

Submitter: DJ Fletcher

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5009

Date: April 1, 2025

To: House Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

RE: SUPPORT FOR 2025 HB 5009 -- FUNDING FOR ODFW

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Frederick and Rep. E. Levy, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 5009, the measure to fund biennial expenses for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). As an Oregon voter, I laud legislation such as HB 5009 that ensures the State's conservation efforts. Thus I do very much appreciate that the Governor's Recommended Budget for ODFW maintains current service levels for many important ODFW efforts in the Fish Division and Habitat Division and adds certain others.

But I believe there should be funding added for a few ODFW initiatives that were not budgeted under HB 5009. As follows, then, I ask you to please support funding for these items not included in the 2025 Budget for ODFW:

#1. Provide full funding at \$20M for the Private Forest Accord (PFA) Grant Program.

Given that the Grant Program is a key, intergral part of the PFA Agreement, I want to amplify the position of PFA signatories such as Trout Unlimited and Rogue Riverkeeper in asking the Oregon Legislature for full funding of the PFA Grant Program.

Notably -- and impressively -- the 2022 PFA Agreement (<https://www.oregon.gov/odf/aboutodf/documents/2022-odf-private-forest-accord-report.pdf>) was reached only thanks to the collaboration and lengthy, complex negotiations by dedicated coalitions: one, of prominent conservation and fishing groups, and, two, of prominent Oregon forest sector companies and the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. The stated goals of the PFA process were to provide

* Greater business certainty to forest landowners and industries dependent on private working forests;

* Greater environmental certainty for the protection of aquatic species and threatened

or endangered species;

* Greater regulatory certainty for achieving an aquatics Habitat Conservation Plan program that is federally-approved;

* A science-driven adaptive management process that supports Oregon's forest practice laws re. private forestland;

* Alternatives for small forestland owners who are disproportionately impacted by regulatory changes.

Full funding of the PFA Grant Program at \$20 million is vital to the State for achieving a federally-approved Habitat Conservation Plan across more than 10 million acres of private Oregon forestlands, and for accomplishing this goal by 2027, i.e., before the new rules would be rolled back to outdated standards.

#2. Continue the funding of fish monitoring; do not cut those funds.

I concur with the recommendation by Trout Unlimited that fish monitoring positions proposed for cuts in Package 70 of the Budget NOT be made. Instead, please continue to fund monitoring staff.

Many recreational fisheries in Oregon -- including catch-and-release fisheries with wild fish such as summer steelhead in Columbia River tributaries, and harvest opportunities for coastal coho salmon -- continue only because ODFW keeps a good eye on fish population numbers and trends. Cuts to monitoring staff would result in fishery and harvest closures as well as loss of economically-valuable opportunities.

#3. Fund the Policy Option Package for Chinook Production in the Klamath Basin.

I support the recommendation of Trout Unlimited to place a high priority on the Klamath-related requests for new General Fund dollars in the next biennial budget.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,
DJ Fletcher
Central Point, OR

[Submitted electronically via OLIS web testimony portal]