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February 5, 2018

Dear Governor Brown,

As you are aware, Oregon is an incredible place to live. With over fifty percent of the state designated as public land, Oregonians are fortunate to have nearly every landscape type and diverse wildlife right at our fingertips. However, conservation funding Oregonians, the original conservationist, sportsmen, and women are frustrated and on the brink. Despite continued engagement with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the ODFW commission and the legislature, our concerns for the future of wildlife, traditional recreation, and conservation funding continue to go unaddressed.

A recent poll of sportsmen and women found that 64% are willing to boycott the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife by not purchasing hunting licenses, tags, or big game applications. We are not advocating for a boycott, but this should be a clear and strong message; Oregonians are willing to forgo their lifestyle, their traditions, their passion for the outdoors because their concerns have been ignored for far too long.

It's time to come together as leaders, as Oregonians, not as Republicans or Democrats and solve the issues facing conservation and conservation funding Oregonians.

Balanced Approach to Restore Wildlife

Deer populations across the state have been in steady decline for decades and are widely below management objectives set by ODFW. This downward spiral must be reversed. The Governor's office must take steps to facilitate effective methods backed by science such as predator management, improved habitat on public land, tag allocation, and increased poaching enforcement to begin restoring deer populations. Further delay in facilitating changes could result in a full collapse of the resource and conservation funding.

Funding Conservation

Hunters, anglers, and recreational shooters in Oregon (resident and non-resident) fund approximately ninety percent of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget through licenses, tags, applications, and equipment purchases. In many states, non-resident hunting and fishing revenue funds sixty to seventy percent alone and the general taxpayer burden is zero. That's not the case in Oregon. In Oregon, each budget cycle, ODFW asks the legislature for more public taxpayer funds. Hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting have been funding wildlife for nearly one hundred years. We need to ask ourselves why other states can thrive in funding conservation but despite Oregon's resources we continue to struggle. The answer is clear; we're leaving millions on the table.

Travel Oregon's website, the state tourism agency, does not list hunting as a "thing to do" when visiting Oregon. We're not actively fighting for the millions of dollars in revenue from the non-resident conservationist. Instead of asking the overburdened taxpayer for additional funds, the Governor's office should immediately facilitate Travel Oregon to begin marketing waterfowl, wild turkey, and other flourishing traditional recreation opportunities to non-residents to ensure adequate funding of conservation priorities in Oregon.

If you wish to gain the confidence and trust of the seven hundred thousand conservation funding Oregonians, it's imperative you take immediate action. We will undoubtedly face challenges in the future, but if we take a balanced and pro-active approach, we can ensure our traditional outdoor heritage and conservation funding continue for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Oregon Outdoor Council Board of Directors