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TESTIMONY –
HB 5009
Joint Ways and Means Committee on Natural Resources
May 3, 2021

Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) represents members across the state with a total number of 13,000 ranchers who care for more than 1 million head of cattle and calves in every one of Oregon's 36 counties. The cattle sold by these ranchers were valued at more than \$625 Million in the 2019 agricultural census.

The OCA values the mission of Oregon Fish and Wildlife Agency and the myriad constituencies the staff of the agency balance in their everyday duties and responsibilities. Therefore, the OCA supports the Agency budget and offers the following recommendation:

Continued Funding of Programs with Farm Bill Matching Funds-

NRCS works with private landowners to implement conservation practices proposed in the federal Farm Bill. ODFW has four Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) Farm Bill positions that serve as field biologists in the USDA NRCS offices in Tillamook, The Dalles, Heppner, and Baker City.

The Conservation Liaison biologists provide outreach to private agricultural producers to share beneficial NRCS programs, develop conservation plans for their properties, and assist producers with applications and implementation of Farm Bill Programs. The positions are funded through NRCS and state Lottery Funds provide the required 20 percent state match necessary to receive the Federal Funds. Three of the current positions provide habitat benefits for several OCS habitats such as shrub steppe and savannah grasslands; as well as strategy species including grasshopper sparrows, long-billed curlews and white-tailed jackrabbits. The fourth position primarily addresses wetland and riparian habitats in the north coast area.

As part of the ODFW budget bill (Governor’s recommended budget), these positions were not included to continue.

The OCA respectfully recommends the continued allocation of \$200K of Lottery or other State Funds to match \$800K in federal funds as part of the 2021-23 biennium budget for ODFW. These positions and their direct connection to the habitat result in benefits on private lands in several key areas of Oregon.

Continued Funding for Wildlife Services and Predator Control – The recent ODFW Annual Wolf Report indicates the wolf packs in Oregon are continuing to thrive. As these packs are intended to co-existent with livestock, it is imperative all tools for managing the wolf population be fully funded and available to livestock producers. Programs that are complex and/or underfunded only serve to disincentivize the producer engagement resulting in mixed results and frustration for citizens and producers.

ODF&W is a vitally important agency to Oregon’s landowners who interface regularly with this agency staff at the local and state levels. It is imperative this Agency remain well staffed with the adequate financial resources to carry out its statutory mandate and mission.

Thank you for your consideration as you move this budget into the full Ways and Means process.

I am available to address questions.

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