



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

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House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
RE: HB 2342 Support

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) is Oregon's largest state-centric hunter conservation organization, representing over 12,000 sportsmen and women throughout 26 chapters in the state. Our mission is 'to protect Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and hunting heritage' and we strongly support science-based wildlife and habitat management.

OHA supports HB 2342. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has done an outstanding job of engaging with stakeholders and the sportsmen's community over the last year as this concept was developed. ODFW staff met with the OHA State Board last spring, not only listening to concerns and suggestions, but implementing several in the formation of the concept.

OHA appreciates the continued fiscal responsibility of the agency. It has been ten years since the last legislatively set fee increases were approved and six years since our last fee increase was put in place. In that time, inflation and inter-agency costs have increased substantially. With these factors in mind, we support the proposed increase as a necessary tool to maintain the current service level of the agency with the only program growth occurring in the wildlife health program.

As this committee is aware, chronic wasting disease (CWD) is an extremely impactful issue for our wildlife populations. In addition to CWD, continued impacts of avian influenza and M.ovi (a pneumonia-like disease effecting our wild sheep populations) threaten our wildlife. OHA supports the agency investments in wildlife health issues and considers it a priority need for our wildlife populations.

The sportsmen and women of Oregon support the conservation of our wildlife, both game and non-game species. Historically, our community has funded 40-55% of ODFW's entire agency budget. Conversely, the General Fund (GF) has averaged only 10% of the agency budget. As ODFW, along with other natural resources agencies, have been chronically underfunded by state dollars, rate-payers have stepped up to not only provide direct funding to the agency through the sale of license and tag products but also through federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing gear, and other supplies that generate federal funding back to the agency.

As the rate-payers come to the table, yet again, in support of the agency and its mission, OHA is asking the State to meet us. The Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) currently has a \$2 million reduction in GF for the agency. This reduction is made up primarily of the removal of the

Anti-Poaching Campaign at a total of \$1,279,084. OHA is strongly opposed to this reduction and the removal of a vital program. The funds for the Anti-Poaching Campaign account for approximately \$599,000 in ODFW staffing and campaign funds plus approximately \$680,000 of funds passed through to Oregon State Police (OSP) for enforcement personnel. This reduction to OSP equates to a 1.5 FTE loss in enforcement personnel.

In addition to the GRB reductions, HB 2342 also includes approximately \$8 million in reductions specific to the fisheries division. This reduction also impacts the OSP enforcement personnel with another 3.5 FTE loss. The cumulative loss to OSP Fish & Wildlife enforcement is 5 FTE plus the supplies & service fees that accompany those positions. This loss of enforcement personnel is of grave concern to OHA.

OHA, and the sportsmen and women of Oregon, are coming to the table to make ODFW whole through the fee increases proposed in HB 2342. We respectfully ask the State to meet us by restoring the \$2 million cuts to the ODFW budget put forth in the GRB and supporting not only the ODFW staff tasked with conservation of our wildlife and habitat but also the OSP enforcement personnel actively working on the landscape.

Thank you for your time,
Amy Patrick
Policy Director