House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water
Re: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Structure

The undersigned organizations represent a broad and diverse section of stakeholders who are invested in, and affected by, the policy and rule-making decisions of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) Commission.

The current statute governing the representation of the commission must be revised due to Oregon's addition of a sixth congressional district. The current statute, housed in ORS 496.090, aligns Commission representation by population, leaving two-thirds of the state under-represented within the Commission structure, yet containing a large portion of the state's most necessary and impactful habitat and wildlife. It is our assertion that a decision-making body tasked with managing wildlife and habitat across the diverse landscape of Oregon should equally represent that diversity in its structure.

Regional representation, such as the utilization of the five river basin management areas, would provide an equitable and more diverse representation of the state. In addition to the five positions specific to the river basin management areas, the current statute stipulating one at-large member residing west of the summit of the Cascade Mountains and one at-large member residing to the east of the summit should be retained to maintain the 7-member commission.

The five river basin management areas have statutory precedent in ORS 536.022 as the regional representation for establishing the Oregon Water Resources Commission. This model has provided equitable representation for all Oregon citizens regarding the imperative issues surrounding water policy and would do the same when applied to wildlife and habitat management policies.

A regional representation model ensures that all of Oregon's natural resources, wildlife, and habitat needs are included in a truly diverse and equitable Commission structure. This ensures the best management decisions for Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and the public at large.

It is our recommendation that the governing statute should retain the stipulation of Commission appointments possessing a background in natural resources to ensure an understanding of all the varying interests and stakeholder viewpoints. Additionally, the commission appointments should continue to be nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, as is current statutory practice.

We urge your support for a Commission structure that provides Oregon's wildlife and habitat with the diverse regional representation needed to ensure proper management of the State's resources.

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Melody M. Damren

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