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OREGON ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
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OREGON LEAGUE OF WOMAN VOTERS
OREGON SMALL WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION
OREGON WATER RESOURCES CONGRESS
OREGONIANS FOR FOOD & SHELTER**

February, 2011

RE: Funding of Oregon's Natural Resource Agencies

Dear Legislator:

This letter is to respectfully express our concern regarding the funding of our Natural Resource Agencies.

Although the state agencies falling under the heading of "Natural Resource Agency" are varied and diverse, they all deal with the protection and prudent use of our natural resources - central to Oregon's economic recovery and preserving our high quality of life.

We understand that these agencies will be expected to carefully prioritize their programs and seriously seek efficiencies; however, we are concerned about the potential loss of General Funds for these agencies and we urge the Legislature to make every effort to avoid or minimize such reductions. The GF allotment for these agencies is very small, *only about 1% in aggregate* of the total GF. Yet these funds support a wide array of program elements essential not only to the mission of these agencies, but to our economic recovery and protection of public health.

We also urge the Legislature to oppose the diversion of funds from fee accounts into the General Fund ("fund sweeps"). This is a critical issue that would affect agency funding and operations far into the future. Many of these programs are funded, partially or fully, by fees paid by Oregon companies and individuals. In the great majority of cases these fees were established or increased with the support of the fee payers with the clear expectation that the fees will be used for purposes specified by the agency, statute, or rule. Consequently, the sweeping out of these funds will not only damage the ability of the agency to perform its mission, it would rightly be perceived as extremely unfair to the fee payers and unavoidably damage the ability of these agencies to seek new fees or fee increases for years to come.

We appreciate the difficulties facing you this session and are eager to discuss these issues with you further as the session progresses.