

Dear Chair Witt, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and members of the Committee:

It gives me great pleasure to support House Bill 2600 to support the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) through the transfer of a small portion of money received from the state transient lodging tax. I served on the original Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and related Outdoor Recreation and Education, which was charged with identifying and recommending potential new and sustainable funding sources for wildlife conservation and related outdoor recreation. Although our December 2016 recommendations to the Oregon Legislature were not initially enacted, the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) was established in the 2019 Legislative Session with strong bipartisan support. Fundraising to match the \$1million allocated by the Legislature began, and to date has raised nearly \$400,000 from individuals and organizations. This demonstrates what public opinion polls have shown--that Oregonians care deeply about wildlife conservation and related outdoor recreation. Unfortunately, momentum waned as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. HB 2600 is a critical step in order to extend the OCRF's June 2021 sunset date, AND to continue to raise the funds necessary to match the Legislature's allocation. Although this will not completely address the critical funding needs for conserving Oregon's wildlife and habitats, it would be an important step, and may help leverage federal funding when available. It would be terribly unfortunately if Oregon would leave "money on the table" for lack of a state match.

Thank you for considering my testimony on HB 2600. I urge you to move this important bill forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Puchy
Former Member of the Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education
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