



STAFF SUMMARY

Recommended Reappointment of Eduardo Contreras to the OWEB Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission

Background

The department is proposing the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission recommend to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) an individual with fish and wildlife interests for a second term as a member of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (OAHC).

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) was established in 2017 to help farms and ranches face the challenges caused by land fragmentation, conversion to non-farm uses, complex regulations, and planning for generational transfers. Administered by OWEB, the program provides grant opportunities that help agricultural landowners adopt practices that maintain or enhance agricultural productive as well as natural resources, including fish and wildlife habitat.

The OAHC, which oversees the OAHP and advises the OWEB Board on funding decisions, is composed of 12 members appointed by the OWEB Board. Statute requires that two of the voting members be recommended by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and have interest in fish and wildlife habitat. Each voting member serves a four-year term and may be reappointed.

Currently, Ed Contreras and Mark Vargas serve as the Commission's two representatives on the OAHC. Mr. Contreras is completing his first term.

Public Involvement to Date

Mr. Contreras's initial appointment followed public involvement at the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting in September 2022 and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board meeting in January 2023. Since then, Mr. Contreras has actively served in all OAHC public meetings. This staff summary and recommendation will be available for public comment from October 21 through November 10. ODFW will summarize any comments received and provide them to the Commission and the public ahead of the December 11, 2026 Commission meeting.

Overview of Proposed Commission Action

The Commission would approve or deny the Departments proposal to recommend Eduardo (Ed) Contreras for a second four-year term as one of its two representatives on the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. Mr. Contreras currently serves as Co-Chair and has been an active contributor throughout his first term.

ODFW is proposing to recommend his reappointment because he brings a history of building strong partnerships to conserve working lands and wildlife habitat. Mr. Contreras is the Habitat Program Coordinator with the Intermountain West Joint Venture and lives in Klamath Falls with his wife Kara and their dogs. In his role with the IWJV, Mr. Contreras has worked with farmers and ranchers for the last decade to implement habitat projects on rangelands and wetlands in

Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and California. His education and experience is in the field of rangeland management and research. He has technical expertise in Farm Bill Conservation programs including those programs that can be leveraged with OAHP funds. Mr. Contreras has worked on livestock ranch operations, sage-grouse initiatives, and collaborative partnerships to conserve wetlands for migratory birds on public and private working lands. Mr. Contreras also serves on several non-profit boards.

His continued service would support the state's goals for protecting both agricultural lands and fish and wildlife habitat.