

Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (HB 2829)

TALKING POINTS

What is HB 2829?

- Establishes the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.
- Appropriates \$17 million from General Fund for biennium beginning July 1, 2019, with expenditures constrained as described below.
- Provides vehicle for gifts, grants, contributions or other donations from any public or private source received for the purposes of the Fund.
- Allows joint projects between ODFW and other state agencies, organizations, or nonprofits.
- Allows funds to be used as state match required to obtain potential federal funding, such as under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
- Creates the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee to advise the Fish and Wildlife Commission on Fund expenditures and promote accountability and efficiency.
- Requires biennial report to the Legislature regarding Fund expenditures.

What is the purpose of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund?

- Funding activities that protect, maintain, or enhance the state's native fish and wildlife, such as wildlife conservation, management, research, habitat improvements, and enforcement activities.
- Implementing the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy.
- Expanding opportunities for responsible outdoor recreation activities related to and in support of healthy fish, wildlife, and habitats.
- Increasing education and outreach to diverse and underserved communities.
- Reducing Oregon's reliance on fishing and hunting fees to protect and enhance Oregon's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

Why is this funding needed?

- Conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and their habitats are currently funded primarily through fishing and hunting license fees and associated federal excise taxes – more than 50% of ODFW's budget. Less than 8% of the agency's budget comes from general fund.
- Benefits of fish and wildlife conservation and management are shared broadly by both Oregonians and visitors, and the costs should be shared more equitably by all.
- This outdated funding model is not adaptable to the ever-increasing complexity and cost of conservation and management.
- A new approach is needed, with a broader and more diverse funding base that creates new opportunities for Oregonians to participate, including Oregon's outdoor recreation communities.
- Funding is needed to ensure our children and grandchildren will continue to have access to the diverse natural resources, abundant fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation opportunities that we enjoy today.

Why are conservation, recreation, and education interconnected in HB 2829?

- The 2015 Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife, and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education identified the need to improve public understanding and participation in recreational and educational opportunities related to the diverse species and habitats of Oregon.
- Public surveys facilitated by the Task Force confirmed that Oregonians place a high value on both healthy fish and wildlife populations and opportunities for outdoor recreation.
- Society is becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world, affecting public health, our well-being, and the future of fish and wildlife in Oregon. Outdoor recreational opportunities are an important pathway for Oregonians to reconnect with the natural world that supports diverse fish and wildlife.
- As Oregon's demographics change, efforts are needed to engage diverse and underserved communities in conservation, recreation, and education programs.

What are some of the economic benefits of protecting Oregon's natural resources?

- The health of our natural resources, including fish and wildlife, is critical to supporting a \$16.4 billion outdoor recreation industry that sustains nearly three times as many jobs in Oregon (172,000) as the wood products industry (see Oregon Outdoor Recreation Economy Report, 2017).
- In 2017 alone, Oregon's outdoor recreation economy generated \$5.1 billion in wages and salaries and \$749 million in state and local tax revenues (see Oregon Outdoor Recreation Economy Report, 2017).
- Although HB 2889 does not resolve the ongoing need for significant investments in recreational infrastructure, it does help protect the natural resources that allow our outdoor recreation economy to thrive as well as better connect communities throughout the state with the outdoors.