



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Legislature created the Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund in 2019 through House bill 2829. The legislation also created the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee and required the Department to deposit \$1 million in to the Fund from non-state and non-federal sources in order to access a \$1 million special appropriation from the General Fund. The program sunsets at the end of the current biennium and the General Fund appropriation was eliminated during the August 2020 special session of the legislature to deal with the immediate economic and health crisis. At the corresponding budget hearing the Legislative Fiscal Office clarified on the record that this is intended as a temporary reduction. The Department and partners continue to fundraise with the expectation of state match dollars becoming available in the next biennium.

As of December 2020, despite many delays and setbacks related to the COVID-19 situation, the Department and partners have generated approximately \$210,000 from non-state and non-federal sources with a few large commitments in the works. This includes donations from over 12,000 individuals.

The Commission adopted OARs 635.098 in October of 2019 to create the nine-member Advisory Committee. Six members represent the Ecoregions of the state as described in the Oregon Conservation Strategy and three members are at-large representatives. Commissioner Mark Labhart and the Director of the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation, Cailin O'Brien-Feeney are non-voting participants on the Advisory Committee.

The intent of the Conservation & Recreation Fund was to increase the Department's capacity to implement the recommendations of the Oregon Conservation Strategy, but the Fund sunsets at the end of the 2019-2021 biennium. Thus, the Advisory Committee is recommending expenditures from the Fund to support the work of conservation partners in the state to implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy and improve equitable access to wildlife-associated recreation activities like community science, wildlife viewing, and urban conservation.

The Advisory Committee formed in March 2020 and made funding recommendations quickly that demonstrate projects that meet their charge. These early projects were approved by the Commission in September 2020.

In August 2020, the Committee announced a more comprehensive notice of opportunity for small grants (under \$10,000). The deadline to apply was October 21 and 65 proposals were received by that date. The Advisory Committee extended the review period through December 9 to accommodate the volume of applications.

After reviewing the proposals, the Advisory Committee is recommending seven projects totaling \$64,983 in expenditures for consideration by the Commission today based on available funds.

Three (3) of these projects totaling \$25,000 were selected by the Committee's Outdoor Equity Subcommittee, with the specific intent to close gaps in equitable access to Oregon's outdoors.

Considering the large volume of strong applications for funding and the imminent sunset of the program, the Committee also requests approval for 22 additional projects contingent on funding becoming available. This will allow the Committee to move quickly to expend funds by the end of the biennium. The list of projects is provided in priority order and incoming funds would be allocated to approved projects in that order.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

All of the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee meetings are open to public participation and have time on the agenda for comments from participating members of the public. The opportunity to apply for funds was well publicized through a press release, multiple emails, and amplification through our partners' communication networks.

## **ISSUE 1**

Conservation & Recreation Fund Expenditure Recommendations from currently available funds.

## **ANALYSIS**

A summary of the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee's process and the recommendations are provided in Attachment 2.

## **OPTIONS**

1. Approve Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee recommendations for expenditures.
2. Reject project proposals

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1. Approve the seven projects recommended by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee.

### DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve the seven projects recommended for funding by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 2.

**Effective Date:** January 15, 2021

## ISSUE 1

Conservation & Recreation Fund Expenditure Recommendations Contingent on Funds Becoming Available.

## ANALYSIS

The Advisory Committee received 65 applications worth \$562,021.21 for approximately \$60,000 in available funds. The Committee members felt strongly that many of the project proposals were worthy. Additionally, there is not much time left in this program to run another grant cycle, but funds will continue to be raised for the next six months at least. The Committee has requested that the Commission provisionally approve 22 additional projects for expenditure once funds become available. The projects are listed in priority order in Attachment 3. If approved, expenditures of available funds will be made in ranked order unless restricted funds become available for a specific project.

## **OPTIONS**

1. Approve Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee recommendations for expenditures contingent on funds becoming available.
2. Reject approving projects contingent upon funds becoming available.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1. Approve the 22 projects recommended by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee contingent on funds becoming available.

### **DRAFT MOTION:**

Approve the 22 projects recommended for funding by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee contingent on funds becoming available as described in Attachment 3.

**Effective Date:** January 15, 2021