



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) was created in 2019 within the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) as a way for Oregonians to support a broad range of conservation and outdoor 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.

Expenditures from the OCRF are recommended to the Commission by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). Since the formation of the OCRF, 142 projects have been funded through six rounds of competitive requests for proposals (RFP). These projects have spanned the state and have provided needed funds to ODFW partners promoting outdoor equity and access as well as science focused conservation and research.

The Advisory Committee seeks to make multiple, diverse expenditures in each funding round encompassing diverse geography, taxonomy, representation of program priorities, and partner engagement.

In 2022, the OCRF account received \$5 million of General Fund as part of a statewide drought relief package (HB 5202), with \$4 million for use on drought, wildfire, and aquatic habitat resilience related work and \$1 million to be used for broader OCRF mission related work. In 2023, the OCRF account received an additional \$1 million of drought relief funds.

The Advisory Committee released their seventh RFP to the public in January 2024, offering \$800,000 to projects that address an aspect of drought/wildfire/aquatic habitat resilience and \$200,000 to projects addressing outdoor equity and/or non-drought related priorities from the Oregon Conservation Strategy. The round 7 RFP closed in April 2024 with 84 applications (see Commission Attachment #3 'Submitted Projects Overview'). Of the 84 submitted projects, 60 could be categorized as drought-related projects and 24 were non-drought related projects.

Each project proposal was scored by at least two Advisory Committee members as well as reviewed by content experts from ODFW staff and the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation using established criteria as defined in Commission Attachment #4 'Project Scoring Criteria'.

The Advisory Committee met on June 4, 2024, to discuss project reviews and select projects based on overall rankings (per the defined review process in the OCRF Expenditure Framework) and the desired diversity of project types and geographies. The Advisory Committee recommended 24 projects for funding for a total expenditure of \$1,253,951 from the OCRF (see Commission Attachment 2, 'Projects Selected for Funding'). Many of these projects have a clear connection with statewide needs around drought and wildfire research, monitoring, and outreach while addressing several of ODFW's identified needs for fish, wildlife, and habitat.

The Advisory Committee is seeking the Commission’s approval for the expenditure of \$1,253,951 from the OCRF main account to fund 24 projects selected from the Spring 2024 OCRF RFP cycle (see Commission Attachment 2, ‘Projects Selected for Funding’).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

All the Conservation and 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.

- Additionally, the public has an opportunity to provide comment prior to (in writing) or (orally) during the hearing that occurs at the Commission meeting.

ISSUE

Conservation & Recreation Fund Expenditure Recommendations from currently available funds.

ANALYSIS

A summary of the Advisory Committee’s process and the recommendations are provided in Attachment 2, respectively.

OPTIONS

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

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve the selected projects (totaling \$1,253,951) as recommended by the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve the 24 projects recommended for funding by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 2.

Effective Date: June 14, 2024