



Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society
PO Box 2378
Corvallis, OR 97339

March 19, 2023

**Senator Michael Denbrow and Representative Khanh Pham
Co-Chairs, Joint Subcommittee On Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. N.E.
Salem, Oregon 97301**

RE: Support SB 5509

Dear Co-Chairs Denbrow and Pham,

The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society includes over 500 active wildlife professionals and students in the fields of wildlife biology, management, research, administration, and education. We see the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) as the most important agency in the management of Oregon's fish and wildlife resources by addressing the impacts of climate change to critical habitats, making sure common species stay common and assisting those species with shrinking populations the best chances for long term survival. We believe the administration of ODFW's programs has demonstrated wise fiscal decisions in program implementation as they move forward in meeting their mission, goals and objectives. For these reasons we are in support of SB 5509, the Governor's recommended budget for ODFW in the 2023 - 2025 biennium.

There are several Policy Option Packages included in the Governor's budget. While we support most of them we feel the following are a high priority:

POP #112 which provides permanent funding for the staff position leading the efforts of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund and its advisory committee. This highly successful grant program targets species of greatest conservation need, as described in the Oregon Conservation Strategy, along with addressing outdoor recreational impacts and opportunities related to those species. The program has grown quickly in size and scope and needs stability and continuity to be fully successful.

POP #121 provides funding for the final phase of acquiring the Minam River Wildlife Area in northeast Oregon. This property acquisition has very high support from diverse organizations from across the state. It will provide nearly 11,000 acres of important migratory corridors and winter range for deer, elk and other species while adding six miles of public access to the Minam Wild and Scenic River.

POP #122 provides a mule deer coordinator position to address the development and implementation of a recently drafted mule deer management plan. Mule deer populations have been declining rapidly over the last 10-20 years from a number of impacts (habitat loss, drought, poaching, etc.). This species needs immediate and long term assistance to stabilize and increase populations to their management objectives.



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We also believe strong consideration should be given to the following POP's for funding that were not included in the Governor's budget:

POP #103 Oregon Conservation Strategy Implementation. This package requests three new positions, funded with Lottery Funds, and one new position funded with General Fund. These positions are critical for understanding the needs of species that may be considered for listing under the endangered species act simply because very little is known about their biological requirements and/or what the environmental impacts are that might be keeping their populations at low levels.

POP #115 Chronic Wasting Disease Testing. This package requests 1 permanent position at ODFW wildlife health lab, funded with USFWS- Pittman-Robertson funding and 9 seasonal positions in field offices throughout the state, funded with General Fund. These positions would conduct increased sampling and testing for chronic wasting disease in deer and elk populations in every wildlife management unit. This disease has spread from eastern and midwestern states to the west with devastating impacts to ungulate populations. Without sampling and testing we may not know the extent the disease may have spread to Oregon. Early detection is key to keeping the disease under control.

And Finally, we would like to give support to POP# 129 in the Governor's budget, an upgrade to the ODFW website. The current website is not only cumbersome and frustrating to use but the information it directs a user to is often out of date. In addition, ODFW relies on social media, podcasts and their second website, "My ODFW" for connecting with the public. Much of this content is focused on their core constituents of hunters and anglers. There are many more Oregonians who do not hunt, fish, or use social media but still appreciate wildlife in many forms and want to learn more about Oregon's diversity of natural resources and how ODFW integrates their work with those resources. We suggest that the agency be given direction to explore other communication and outreach efforts through this package including print media, such as bringing back the successful *Oregon Wildlife* magazine, which increased the diversity of public participation and awareness while demonstrating ODFW's effective stewardship of Oregon's fish and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,

Jim Greer
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Chair, Conservation and Legislative Committees
Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society