



Testimony of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition on HB 5009
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

April 29th, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor, Reardon and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the **Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC)** — a group of nine wildlife conservation organizations working collaboratively to advocate for policies that are science-based, humane, and reflect the state’s conservation values — we submit this testimony regarding HB 5009.

As you deliberate on public funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, we urge your support for funding the following critical programs:

1. **ODFW Habitat Division (POPs 112, 114, 115, 116)**: Vital staff positions for the new Habitat Division at ODFW. The Habitat Division was reestablished in 2020 with strong support from the conservation community. The ODFW Commission recommended establishing seven positions to support this division. However, the Governor's proposed budget only includes two (from POPs 112 and 115) and has directed others to be funded through federal programs. No federal funding has been identified for the positions so far and without the positions, the Habitat Division will essentially be ineffective and non-functional. OWC therefore asks that all positions for the Habitat Division be funded through general fund dollars.

2. **Anti-poaching Campaign**: These funds are intended to support an integrated education, outreach, and enforcement program to address Oregon’s growing poaching problem. Poaching shows flagrant disregard for our state’s wildlife laws and the agencies charged with enforcing them, and it puts already imperiled species at even greater risk. The campaign went through significant budget cuts to some of the most novel proposals for proactively addressing poaching due in 2020’s special session, including the creation of a dedicated prosecutor for violations of Oregon’s wildlife laws, and a robust statewide education and outreach campaign to aid reporting. The anti-poaching funds have wide support from a diverse group of stakeholders and OWC strongly recommends that the funds should be reinstated.

3. **Wolves:** We support full funding of the wolf program. Specifically, we advocate for wolf program positions to be funded through the General Fund. It is inappropriate for these positions to be funded exclusively with revenues from the sale of sporting arms and ammunition is inappropriate.

4. **Marine Reserves:** OWC requests that the Marine Reserves program remains fully staffed to ensure the program can meet its statutory requirements. This program is essential to evaluating the efficacy and impacts of the Marine Reserves Program in preparation for the review that is scheduled to occur in 2023.

5. **Minam River Wildlife Area Acquisition:** OWC is supportive of the Minam River Area acquisition and long term management of the area by ODFW as this acquisition will link critical wildlife habitat, establish better habitat connectivity and add to the conservation efforts for several species including numerous Oregon Conservation Strategy habitats and species, federal and state listed species, and species of local economic and cultural importance.

As identified in the Governor's Recommended Budget, we urge you to remove funding for:

Wildlife Services Predator Management: We support funding cuts to predator control for the Department of Agriculture (\$200K) and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$200K). These funds go directly to contracts with Wildlife Services, the controversial U.S. Department of Agriculture program that kills tens of thousands of Oregon's wildlife each year. Wildlife Services relies primarily on lethal and inhumane methods to address conflicts with wildlife, frequently at the behest of industry interests. These funds should be cut and any additional or alternative investment should focus exclusively on more effective and humane nonlethal methods to address conflicts with wildlife.

We appreciate your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

*Cascadia Wildlands
Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Humane Society of the United States
Humane Voters Oregon
Oregon Wild
Portland Audubon
Western Environmental Law Center
WildEarth Guardians*