



Service Employees
International Union
Local 503

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To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503

RE: Support for HB 5009

Date: April 2, 2025

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers, and I am the Immediate Past President and a Policy Strategist for SEIU Local 503. Our union proudly represents over 70,000 Oregonians across every county in the state, including the dedicated staff at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) in HB 5009, along with additional funding requests.

ODFW staff are highly trained professionals committed to managing Oregon's wildlife, recreation, hunting and fishing, water quality, and more. Their expertise and dedication are essential to fulfilling ODFW's mission and ensuring the sustainability of Oregon's natural resources.

We appreciate that the GRB maintains a Current Service Level budget for many ODFW programs¹. And, as others have noted, it is crucial to sustain – and, where possible, increase – funding for the following key programs:

- ODFW Water Program
- Instream Water Rights & Land Use Resolution
- Fish & Wildlife Passage Infrastructure
- Klamath Reintroduction Monitoring
- Natural and Working Lands Initiatives
- Natural Climate Solutions Fund

Additionally, the proposed increase in license and tag fees under HB 2342 will provide ODFW with critical resources to continue its vital work. These funds are essential for conserving ecosystems and habitats while ensuring healthy wildlife populations for future generations.

However, we are deeply concerned about the proposed cuts that would result in the loss of 34 positions. Some key programs essential to ODFW's operations have not been included in the GRB, which could severely impact the agency's ability to function effectively.

¹ [2025-27 Budget Review – Department of Fish and Wildlife](#)



For example, we strongly recommend restoring funding for predator control and anti-poaching efforts, which are currently excluded under Policy Option Package (POP) 90. These and other initiatives are vital to maintaining ecological balance and protecting Oregon's wildlife.

Furthermore, while not explicitly addressed in the GRB or the agency's presentation, our seasonal staff face significant challenges due to a lack of housing options and support. Without action to improve housing accessibility and affordability, we risk a "brain drain" effect, where skilled workers leave due to unsustainable living conditions. Many employees, particularly those in rural areas, must commute long distances or resort to living in their vehicles due to the dominance of short-term rental markets. Addressing this issue is essential to maintaining a stable and experienced workforce.

Given the importance of Oregon's wildlife, hunting and fishing activities, hatchery production, and the need to retain experienced personnel, we strongly support these funding requests. We urge you to invest in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife by supporting the GRB and providing the additional funding needed to protect and sustain Oregon's working and natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration.