



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund (OCRF) is a new way for Oregonians to support projects that 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. The Oregon legislature created this Fund in 2019.

The Oregon Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee (Committee) was created to advise the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on expenditures from the Fund.

As of July 2021, the OCRF has just over \$2.5 million in state funds available to support fish and wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation this biennium. \$1 million of this is still contingent on ODFW generating an additional \$1 million from non-state sources.

Since the OCRF inception in 2019, a total of \$907,709 has been contributed or committed to the account. This includes recent large commitments from Meyer Memorial Trust, Keen Footwear, an anonymous donor, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Oregon Zoo.

Of the legislatively appropriated funds this biennium:

- **\$545,000 general fund to match the total private funds raised in the 2019-2021 biennium** – All of this has been successfully matched. All but \$98,000 was deposited in to the OCRF before the end of 2021 and the remainder is expected by mid-January
- **\$1 million general fund to match contributions made to the OCRF from sources other than state government in the 2021-2023 biennium** – A portion of this \$1,000,000 challenge has been raised. ODFW must request the General Fund from the Legislature Emergency Board. Staff will be prepared to demonstrate fundraising success at each of the 2022 meetings of that body.
- **\$1 million from Oregon’s apportionment of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds** – The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is administering these funds. ODFW has submitted the requested documentation to DAS. The timeline for disbursement of this funding is unclear. The federal deadline for spending ARPA is the end of 2024.

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

The Oregon Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee announced the notice of opportunity (Attachment 6) on August 30 with a deadline to apply of October 22. The Committee received 37 proposals.

Between November 1 and November 24, each committee member reviewed 18-19 projects, which resulted in each project having four total reviewers. Projects were evaluated on each of the following criteria:

- Clarity of the proposal – well presented, organized and with clear deliverables
- Project outcomes align with OCRF Program Priorities identified in the Expenditure Framework and are consistent with the Oregon Conservation Strategy – the more the better, but strong alignment with at least one as specified in the framework
- Timeliness consistent with having the necessary approvals in place – the Committee seeks projects that will be implemented in a timely manner
- Appropriate partnership and demonstration of partner investment – project engages a variety of partners and shows commitment from participants
- Measurability – the applicant has identified the ability to quantify the results of the project
- Outdoor Equity - How well projects engage Oregonians in the solution to a key conservation issue or in recreational opportunities that reach out to and engage people who have not participated in the past because of language barriers, financial barriers, access barriers, etc.

The Committee also took note of whether applicants have a proven track record of achieving stated outcomes and the integration/intersectionality between conservation and recreation demonstrated in the proposal. Each project received a total score out of 60 points.

Also, between November 1 and November 30, each of the 37 proposals was reviewed by one member of ODFW or Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) staff. Staff provided the Advisory Committee with subjective comments on the need for the project, likelihood that the project would be successful, and clarifying questions the Committee should ask. These comments were available to the Committee members to reference but were not part of the scoring process.

As of the December 6 Advisory Committee meeting, the OCRF had \$402,891 in unobligated funds available, and the Committee sought to obligate as much as possible. Because of the Committee's commitment to closing gaps in outdoor equity, they reviewed the total average score for each project, but also flagged all projects with a high score on the outdoor equity criterion (5.5.-6 out of 6 possible points).

The Committee recommended funding the projects ranked 1-22 on the list and then specifically selected project #37: People of Color Outdoors’ Guardians at Whitaker Ponds to elevate because of its excellent outdoor equity score.

The twenty-three projects recommended for expenditure total \$391,158.32 as summarized in Attachment 3 and available in detail in Attachment 4.

There has been considerable interest from donors in supporting the OCRF through restricted gifts to OCRF projects. For example, there are at least two contributions lined up to support projects being recommended today. Considering this interest, staff are recommending that the Commission allow ODFW to increase the financial scale of the projects upon receipt of restricted donations.

OPTIONS

1. Approve Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee recommendations for expenditures.
2. Approve a subset of the Advisory Committee recommendations for expenditures
3. Reject project proposals

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1. Approve the twenty-three (23) projects recommended by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee.

DRAFT MOTION:
I move to approve the twenty-three (23) projects recommended for funding by the Conservation & Recreation Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 2 with the authority to increase expenditures for projects if restricted gifts are received for those projects.
Effective Date: January 14, 2022