



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 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP; also known as 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, 167 projects have been funded through seven rounds of competitive requests for proposals (RFP). These projects have spanned the state and have provided needed funds to ODFW partners promoting science focused conservation and research as well as outdoor equity and access.

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 eighth RFP to the public in August 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 OCRF round 8 RFP closed in October 2024 with 52 applications (see Commission Attachment #3 'Submitted Projects Overview'). Of the 52 submitted projects, 38 were categorized as drought-related projects and 14 were non-drought related projects.

The Advisory Committee is seeking the Commission's approval for the expenditure of \$1,027,519 from the OCRF main account to fund 17 projects selected from the Fall 2024 OCRF RFP cycle (see Commission Attachment #2, 'Projects Selected for Funding').

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

All the Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee meetings are noticed and 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

Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund Expenditure Recommendations from currently available funds.

ANALYSIS

A summary of the Advisory Committee's process is provided below, and the recommendations are provided in Attachment 2.

The Advisory Committee released their RFP to the public in August 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 SWAP.

The OCRF RFP closed in October 2024 with 52 applications (see Commission Attachment #3 'Submitted Projects Overview'). Of the 52 submitted projects, 38 could be categorized as drought-related projects and 14 were non-drought related projects.

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

The Advisory Committee met on February 4, 2025, to discuss project reviews and select projects based on overall rankings and the desired diversity of project types and geographies. The Advisory Committee voted and recommended 17 projects for funding for a total expenditure of \$1,027,519 from the OCRF (see Commission Attachment 2, 'Projects Selected for Funding'). Of the 17 projects recommended for funding, 12 projects addressed drought impacts to fish and wildlife (\$829,452), and 5 were focused on non-drought related conservation and/or outdoor recreation (\$198,067).

OPTIONS

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

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve the selected projects (totaling \$1,027,519) as recommended by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve the 17 projects recommended for funding by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 2.

Effective Date: March 14, 2025