



4/2/2025

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

RE: Support for the 2025-2027 Budget for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (H.B. 5009)

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

On behalf of Oregon's watershed councils, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils ("NOWC") supports HB 5009, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) budget bill.

NOWC supports the work of Oregon's community-based watershed councils through capacity building, trainings, and by providing a voice with government agencies and funders. Watershed councils are led by natural resource experts and scientists and are guided by boards led by local community members. Councils conduct voluntary conservation projects to restore and enhance the waters and lands for native species and for people.

We appreciate that the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for ODFW includes some funding to support the Private Forest Accord (PFA) Mitigation Grant Fund and some programs within the Habitat Division. However, there are additional elements of the budget that we urge you to consider as you develop the final budget for ODFW.

We ask that a full \$20 million be assigned to the PFA Grant Program. This is a critical agreement between conservation organizations, such as our watershed councils, to update forest practices on private forestlands. This grant program support projects that benefit fish and aquatic wildlife species and habitats covered under the developing Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the funding is key to supporting that work and fulfilling the funding commitment included in passage of the 2022 SB 1501, which included \$10 million per year, or \$20 million per biennium.

We ask that the budget include, as part of the Oregon Conservation Recreation Fund, \$1.5 million for drought-related projects and \$1 million from the general funds to support OCRF projects and ability to hire staff. OCRF offers grant funding to support underserved communities and provide outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state. It is a key component of ODFW's work as part of the Oregon Conservation Strategy to preserve fish and wildlife habitats, but unfortunately, the GRB does not include any funding for the OCRF.

Lastly, we ask that you include Policy Option Packages 108: Natural Climate Solutions; 114; Regional Habitat Phase 2; 122: Fish Passage and Wildlife Crossing Infrastructure. These are all critical to providing the necessary funds for healthy fish and wildlife habitat, and to implement projects that our state's watershed councils are positioned to begin as soon as there are available funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony,



Terri Preeg Riggsby
Executive Director, NOWC