



## **ODFW Budget Crisis: An Opportunity to Strengthen Wildlife Conservation in Oregon**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is faced with an unprecedented budget shortfall that compromises its existing and future conservation programs. With legislative action in 2015, ODFW can be made functional, whole, stable, and accountable to the public for fulfilling its broad conservation mission to *"...protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations."*

### **The Problem**

ODFW's current budget depends largely on hunting and fishing license sales and related fees. This dependence has created an internal agency dynamic that prioritizes game species and consumptive users of wildlife at the expense of the ODFW's broader conservation mission and constituency. Due to Oregon's changing demographics, this revenue stream has declined significantly. Combined with other economic factors, ODFW is now faced with an unprecedented \$32 million budget shortfall.

In response, the agency has proposed a 2015-2017 budget with deep spending cuts to conservation programs, increased hunting and fishing license fees, and \$17 million in general fund dollars. As currently proposed, ODFW's request for public dollars is not tied to any reform or conservation initiative that benefits the public at large.

### **The Framework for a Pro-Conservation Solution**

Any pro-conservation solution to address ODFW's budget crisis should include the following elements:

- General fund dollars should be tied to agency reform that helps ODFW implement and expand its conservation mission.
- Avoid cuts to critical conservation programs and staff positions, including law enforcement, the water program, and key scientific capacities, particularly at the district biologist level.
- General fund dollars should be spent only on conservation programs that benefit the public at large (programs that can't access dollars from hunting and fishing license revenues).
- Fund and implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy, including protection and conservation of non-game species and their habitats.
- General fund dollars should not be used for predator control programs. These wildlife-killing programs are controversial, often counter-productive, and are generally designed to benefit narrow interest groups rather than Oregon's larger public interest.
- Support increases in hunting and fishing license fees to help balance the general fund request.

### **For more information...**

Contact Quinn Read, [qr@oregonwild.org](mailto:qr@oregonwild.org), 503-283-6343

or Christy Splitt, [christy@olcv.org](mailto:christy@olcv.org), 503-224-4011