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## **Oregon Wildlife Coalition's Budget Priorities for SB 5509 - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's 2023-2025 Budget**

[The Oregon Wildlife Coalition](#) is a coalition of wildlife conservation groups working proactively and collaboratively to advocate for policies that are science based and humane, and reflect the state's conservation values.

Members include Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Oregon Wild, Portland Audubon, and Western Environmental Law Center.

Listed below are our budget priorities for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) we urge the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources to fully fund:

### **1. Implementation of the Oregon Conservation Strategy**

The Oregon Conservation Strategy is our state's wildlife action plan to conserve our most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats. Yet, it is one of the most underfunded programs within ODFW. ODFW cannot use their revenue from Pittman Robertson Funds (PR Funds) for many of the OCS species, which is why state support is especially important. We support **funding four new FTE for implementing the OCS** (POP 103 in agency requested budget) and funding POP 114 in agency requested budget that supports the implementation of ODFW's climate change policy.

### **2. Wildlife Coexistence Package**

We support a new Wildlife Coexistence Program including five biologist positions + 1 Coexistence Communications Coordinator to expand education and outreach efforts focused on the urban/suburban environments on how to interact with wildlife/avoid conflicts, work with local governments, community groups, schools, etc., in their areas, and provide training sessions for those groups, law enforcement, animal control, and others. They would also assist local rehabbers with understanding rules for holding and proper treatment of wildlife, conduct facility inspections and assist with permitting. **Total budget: \$2,077,403.**

### **3. Wolf Management Program**

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.

### **4. Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF)**

The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund was established by the legislature in 2019 as an alternate funding to implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy. It funds local and grassroots projects that benefit species and habitats in the Oregon Conservation Strategy while promoting access to diverse recreational opportunities for Oregonians. Since the formation of the OCRF, 91 projects have been funded through four rounds of competitive requests for proposals (RFP). These projects have spanned the state and have provided needed funds to ODFW partners promoting outdoor equity and access as well as science-focused conservation and research.

The legislature has supported OCRF in the past and it has strong bi-partisan support to implement its mission. However, OCRF's grant funding was not included in the Governor's Recommended Budget (POP 112) which only funds the position of the coordinator. We request the legislature to **support funding for OCRF with the \$3 million** that was originally included in the ODFW budget request.

### **5. Habitat Division**

We strongly support funding the newly established Habitat Division at ODFW. The Habitat Division was reestablished in 2021 with strong support from a diverse group of stakeholders with the intent of prioritising restoration, protection, and enhancement of habitats that are critical to the conservation, recovery, and management of the state's fish and wildlife species. Another key role of the habitat division is to provide increased coordination and substantive engagement with other state agencies where proposed actions and projects may have an intersection with fish and wildlife.

We appreciate the continued funding support for the Habitat Division, however, to get the division fully functional some key positions need to be filled up. ODFW Habitat Division does not have the capacity necessary to fulfil the other two critical roles for the division: serving as the Science/Information Hub on fish and wildlife habitat needs and serving as a Policy Resource for Habitat Conservation. These two functions are essential to management and protection of habitat resources and guiding where restoration efforts can have the greatest positive impact for fish, wildlife, and habitat. Given the grand scale of emerging habitat policy issues in Oregon ranging from climate change to post-fire rehabilitation to management of private and state forests, there is a need for increased capacity at the senior policy level to ensure fish and wildlife habitat are considered in balance. We ask that the legislature fund POP 102 from the agency requested budget for a funding of \$1.79 million.

## **6. Marine Reserves Program**

We request reinstatement of the 187K biennium allocated for the Communications Project Leader of ODFW's Marine Reserve Program. This key position is a critical connection point between coastal communities and Marine Reserves.

Additionally, we recommend the Ways and Means Committee not fund for the following programs:

### **1. Predator Management**

We support cuts in the Governor's Recommended Budget to "predator control" funding for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. 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. There is no requirement or intent to use any of these funds to attempt non-lethal deterrent methods to prevent conflict with wildlife. 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.

Thanking you

Sincerely

*Cascadia Wildlands*

*Oregon Wild*

*Center for Biological Diversity*

*Western Environmental Law Center*

*Humane Society of the United States*

*Humane Voters Oregon*

*Defenders of Wildlife*

*Portland Audubon*