



Testimony of Oregon Wildlife Coalition on House Bill 3328  
House Committee on Revenue

March 31, 2021

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Pham and Reschke, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC) is a coalition of wildlife conservation groups working proactively and collaboratively to advocate for policies that are science-based, humane, and reflect the state's conservation values.<sup>1</sup>

OWC supports efforts to diversify funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in order to help the agency achieve its mission to protect and enhance the state's fish and wildlife and their habitat for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. That said, OWC has concerns about House Bill 3328 as drafted.

ODFW manages Oregon's fish and wildlife, which is owned by the state in trust for all Oregonians. ORS 498.002; *Simpson v. Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife*, 242 Or. App. 287 (2011). Presently, ODFW receives a significant portion of its revenue from hunting and fishing – revenue from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, and from excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, for example – despite the fact that many Oregonians who do not hunt or fish also enjoy and benefit from the state's fish and wildlife. Indeed, “[t]oday, only 12% [of Oregon's population] fish and 7% hunt.”<sup>2</sup>

A report by Oregon Public Broadcasting discovered that staff responsible for conserving the 600 non-game species – roughly 88% of all wildlife in the state – get about 4% of total funding. Without additional funding, it is clear that ODFW conservation programs will continue to suffer, which puts many of these species (and their habitats) at risk of becoming threatened or endangered. Thus, we support diversifying ODFW's funding sources so that more of the general population both contributes to and is served by ODFW's management of Oregon's fish and wildlife. We also support the specific dedication of \$500,000 per biennium to the Office of Outdoor Recreation and, through the proposed -2 amendments, the specific dedication of \$1,000,000 per biennium to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.

We have two primary concerns with HB 3328:

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<sup>1</sup> The nine members of the coalition are Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, Center for Biological Diversity, Portland Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, Western Environmental Law Center, the Humane Society of the United States, WildEarth Guardians and Humane Voters Oregon. Please see our [website](#) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> ODFW 2021-23 Presentation to External Budget Advisory Committee, p. 69.

1. Other than the specific dedications noted above, HB 3328 would direct all revenue raised to “the State Wildlife Fund established in ORS 496.300.” Revenues directed to the Wildlife Fund “are appropriated continuously to the commission to carry out the wildlife laws” without further direction. We are therefore concerned, assurances in the record aside, that the bulk of money raised with the proposed new income tax – an estimated \$160 million per biennium according to ODFW – would continue to be spent in a way that emphasizes hunting, fishing, and lethal control of wildlife. We are also concerned that this would mean status quo for the agency and their focus on game species, rather than being more inclusive of non-game species, which make up more than three-quarters of Oregon's wildlife species. We would like to see more of the anticipated revenue specifically earmarked for conservation and restoration of Oregon’s fish and wildlife populations for their own sake, and for the general benefit of all Oregonians, such as through implementation of ODFW’s Oregon Conservation Strategy.
2. We do not support a credit against the tax for a “license, tag or permit issued pursuant to the wildlife laws.” (Section 5.) Purchasers of licenses, tags and permits are likely to be using the fish and wildlife resources more intensively, including through consumptive use of fish and wildlife, and should pay for that privilege.

Thank you for considering our comments.

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