

March 30, 2021

To: The Honorable Nancy Nathanson, Chair
House Committee on Revenue

House Bill 3328
Oregon Outdoor Council

The Oregon Wildlife Council and our partners in conservation appreciate the opportunity to discuss HB 3328 with you today. The Oregon Wildlife Council represents the conservation interests of numerous heritage sporting communities and associated businesses from all corners of the Beaver State. The conservation funding concepts outlined in HB 3328 evolved after months of discussions by the legislatively mandated Task Force on Funding for Fish and Wildlife and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education.

The North American Model of Conservation has been and continues to be arguably the world's most successful fish and wildlife management system. The "Model" has been responsible for rescuing from the brink of extinction the wood duck, pronghorn antelope and what one of our nation's founders, Benjamin Franklin, wanted as our national symbol, the wild turkey. Millions of acres of habitat have been purchased and restored through sportsmen and sportswomen's license, tag and permit fees and associated Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson excise taxes. The Model's unparalleled conservation successes have financially and biologically benefited species as diverse as the Oregon Swallowtail Butterfly, Rocky Mt. Big Horn Sheep, and the nation's first fish to be delisted from the Endangered Species list; the Oregon Chub. The Model's huge conservation engine has been primarily fueled by America's traditional outdoor sporting community's user-pay system.

While the Model has been extremely successful, it is the opinion of the Oregon Outdoor Council that it is being asked to do more than it was designed to accomplish. In other words, Oregon's conservation engine does not have the fiscal ability to pull the plow without having additional conservation funding.

The following is an example of the potential negative impacts that nominal funding of fish and wildlife law enforcement could potentially have on the conservation of Oregon's shared public trust natural resources. During the early onset of Oregon's Covid-19 response, critical funding was cut from the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division resulting in numerous Troopers being reassigned away from their conservation enforcement duties. Fish and Wildlife law enforcement has been deemed as the most difficult job in law enforcement generally. With the reduction in even a single Fish and Wildlife Division Trooper, the likelihood of successful investigations into cases such as the heinous ones listed below are greatly diminished.

The following information shows the true conservation value of maintaining a consistent and dedicated funding source for the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division's Troopers that will be assured by passage of HB 3328.

On April 8, 2020 Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Troopers from the Mid-Valley Team served search warrants that resulted in the arrest of wildlife violators for the following conservation violations and crimes:

- Felon in Possession of Firearm
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Buck Deer
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Bull Elk
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Black Bear
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Cougar
- Lend/Borrow or Sell Big Game Tag
- Hunt Closed Season
- Hunt No Big Game Tag
- Fail to Properly Check in Cougar to ODFW

On April 25, 2020 Fish and Wildlife Troopers served simultaneous search warrants resulting in the arrest of wildlife violators for the following conservation violations and crimes:

- Unlawful Take/Possession of Buck Deer
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Bull Elk
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Black Bear
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Cougar
- Unlawful Take/Possession of Bobcat
- Lend/Borrow or Sell Big Game Tag
- Hunt Closed Season
- Hunt No Big Game Tag

Based on evidence seized or processed, troopers believe three males participated in the unlawful take/possession of 27 big game animals within the last two years, with evidence indicating many of the animals were killed during closed season or prohibited hours.

Values attributed to Oregon's wildlife by Oregon Revised Statute 496.075 could total \$162,700.00 in restitution to the State of Oregon.

The Oregon Outdoor Council requests that the House Committee on Revenue support HB 3228. It is our collective opinion that all Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife programs ranging from aiding salmon-steelhead recovery efforts by utilization of instream egg incubations systems to creating and maintaining pollinator - ungulate friendly habitats and patrolling for environmental and wildlife crimes are essential and vitally important conservation services. Passage of HB 3228 is another example of providing conservation funding "The Oregon Way."

Thank You,

Oregon Outdoor Council – Board of Directors