

DATE: April 1, 2025

TO: Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and Members of the Ways & Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

FROM: Bird Alliance of Oregon, Oregon Wild, Trout Unlimited, Wild Salmon Center

RE: Private Forest Accord Funding Needs in Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Budget (HB 5009)

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations that represent conservation signatories to the Private Forest Accord, we appreciate your consideration of these comments regarding the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Budget (HB 5009).

The Private Forest Accord (PFA) was the result of months of negotiations brokered by the Governor's office between 13 timber industry representatives and 13 conservation and fishing groups to broadly reform the Oregon Forest Practices Act. A foundational goal of this process was to modify Oregon's standards for logging on private forest lands to achieve a federally approvable Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

If an HCP is not finalized and approved by 2027, all of the PFA changes roll back to the previous Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) standards. In July 2024, the state submitted its comprehensive draft HCP to USFWS and NOAA. Full funding for natural resource agencies to ensure successful implementation of the PFA and a federally approvable HCP is critical in the 2025-2027 biennium, and should be included in the CSL/base budget in future years. Underfunding these programs in the next biennium puts the viability of the PFA and a federally approved HCP at risk.

Specifically, we respectfully request full funding for the PFA Mitigation Grant Program at ODFW (\$20M).

This program provides dedicated grant funding for fish passage barrier removal, stream habitat restoration, and other mitigation projects. In 2024, the inaugural round of grant funding through this program awarded \$10M to 25 projects across the state.¹

¹ Private Forest Accord Grant Program Awarded Projects, ODFW, <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/habitat/PFA/projects/index.html>

It also represents a commitment in the authorizing legislation from 2022 (SB 1501) for the state to contribute \$10M annually and \$2.5M from industry annually for this fund until federal approval of an HCP, after which the industry contribution increases to \$5M annually.

- Funding in 2025-2027 GRB: The GRB established a \$14M Special Purpose Appropriations (SPA) for three PFA programs at ODF and ODFW without further specifying funding levels for each agency or specific program.
- Funding in HB 5009: The PFA Mitigation Grant Program is funded at \$4M in HB 5009, which is \$16M less than the \$20M needed to meet commitments made in SB 1501.

The PFA Mitigation Grant Program and the long-term investments needed to keep it functioning are core components of the negotiated agreements under the PFA authorized in SB 1501 and updated rules, as well as the HCP that the state will submit for federal approval. In the 2025-2027 biennium, full funding at \$20M for the Mitigation Program in the base budget is critical to support the success of the PFA and finalization of the HCP.

Although not in ODFW's budget, we also respectfully request full funding for two related PFA programs at Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), specifically the SFISH grant program for small forestland owners at \$10M and the adaptive management program at \$6M.²

Now is the time to secure the PFA into the future and to ensure that Oregon has its best chance to secure federal approval of the PFA HCP. Thanks for your consideration of these comments and our request for full funding for the Private Forest Accord (PFA).

Sincerely,

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Bird Alliance of Oregon

Chrysten Rivard
Oregon Director
Trout Unlimited

Casey Kulla
State Forest Policy Coordinator
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² Two signatory organizations to this letter are current members of the AMPC and IRST that received participation grants in the 2023-2025 budget and identify a potential conflict of interest.