

DATE: March 23, 2023

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources
Co-Chair Dembrow
Co-Chair Pham
Senator Anderson
Senator Frederick
Representative Holvey
Representative Bobby Levy
Representative Emerson Levy
Representative Owens

FROM: Oregon Water Partnership

RE: **SB 5509 (ODFW 2023-25 Budget)** – Supporting Oregon’s Water Resiliency

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Water Partnership (OWP) supports investments to maintain and enhance the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) Water Quality & Quantity Program (“Water Program”).

We are a diverse partnership of statewide conservation groups with a common goal: to advocate for balanced water policies that ensure cold clean water to sustain healthy communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Our priorities for the 2023 legislative session are to build resilience for Oregon’s water future, bring water data into the 21st century, support smart water management, and protect and restore our waters.

During previous sessions, our coalition members have successfully advocated for investments critical to rebuilding ODFW’s long-underfunded Water Program and enhancing the agency’s capacity to engage myriad water issues affecting fish and wildlife. As this Subcommittee is aware, ODFW has a newly reconstituted Habitat Division, and its top priority is addressing instream flow needs. **Oregon Water Partnership strongly supports funding that will help the agency maintain its momentum on addressing instream flow needs and build on investments from the 2021-23 budget (HB 5009) and through the 2022 drought resilience package (HB 5202).**

We believe the investments identified below are consistent with the 2023-25 Co-Chair Budget Framework general principles to Protect Vital Services, Get the Most for Every Dollar, Prioritize Investments in Key Areas, and Plan for the Future. Robust funding for the Water Program also meets the specific Natural Resources program area framework, ensuring “the continuation of existing critical programs and services” and targeting “any available resources for the Natural Resources program area in climate resilience, including wildfire and drought.”

We have reviewed ODFW’s Agency Request Budget and the Governor’s Recommended Budget. We have also offered [coalition input on HB 3124](#), the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package, as well as on many of the policy concepts it contains. While each of our organizations has its own priorities and perspectives on other elements of ODFW’s 2023-25 budget, **we are united in providing the following input on necessary investments that support ODFW’s Water Program:**

- **NO CUTS to Current Service Level**
- **POP 107**¹ (Integrated Water Resources Solutions):** \$463,725 GF; \$231,862 OF; 3.0 FTE
- **POP 102** (Habitat Division Policy & Operations):** \$1,797,102 GF; (\$242,131) OF; 4.0 FTE
- **POP 110** (Statewide Stream Temperature Monitoring):** \$393,302 GF; 1.0 FTE
- **POP 105**² (Private Forest Accord Data Implementation):** \$20,354,000 GF; \$12,000,000 OF (PFA Mitigation subaccount); 1.0 FTE

¹ ** Policy Option Package not included in Governor’s Recommended Budget.

² ** Policy Option Package reduced in Governor’s Recommended Budget.



Additional ODFW funding needed: We have identified two targeted ODFW Water Program initiatives that would greatly benefit from additional funding in the 2023-25 Budget. Neither was included in the ARB because these issues have largely arisen since the Fish & Wildlife Commission approved the Agency Request Budget in mid 2022. Each of these requests would build upon ODFW projects now underway that received funding in the 2022 regular legislative session (HB 5202, section 403). These are:

- **Coldwater refugia identification (\$180,000-\$320,000 for biennium, depending on size of field crew funded):** This funding would hire 2-4 technicians for the 2023 and 2024 summer field seasons who will collect temperature data to better understand where coldwater refugia can protect fish like salmon and trout. ODFW has already purchased all necessary equipment and installed sensors in northwest Oregon, so this funding would be associated with staff and travel to continue this sensor installation work in other regions of the state.
- **Real-time river flow and temperature gauging network (\$750,000 for biennium):** This funding would provide necessary operations and maintenance (O&M) service for long-term management of ODFW's expanding river flow and temperature gauge network. ODFW received funds during the 2022 session for the purchase and installation of gauges and estimated ongoing O&M, but it was subsequently determined that the allocated O&M funding was per biennium rather than per annum. With additional funding to address the unintended O&M shortfall, ODFW will be able to support the robust monitoring network envisioned in the 2022 drought resilience package by adding 15 new gauging stations in drought-impacted areas across the state.

Funding ODFW at this level will leverage and build upon prior investments in the Water Program and will help ODFW achieve their mission "to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations."

Thank you for considering our request to fund these critical needs, and please contact us if you have any questions.

Oregon Water Partnership

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