



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Oregon legislature established the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) within the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as a way for Oregonians to support a broad range of conservation and recreation efforts throughout the state. The intent of the OCRF is to increase the Department's capacity to protect and enhance the species and habitats identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy and create new opportunities for wildlife watching, urban conservation, community science, and other wildlife-associated recreation.

To date, the OCRF Advisory Committee has recommended and received approval from the Commission to fund 140 projects through six rounds of competitive request for proposals (RFP). These projects have occurred across the state and have provided needed funds to groups promoting outdoor equity and access as well as science-focused conservation and research. Each proposal was reviewed by at least two OCRF advisory members as well as content experts from ODFW staff and the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation. The OCRF seeks to make multiple, diverse expenditures in each funding round encompassing diverse geography, taxonomy, representation of program priorities, and partner engagement. The OCRF Advisory Committee uses a public grant application process for requesting project proposals from public or private nonprofit organizations.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) adopted new Division 098, Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) in October of 2019 to create the nine-member OCRF Advisory Committee. As the OCRF Grant Program has continued to grow and evolve since its inception, the Department and the OCRF Advisory Committee have identified a need for improved clarity in the OCRF administrative rules to help the public better understand the grant funding pathways, the application process, and grant agreement requirements.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

All the OCRF Advisory Committee meetings are open to public participation and have time on the agenda for comments from participating members of the public. The OCRF rule revisions were a topic on the agenda of the August 7th, September 11th, and October 7th, 2023 OCRF Advisory Committee meetings and the draft rules were posted to the OCRF website as meeting materials to be viewed by members of the public. The Department has solicited input from communities likely to be affected by the proposed rule to assess the extent of any fiscal impact, and whether the rules will have any other significant impacts. The draft administrative rules were also filed and posted on the Secretary of State's website on October 20, 2023.

ISSUE

Under the current rules, the application process, funding pathways, and agreement requirements are not stated for the public.

ANALYSIS

Under the current rules, the application process, funding pathways, and agreement requirements are not stated clearly. The Department is proposing rule revisions to address the needs of stakeholders and projects by including in rule some of the established procedures outlined in the OCRF Expenditure Framework. The rule change will also allow the OCRF to offer Urgent Grants outside of the regular granting cycle, which aligns with the Private Forest Accord Grant Program's operating procedures. These revisions will be beneficial to interested parties while not undermining any established application procedures already in place through the OCRF Expenditure Framework.

OPTIONS

1. Amend Conservation and Recreation fund rules in Division 98 as proposed by staff
2. Modify proposed rule amendment
3. No action

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to amend OAR 635-098-0060 as proposed by staff.

Effective Date: Upon filing.