



NETWORK of OREGON
WATERSHED COUNCILS

March 17, 2021

To: The Oregon Legislature House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

Re: Support for HB 2600 -- Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF)
Transfer from Lodging Tax

Chair Witt and Committee Members,

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC) offers our support for HB 2600. NOWC represents 60 Watershed Councils across the state, which are non-regulatory groups based in local communities who work with landowners to develop and implement restoration projects improving fish and wildlife habitats across the state and work to assess and monitor environmental conditions.

Watershed Councils recognize the OCRF as a unique and valuable source of funding for conservation and restoration work. The OCRF aligns well with Watershed Councils' mission to perform voluntary conservation/restoration work with a whole-system approach, developing urban and rural partnerships and collaborations with a wide range of landowners and stakeholders. Watershed Councils have especially appreciated the OCRF as other funding sources for conservation and restoration work have been diverted towards front-line pandemic and wildfire mitigation.

Watershed Councils have made good use of OCRF funds for habitat improvements across Oregon. When a Watershed Council is awarded funding for a restoration project, it not only supports the council's capacity, it is often multiplied as we contract with local companies. In rural economies, these investments and re-investments have a tremendous impact. Some recent OCRF-funded Watershed Council projects include:

- Salmon habitat restoration and community amphibian surveys in the Sandy River -- \$7,500, Sandy River Watershed Council;
- Tidal Wetland Mapping, a tool for evaluating lowland habitat and tidal infrastructure on the southwest coast -- \$9,500, Coos Watershed Association;
- A study of invasive ringed crayfish and their impact on native signal crayfish, steelhead and salmon in southern Oregon -- \$3,350, Valleys of the Rogue Watershed Council.

Watershed Councils especially appreciate the OCRF emphasis on broadening equitable access. NOWC supports the intent of the OCRF, to preserve Oregon's land and waters and increase equitable access to and the ability to thrive in Oregon's outdoors. The OCRF funding structure, matching the legislature's commitment with privately raised funds, has created a clear path for regular Oregonians to participate and invest in efforts to improve our wild places.

By extending the "sunset" date for the OCRF and restoring the legislature's commitment to match private funds raised by the OCRF, the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources will support further opportunities for Watershed Councils to plan and implement projects important to our local habitats and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



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