



Date: March 22, 2023

Submitted to: Representative Pham and Dembrow, and all other members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: Testimony- ODFW Budget- Habitat Division- Fund POP 102

For 36 years, Central Oregon LandWatch (LandWatch) has been working to create well-planned cities and protect wild, open spaces across the region. Leveraging our legal expertise, policy analysis, and experience with Oregon's land-use planning system, we work to guide development where it makes the most sense and protect the land and water that sustains our communities and ecosystems, which includes the protection of healthy, abundant, and accessible fish and wildlife habitat.

As an organization that regularly participates in land use decisions across three counties in Central Oregon, we have a strong interest in seeing ODFW's Habitat Division fully funded and staffed. As such, **LandWatch strongly supports providing more funding and support to the newly reestablished Habitat Division at ODFW; specifically, we respectfully ask the Legislature to fund Policy Option Package (POP) 102 for the full \$1.79 million, from the agency requested budget.** This funding would support four critical positions within the habitat division: a Habitat Division Operations Manager, a Senior Policy Analyst to focus on key, long-range projects like climate adaptation and drought training, and two GIS Specialist to build, prioritize, manage, and monitor habitat models and plans.

As Central Oregon moves through unprecedented drought years, and respond to climate change and the rapid increase of development and housing in our region, we need the full strength of a division that collects and provides the best available information on the current and future needs of wildlife habitat. As interests compete, as they will in land use decisions, we need to work with the best available data to ensure wildlife habitat and connectivity is accurately represented and protected in the land use decision-making process. Further, the division's data will help efficiently and effectively restore and enhance degraded habitat where it's needed most, and restore habitat connectivity across county lines. The work of this division would benefit other agencies and projects, such as the critical work of current HB 2999, to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions while increasing wildlife mobility and connectivity across the state. Finally, if funded and adequately staffed, the Habitat Division can play a critical communication and facilitation role in bringing together public and private stakeholders to work around shared interests, to produce meaningful conservation outcomes across landscapes.

As our state grows and responds to a changing climate, the Habitat Division provides the vital role of representing the interests of the fish and wildlife and their habitat. **The ODFW POP 102**





funding for these four positions will give the division full strength to provide healthy, abundant, and accessible habitat to ensure a robust future for fish and wildlife throughout Oregon.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristy Sabo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kristy" and the last name "Sabo" clearly legible.

Kristy Sabo (pronouns: [she/her](#))

[Central Oregon LandWatch](#)

On ancestral & traditional lands of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

