



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund (OCRF) sunset date was removed by the legislature in the 2021 session. The legislature also appropriated money to the OCRF program for the 2021-2023 biennium, including:

- \$545,000 general fund to match the total private funds raised in the 2019-2021 biennium;
- \$1 million general fund to match private contributions made to the OCRF in the 2021-2023 biennium (renewing the fundraising challenge); and
- \$1 million from Oregon's apportionment of federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

So, once again, the Department has been tasked with raising one million dollars of private funds for the OCRF to help implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy and fulfill its broad mandate for engaging Oregonians in the outdoors.

At the March 5 meeting of the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee), the members agreed that, at the donor's request, any OCRF donation greater than or equal to \$10,000 and restricted to a specific OCRF Project, may be matched by up to 30% with general fund by the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee agreed that they would accept such donations for existing, Commission-approved OCRF Projects, but would also accept such restricted donations and make the match commitment for new OCRF Projects submitted at the invitation of the Advisory Committee. New OCRF Projects are evaluated by the Advisory Committee for consistency with the Expenditure Framework and the existing OCRF Project review criteria. The benefit of this approach is that large, restricted donations can help reach the OCRF fundraising target, allowing the OCRF to support a broader suite of projects with the state funds that are released by meeting that target.

In recognition that this program may have sunset on June 30, 2021, the Advisory Committee invited one project application to pilot this approach to incentivizing large donations in the previous biennium. The Commission approved that project at the June 2021 meeting and a \$20,000 donation was received for that project from Keen Footwear. Today the Advisory Committee is recommending a second project that will be able to generate substantial contributions to the OCRF, aligns with the goals of the program, and engages numerous conservation partners in the Portland metro area.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

All Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee virtual meetings are open to the public and recordings are posted on YouTube for those who cannot attend live.

ISSUE 1

Conservation and Recreation Fund Expenditure Recommendation for “Green Jobs Training and Internship Program.”

ANALYSIS

In June 2021, the Advisory Committee invited Forest Park Conservancy to apply for a new OCRF project, the “Green Jobs Training and Internship Program,” as a second opportunity for OCRF to support a project with the potential to generate substantial private contributions. A subcommittee of four Advisory Committee members worked with the applicant to refine the proposal. The subcommittee members then reviewed and scored the project using the existing scoresheet for OCRF projects and considered consistency with the Oregon Conservation Strategy, the Advisory Committee’s expenditure framework, the potential to leverage large donations, and project viability. The Subcommittee made a consensus recommendation to approve the project and the Advisory Committee voted unanimously on August 30 to recommend the project to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Advisory Committee recommends that the Commission approves an expenditure limitation of \$325,000 for this project. The applicant and Advisory Committee will seek \$250,000 from private contributions for the project. The OCRF would provide a 30% match (up to \$75,000) from the OCRF’s general funds for each private dollar raised. Meyer Memorial Trust, a foundation with interest in supporting the OCRF and this project, has already committed \$100,000 which will be matched with \$30,000 general fund dollars, if the motion is approved.

With the acceptance of this project and successful procurement of restricted donations to the full funding level, the OCRF will be 25% of the way to the \$1 million fundraising goal for this biennium. Additionally, through success of this joint fundraising effort, \$175,000 in general fund will be made available for other OCRF supported projects.

The “Green Jobs Training and Internship Program” is a partnership between Forest Park Conservancy, Columbia Land Trust, Ecotrust, Portland Water Bureau, Environmental Science

Associates, and West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. The project applicant is Forest Park Conservancy. This request would support two years for a program that manages a 12-month paid internship that provides relevant hands-on professional experience and training for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) young adults to gain the necessary skills to exponentially increase their chances to obtain a full-time position in the conservation or environmental field.

Specifically, the Internship allows the participants to gain hands-on experience in field work, learn about monitoring and management strategies and, shadow experienced professionals, all while earning a salary, developing a professional network, and contributing to habitat conservation in the greater Portland area.

Through research and experience the applicants have found that there are a variety of six-week to three-month programs seeking to provide opportunities in environmental careers for BIPOC youth. These programs graduate large numbers of interns, but the success rate of graduates finding jobs afterward is low. Although these programs are wonderful for introducing interns to the kinds of jobs out there in this field, they simply can't gain enough professional experience in that short period of time. The Green Jobs Training and Internship project seeks to give interns enough experience up to become highly employable in this field. Interns for the Green Jobs Internship are recruited from an existing introductory workforce development program run by the Blueprint Foundation, Wisdom of the Elders and Ecotrust called the Green Workforce Academy.

This program seeks to focus on success, not the numbers, and provide the personal and professional skills interns need to find employment following the program and also foster a sense of passion and stewardship for our amazing outdoor spaces. As part of this program, interns will develop an Individual Development Plan that gives them ownership over the kinds of training and skills they feel they need to learn along with staff guidance. Interns will have opportunities to experience the type of conservation work done by each of the partners. Five interns will be supported during each of the two years.

The internship is an outgrowth of the long term collaboration of these partners on the Greater Forest Park Conservation Initiative (GFPCI). The interns employed in this program will spend their time working on the conservation initiatives of the GFPCI, which includes goals of restoring an additional 3,600 acres of native habitat, remove invasive ivy from 27,000 trees, plant over 19,000 native trees and shrubs in the next five years.

OPTIONS

1. Approve Conservation and Recreation Fund expenditure recommendation from the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee.
2. Reject Conservation and Recreation Fund expenditure recommendation from the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve Conservation and Recreation Fund expenditure recommendation from the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve expenditure from the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund of up to \$325,000 for the project “Green Jobs Training and Internship Program” contingent upon the receipt of restricted donations of up to \$250,000.

Effective Date: September 17, 2021