



Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Legislative action is needed this session to reconcile the commission’s structure in accordance with redistricting.

The Problem

Under current law the Fish and Wildlife Commission consists of seven members, with five tied to each congressional district, one from east of the Cascades, and one from west of the Cascades. Redistricting – and the addition of a sixth congressional district – requires the legislature to amend the establishing language in ORS 496.090 accordingly.

Recommendation for Commission Structure

Maintaining a structure based on proportional representation ensures the public interest will be represented and that we have a diverse candidate pool that reflects Oregon’s rapidly changing demographics. Therefore, our organizations advocate for a technical fix, requiring minimal changes to the existing structure. Specifically, we recommend maintaining a 7-member commission and amending ORS 496.090(4) to read:

One member of the commission shall be appointed from each of the six congressional districts of this state, and one member shall be appointed at large. Of the seven members appointed by the Governor, and to ensure geographic representation, at least one member must be from among individuals who reside west of the summit of the Coast Mountain Range and at least one member from among individuals who reside east of the summit of the Cascade Mountain Range.

According to the state’s Membership Handbook for Boards and Commissions, it is important to keep in mind that members are appointed to serve the public at large. The concerns and points of view of all interested parties must be represented and considered, but ultimately, the primary responsibility of every board or commission member is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the general public.

Recommendation for Commission Qualifications

We also recommend amending ORS 496.090(7) to read, in its entirety, as follows:

All members of the commission shall have knowledge of fish, wildlife and habitat issues and an understanding of the operation and functions of public policy boards and commissions.

We recommend streamlining the qualifying language for the Commission to attract a broader and more diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. Listing out specific backgrounds risks unintentionally excluding some stakeholder groups and constricting the pool of candidates.

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