, Humane Society of the United States, Chintimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and Wildlife Center of the North Coast. The task force was created in response to a growing recognition that current resources are inadequate to promote wildlife stewardship, reduce and resolve human-wildlife conflicts and support partnerships. This can result in:

- Unnecessary harm to wildlife

¹ Policy Option Package 113, Page 786,

https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/budget/docs/23-25_ARB/Complete%202023-25%20Agency%20Request%20Budget.pdf

- Property damage
- Risks to public health and safety
- Reactive rather than proactive approaches that result in increased costs and decreased efficacy
- Missed opportunities to constructively engage the public in wildlife stewardship
- Community frustration
- Negative publicity

As humans and wildlife come into more and more frequent contact, it is critical that ODFW have the resources to promote stewardship and reduce conflicts across urban, suburban and rural landscapes. The Wildlife Coexistence Package is an effective strategy to effectively a growing and increasingly diverse populations across all landscapes to further the protection of Oregon's wildlife.

Thank you for considering restoring the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package to the ODFW Budget.

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