



# Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund 2020 Annual Report



The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, created in 2019 by House Bill 2829, empowers implementation of the Oregon Conservation Strategy and connects people with outdoor opportunities. Throughout 2020, the Fund invested in projects that:

- Connect youth, families, diverse and underserved communities to the outdoors
- Engage Oregonians in the science and research needed to improve our understanding of Oregon’s diverse species
- Restore healthy ecosystems to benefit Oregon’s fish and wildlife and improve the health of our environment for future generations

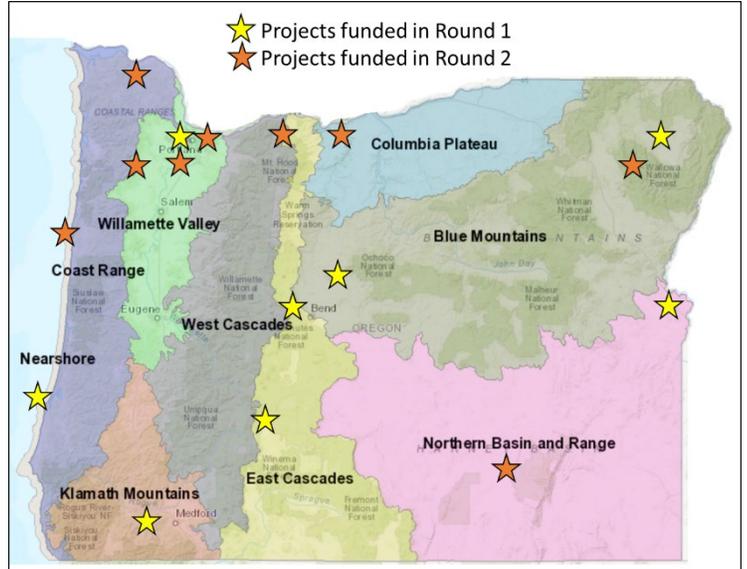


The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund program consisted of three primary workflows in the 2019-2021 biennium that are each addressed in the following pages:

1. A campaign to generate \$1 million for the Fund from private sources
2. Making expenditures to implement the purpose of the fund, ensuring all funds are distributed by the end of the 2021-2023 biennium to accommodate the July 1, 2021 sunset date
3. Forming a new Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee to advise the Fish and Wildlife Commission on expenditures from the Fund

**As of January 31, 2021, the Fund has generated over \$250,000 from more than 15,000 individuals and multiple foundations.**

The Advisory Committee, while only able to meet virtually, has already obligated \$221,789 for 17 projects around the state. These projects range from examining the feasibility of restoring sea otters to Oregon’s coast to searching for elusive mammals in the Willowa Mountains and engaging urban teens on their first camping trip. The Advisory Committee is managing a list of twenty additional conservation and recreation projects that are being funded as soon as new donations are made. This ensures that every dollar will support conservation and recreation before the program sunsets at the end of the biennium. Donations to the Fund are managed in partnership with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation at [OregonIsAlive.org](http://OregonIsAlive.org).



The Committee’s work in 2020 identified and began to address a tremendous and growing need to invest in Oregon’s relationship with our fish, wildlife, and the outdoors. The Committee sought to fill gaps in our current system and is well positioned to fill these gaps in the future.



# Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund 2020 Annual Report



## Fundraising Campaign

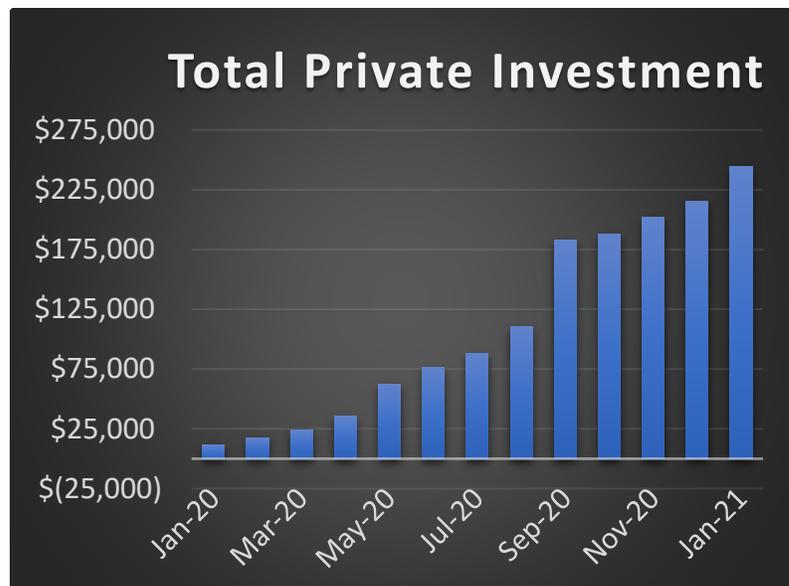
Despite COVID-19, the highly impactful wildfire season, and a pandemic-induced recession, the Conservation and Recreation Fund has successfully raised over a quarter of a million dollars. As soon as the Fund was created, the Department of Fish and Wildlife partnered with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation to begin work on a private fundraising campaign. The Campaign kicked off with an event hosted by a variety of outdoor recreation partners and the First Gentleman in Bend in January 2020.



The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and the associated financial downturn in March forced a major refocusing of the Campaign to an online, crowdsourcing effort. In July, a coalition of 64+ supporting organizations was launched in concert with a campaign website, [OregonIsAlive.org](https://OregonIsAlive.org). As of January 31, 2021, **over 15,000 individuals have made contributions to the Fund** through this website and as additions to purchases made through the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s online sales portal.

On top of the generosity of Oregonians, major contributions have been received from the Oregon Wildlife Foundation, Gray Family Foundation, Oregon Wild, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Starview Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trust. Many of these donations were made with the explicit expectation that their funds would be matched through the \$1 million special appropriation from the general fund, which was eliminated during the 2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Session to deal with the immediate health and economic crisis.

The coronavirus pandemic has underscored the importance of the natural world to our well-being. The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund is a meaningful opportunity for the state to grow its investment in protecting Oregon’s outdoors and ensuring that all Oregonians have the opportunity to experience it.





# Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund 2020 Annual Report



## Funded Projects

Given the nature of this limited duration Fund, the Committee decided to grant private dollars directly to partners and organizations that can undertake projects that meet the intent of the Fund this biennium. More details on these projects and all seventeen projects funded to date are described online: [www.oregonisalive.org/projects](http://www.oregonisalive.org/projects).



### **Exploring Nature in Lents**

Students from the Lents Youth Initiative, a program of ROSE Community Development, will experience increased exposure and awareness of natural areas in and around the Lents neighborhood of Portland and learn about careers in conservation and the environment.



### **Western Pond Turtle Distribution in Yamhill County Using Community Science Volunteers**

Yamhill County has the fewest documented reports of western pond turtles in the Lower Willamette watershed, greatly impeding our conservation of this species. This project seeks to engage community scientists in surveying for the presence of this species.



### **Community Science for Conservation: The Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas**

The Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas is a community science project aimed at tracking bumble bees, including multiple species of concern in Oregon. This will improve knowledge of their distributions, habitat associations, and life histories to inform conservation.



### **Crooked River National Grasslands Sustainable Trails Project**

Community engagement will begin for the development of a sustainable trails plan for the Crooked River National Grassland to ensure that the plan will connect locals and visitors to public lands and reduce conflicts while protecting wildlife habitat and natural resources.



### **Feasibility Study: Restoring Sea Otters to the Oregon Coast**

The Elakha Alliance will conduct an Economic Impact Assessment and engage in a public engagement strategy focused on coastal tribal communities and fisheries stakeholders related to the restoration of sea otters to the coast.



### **Gilchrist Underpass Wildlife Directional Fencing**

The Oregon Hunters Association, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and partners will install the directional fencing needed to guide animals to the newly constructed Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass on Highway 97 to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions.



### **Missing Link: A Service Learning Project**

Trout Unlimited and Caldera will engage public school students from central Oregon and urban youth from Portland, with restoration work conducted by the U.S. Forest Service. Each student will have field experiences available to study Link Creek and the Metolius River.



# Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund 2020 Annual Report



## The Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee

The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee was created to evaluate projects and advise the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on expenditures from the Fund. The Advisory Committee provides valuable oversight and expertise related to Oregon’s ecoregions. In less than one year, the Committee helped raise over \$250,000 and completed two rounds of expenditures. The Committee is supporting seventeen projects and identified an additional twenty projects that will be funded as quickly as dollars become available.

The Commission adopted regulations to create the Advisory Committee in October 2019 and the Governor appointed the members in January 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first meeting of the Committee was held virtually on March 23 and all of the subsequent thirteen meetings in 2020 were virtual.

During the spring, the Committee established Operating Principles and developed an Expenditure Framework for the Conservation and Recreation Fund. The Framework includes a list of Program Priorities with an overarching priority for projects that seek to engage Oregonians in Oregon’s outdoors in the solution to a key conservation issue identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy or in new recreational opportunities.

Two grant-making opportunities were managed by the Committee in 2020. The first resulted in funding eight projects that represented the breadth and diversity within the charge of the Fund. During the second opportunity, the Committee received 65 applications requesting over \$500,000 and had only \$60,000 available to spend. Seven projects were selected for funding and twenty-two more were selected to receive funding as soon as funds become available. The Committee has been able to Fund two additional projects every month and expects that this list of pre-approved projects will ensure that every dollar donated to the Fund will reach a partner organization as fast as possible.

### Outdoor Equity Subcommittee

Embedded within the mandate for the OCRF is a commitment to reach out and engage underserved Oregonians and communities who have not participated in conservation or outdoor recreation in the past. Recognizing that barriers to participation will not be broken down coincidentally but rather need a focused and pursued endeavor, the Committee formed an Outdoor Equity Subcommittee to intentionally reach out to and connect with people, communities and organizations that are seeking to break down barriers. The Committee also dedicated a portion of Conservation and Recreation Fund revenue to projects and organizations that are explicitly seeking to close these gaps in outdoor equity. This resulted in the selection of seven Outdoor Equity projects in the second round.

### Meet the Committee

**Dr. Karl Wenner**, Chair - Klamath Mountains Ecoregion

**Mauricio Valadrian**, Vice Chair - At-Large

**Jane Hartline** - Willamette Valley Ecoregion

**Maret Pajutee** - East and West Cascades Ecoregions

**Tim Davis** - Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion

**Chris Hager** - At-Large

**Mark Stern** - At-Large

**Commissioner Mark Labhart**, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (ex-officio)

**Cailin O’Brien-Feeney** – Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation (ex-officio)

Vacant: Nearshore and Coast Range Ecoregion and Columbia Plateau and Blue Mountains Ecoregions