

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

To date, conservation and management of fish, wildlife and their habitats have been funded primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and associated federal excise taxes. Over time, participation in hunting and fishing nationally and in Oregon is declining, and even when stabilized, these fee payers continue to be asked, through fee increases, to shoulder costs tied to a management regime that is increasingly complex due to today's legal requirements, overlapping jurisdictions, and changing public demands and engagement with nature.

Meanwhile, public attitudes, uses and demands related to the recreational and aesthetic value of fish, wildlife and habitat have changed, reflecting increased needs and public expectations around conservation, recreation, and education. At the same time, society is becoming disconnected from the natural world. This lack of connection with nature profoundly affects public health, our well-being, and the future of fish and wildlife in Oregon.

A diverse group of Oregonians worked on a legislatively appointed task force in 2015 to identify solutions to ensure that future generations can experience the clean, clear rivers, deep forests, high desert sagebrush, dramatic coastlines, and the outdoor recreation and abundant fish and wildlife that we enjoy today. The Task Force reviewed approaches in other states, explored ways to leverage current funding, and identified creation of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund as a critical first step. [Read the Task Force Report](#)

Oregon's 80th Legislative Assembly passed HB 2829 to begin to implement the Task Force's recommendation and Governor Kate Brown signed it in to law on July 16, 2019.

House Bill 2829:

1. Creates the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (Fund)
 - Directs the Department to use the Fund to carry out activities that serve to protect, maintain or enhance fish and wildlife resources
 - Allows the fund to consist of moneys appropriated to the Department by the legislature and gifts, grants, contributions or other donations
2. Establishes the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee (Committee)
 - The Committee will advise the Department and the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) regarding use of the Fund
 - Membership number and geographic representation determined by the Commission
 - Members appointed by the governor
3. Appropriates \$1 million General Fund after the Department deposits at least \$1 million from non-state and non-federal sources into the Fund
4. Sunsets the Fund and Committee on January 2, 2022.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Passage of HB 2829 included a multi-step public process in the legislature. The House Natural Resources Committee held a public hearing and received testimony from 25+ individuals and organizations.

ISSUE 1

ESTABLISH RULES FOR OPERATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, INCLUDING DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE MEMBERS.

ANALYSIS

The 80th Legislative Assembly established the Oregon Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee as an advisory committee to the State Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. HB 2829 directed the Commission to determine the number of members of the Advisory Committee and the geographic representation of the members.

Implementation of the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy is a primary intent of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, thus staff recommend that **the number of members and geographic representation of the members reflect the nine ecoregions described in the Oregon Conservation Strategy** to ensure that the committee membership represents a diverse technical knowledge of Oregon's ecoregions.

The Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy is a comprehensive, science-based plan that helps government agencies, landowners, conservation groups, hunting and fishing organizations and other partners coordinate their efforts to improve fish, wildlife and their habitats in Oregon's terrestrial, aquatic and nearshore ecosystems. The goals of the Conservation Strategy are to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing declines in these resources where possible.

The Conservation Strategy emphasizes proactively conserving declining species and habitats to reduce the possibility of future federal or state listings. It is not a regulatory document but instead presents issues, opportunities, and recommended voluntary actions that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation in Oregon.

The nine ecoregions are:

- (A) Nearshore
- (B) Coast Range
- (C) Willamette Valley
- (D) Klamath Mountains
- (E) West Cascades
- (F) East Cascades
- (G) Columbia Plateau
- (H) Blue Mountains
- (I) Harney Basin

OPTIONS

1. Adopt rules as proposed by staff
2. Adopt rules with amendments to staff recommendations.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1.

DRAFT MOTION

I move to adopt OAR Chapter 635, Division 098 as proposed by staff.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon Filing