



The Habitat Institute

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RE: House Bill 2600 ~ Modify to Increase Funding

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources Members

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to support a modified House Bill 2600 that provides revenue to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund and repeals the sunset. HB Bill 2600 needs to increase its funding base to implement the Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife program.

The reasoning for this request is with climate change, forest fires magnitude and increase we are in a crisis with the inadvertent loss of the biodiversity associated with these two events. Biodiversity is the glue that holds our ecosystems together. The basic funding for this program is woefully inadequate to meet the conservation needs. This is because our organization was a principal in securing the \$150 million dollar Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Settlement for Oregon Fish and Wildlife. This allowed \$10 million in project money over 15 years. So a minimum base for this fund should be about 4 to 5 million a year.

HB 2600 identifies \$500,000 a year via state transient lodging tax. To make up the difference please look at the Oregon Forest Resource Institute (OFRI) that is funded annual about 4 million by public taxes (see OPB 8/4/2020 – *How a public institute in Oregon became a de facto lobbying arm of the timber industry*). If a state non-profit were to act like OFRI, being a lobbying entity for Forest Companies that has eliminated thousands of jobs in the state along with acquiring \$3 billion in tax cuts; they would be disbanded by the state.

So defund OFRI and use this funding for the public good! Forest Companies can pick up the funding support for OFRI, if they so desire, especially given they were their benefactors over the years.

The Institute does support an increase funding of 4 to 5 million modification to HB 2600.

Very Best,

Thomas O'Neill – Director
The Habitat Institute