



STAFF SUMMARY

Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund – Wildlife Crossing Project Approval

Background

The Department is proposing to request the Commission’s approval for the expenditure of \$6,000 from the OCRF Lottery Revenue Bonds to fund the “Adaptive Plan to Improve Wildlife Passage Under I-5” led by Oregon Wildlife Foundation (Attachment 2, ‘Wildlife Passage Project Summary’).

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; formerly 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).

In 2025, the OCRF received \$5,000,000 in proceeds from the May 6, 2025 Lottery Revenue Bond Sale. These funds were allocated by the 2023 legislature in HB 5030 (Section 2) for the purposes of supporting wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity projects in priority connectivity areas. To date, OCRF has awarded \$4,969,500 of the Wildlife Passage Lottery Revenue Bonds to four projects.

At their September 15th, 2026 public meeting, the OCRF Advisory Committee recommended the approval of \$ 6,000 in additional expenditure from the OCRF wildlife connectivity funds to support the “Adaptive Plan to Improve Wildlife Passage Under I-5” (see Attachment 2 for project summary). The Commission previously approved \$274,500 in expenditure to the same project in June 2025. The additional funding request of \$6,000 would go towards Phase II planting native trees and shrubs along the wildlife shield.

Wildlife Passage Under I-5 project aims to build a wildlife shield on an I-5 underpass near the Mt. Ashland exit to provide safe migratory passage for wildlife. The Oregon Wildlife Foundation is partnering with the Oregon Department of Transportation on project design and implementation. Existing Mt. Ashland Exit bridges on I-5 in southern Oregon currently provide wildlife with an undercrossing opportunity. However, in the current state, deer and other wildlife species must negotiate an approximately 700-foot corridor along both sides of the exit road and bridge abutments to cross under the Interstate. The project proposes to construct a wildlife-friendly bench along the exit road. A retaining wall will be constructed and backfilled along the south side of the exit to create a bench that is more conducive to wildlife movement. Vegetation, boulders, and tree wads will be added to help shield wildlife from the appearance and noise of traffic.

Public Involvement to Date

All Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee meetings are publicly noticed, open to participation, and include dedicated time for public comment. The wildlife crossing proposal was presented at the Committee's September 15, 2026 meeting and listed as an agenda item in public notices. The funding opportunity was broadly publicized through press releases, multiple OCRF email distributions, the Department's website, and outreach amplified by partner organizations.

Overview of Proposed Commission Action

The Commission would be asked to approve the OCRF Advisory Committee's recommended expenditure for the Adaptive Plan to Improve Wildlife Passage Under I-5.