

March 25, 2021 Support HB 3187 - Establish the Oregon Wildlife Counsel

The Honorable Representative Brad Witt, Chair House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

The Honorable Representative Vikki Breese Iverson, Vice Chair

The Honorable Representative Zach Hudson, Vice Chair

Committee Membership:

Rep. Jami Cate

Rep. Jeff Reardon

Rep. Pam Marsh

Rep. David Brock-Smith

Rep. Susan McLain

Rep. Anna Williams

Rep. Bill Post

Dear Chair Rep. Witt, Co-Chairs Rep. Breese Iverson, Rep. Hudson, and Committee members,

Good afternoon, my name is Stan Steele. As a native Oregonian, I am here today speaking on behalf of tens of thousands of Oregon's licensed sportsmen and sportswomen who are seeking your approval of a public education program that will increase the public's awareness of how the management, conservation and protection of our state's natural resources are funded. In 2016 the Oregon Legislative Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife, and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education requested a survey to determine Oregon residents' attitudes and knowledge towards wildlife and wildlife funding. The comprehensive study was conducted by Responsive Management, an internationally recognized survey research firm specializing in attitudes toward natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. The study was titled: "Oregon Residents' Opinions On And Values Related To The Oregon Department of Fish And Wildlife." [Microsoft Word - OR 2016 Legislative Survey Report \(state.or.us\)](#) The results of the survey provided the impetus for Oregon's over 800,000 hunters, anglers, trappers, and sport shooters to explore all the available options on how to better inform and educate the non-heritage sporting public on the conservation benefits and economic contributions that are provided by licensed sportsmen and sportswomen.

The May 2016 survey identified the top-ranked value shared by both sportsmen and sportswomen and those who choose not to participate in our heritage sports: "That healthy fish and wildlife populations exist in Oregon." This shared value is the cornerstone of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation! However, the survey revealed some shocking public knowledge/information gaps regarding who is primarily responsible for funding the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

According to the survey, most Oregonians are unaware that hunters, anglers, trappers, sport shooters, recreational boaters and commercial fishermen are most responsible for funding the state's conservation programs that benefit everything from mule deer bucks to swallow-tail butterflies. While we may have many shared values, it was very alarming to learn that 44% of Oregonians could not name the agency most responsible for protecting and managing fish, wildlife, and habitat in Oregon. Equally troubling was that a follow-up survey question revealed that 54% knew little or nothing about the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Another glaring knowledge gap revealed by the survey: Most Oregonians who do not participate in the heritage sports believe that their general tax dollars are primarily responsible for funding the conservation and management programs administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The citizens surveyed evidently did not know that relatively little (approximately 10%) of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget is derived from their general fund tax dollars.

It is similarly disturbing that only 4% of Oregonians, according to the survey, identified the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Funds (federal excise tax on hunting equipment) or the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Funds (federal excise tax on fishing tackle and motorboat fuel) as important sources of funding for Oregon's fish and wildlife conservation and management programs.

Oregon's P-R Act appropriations for the last 2 years: \$30,563,993.00.

Oregon's D-J Act appropriations for the last 2 years: \$17,043,675.00.

2-year appropriation total: \$47,607,668.00

The conservation funding significance of these federal excise tax systems and our license and tag fees cannot be understated, but, unfortunately, the information is widely unknown by the uniformed non- heritage sporting public.

(As a note of interest, Oregon newspaperman, Carl D. Shoemaker who also served as the Director of the Oregon Fish and Game Commission for ten years, was the drafter of the original Duck-Stamp Act, Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid Act, Dingell-Johnson Federal Aid Act, and founder of the National Wildlife Federation).

The information source that the survey's respondents identified as their number one way of getting information regarding fish and wildlife management, conservation, or fish and wildlife related recreation was from friends and family. As sportsmen and sportswomen, we all know about fish stories, so we are more than little concerned about how this big one got away. Why is there such a widespread lack of knowledge or readily available information on who is primarily responsible for funding Oregon's fish and wildlife management programs? Fish stories may be fun to tell, may be entertaining, but if they are misleading or false, they may lead to bad public policy. A credibly informed populace is an educated populace.

We feel that the survey's finding that the respondents overall use of media was significantly below other sources of information to be also quite disconcerting. This survey result appears to justify the need to establish a comprehensive media-based conservation information program that competently informs the public of the important role that sportsmen and sportswomen play in financially supporting Oregon's wildlife management and conservation programs.

By supporting HB 3187, you will be joining hundreds of thousands of Oregon's licensed sportsmen and sportswomen in recognizing the need to establish a credible fish and wildlife public information and education program that works in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Oregon Wildlife Council is modeled after extraordinarily successful outdoor education programs in Colorado and Michigan. By supporting HB 3187 and the Oregon Wildlife Council, you will be walking in the honorable conservation shoes of Carl D. Shoemaker.

United in Conservation,

Stan Steele

Oregon Outdoor Council

Oregon Trappers Association

Oregon Anglers Association

National Trappers Association

Fur Takers of America

Oregon United Sporting dogs Association

Hunting Works for Oregon