

## **The Oregon Conservation Network Common Environmental Agenda for the 2005 Oregon Legislature**

Since its inception in 1995, the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) has worked to unite conservation groups from around the state in an effort to protect Oregon's environmental heritage in the state legislature. The OCN has grown into a coalition of more than 70 conservation groups with a combined membership of more than 100,000 Oregonians working to counter legislative threats that undermine Oregon's environmental legacy and threaten our quality of life.

For the first time, a coalition of OCN member groups developed a list of environmental priorities for the Oregon legislature. This "Common Agenda," outlined below, reflects the OCN's view of the seven most important actions decision-makers can take in 2005.

### **Protect the Oregon Dream: Stop Weakening Environmental Protections**

The 2005 Oregon legislature should pass no law that weakens environmental safeguards. For a decade, the legislature focused much of its energy on "rolling back" existing Oregon laws that promote clean air and water, hold polluters accountable, conserve farm and forestland, and protect wildlife. This year, the legislature should restore Oregon's standing as a national environmental leader, based on the understanding that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. For more information contact: [Jed Jorgensen](#), Oregon League of Conservation Voters.

### **Support Oregon's Economy: Invest in Preserving our Quality of Life**

The 2005 legislature can begin to provide the long-term investments needed to create jobs in hard-hit rural areas -- through projects that protect fish and wildlife and repair Oregon's natural infrastructure. Investing in conservation projects lays the foundation for economic and environmental success by immediately putting money and jobs into rural communities. In 1998, Oregon voters overwhelmingly passed Measure 66, which amended Oregon's constitution and dedicated 15% of the state's lottery revenues in conservation projects. But since the ballot measure passed, the Legislature has instead used the millions of dollars to pay for other agency programs. Repeated misuse of these conservation funds takes money out rural communities and undermines the credibility of state government. For more information contact: [Bruce Taylor](#), Defenders of Wildlife.

### **Close the Toxic Pollution Loophole to Restore Safe and Healthy Rivers**

Industrial pollution, containing untreated toxic chemicals, is currently being pumped into Oregon's rivers and streams at dangerous levels. A "loophole" in existing law encourages polluters to dump untreated pollutants such as arsenic, lead, and mercury into Oregon's rivers at levels known to be toxic to people and wildlife. This dumping creates toxic areas in our rivers. Some of these areas are as large as two football fields, yet state authorities do not warn the public where they are located - even within popular rivers such as the Willamette. The 2005 Legislature has the opportunity to fix this serious problem to restore safe and healthy rivers for Oregon. For more information contact: [Brent Foster](#), Willamette and Columbia Riverkeeper, [Travis Williams](#), Willamette Riverkeeper, or [Rhett Lawrence](#), Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG).

### **Put Oregon's Fishermen Back to Work: Create Marine Nurseries**

Due to over-fishing, Oregon's marine fish populations have become so small that the government has resorted to buying out commercial fishermen to prevent further population declines.

Scientists have found that protecting certain areas in the ocean can help restore fish populations.

Establishing "marine reserves" is like creating a nursery, allowing adult fish to grow and reproduce in abundance, while their offspring help replenish populations in areas where fishing is allowed outside the reserve boundaries. Oregon is the only state on the West Coast without marine reserves. The sooner a system of reserves is created, the sooner Oregon's fisherman can get back to their jobs. As an added benefit to the coast's economy, marine parks, where education and recreation would be emphasized, would help boost ocean and coastal tourism. For more information contact: [Robin Hartmann](#), Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, or [Samantha Murray](#), Audubon Society of Portland.

### **Biodiesel Solutions for Oregon's Farmers and Children**

Diesel exhaust, the #1 air toxin in Oregon, causes cancer and triggers asthma in children and other vulnerable people. Biodiesel, a substitute for petroleum diesel, is a nontoxic, renewable fuel made from plants. Biodiesel significantly reduces air pollution while creating new markets for Oregon's farmers and promoting new industrial jobs. By promoting biodiesel, and establishing a fund to demonstrate biodiesel use in school buses, the 2005 Legislature can reduce unhealthy diesel exhaust and help Oregon's farmers. Diesel school buses deserve the legislature's immediate attention because of the high risk diesel exhaust poses for children who ride the bus. For more information contact: [Chris Hagerbaumer](#), Oregon Environmental Council.

### **Take Back Our Right to Know: Implement Oregon's Pesticide Use Reporting Law**

Pesticides are widely used throughout Oregon, not only on farms and forests, but also in schools, parks, roadsides, hospitals, grocery stores, and public buildings. In 2003, there were 153 known cases of pesticide poisonings in Oregon. Tracking pesticide use is critical for protecting human health and preventing future poisonings. Five years ago, the Oregon Legislature voted overwhelmingly to pass a landmark "pesticide use reporting" law. Today, however, there is still no information about where, when, how much or how pesticides are being sprayed in our communities because the Legislature withheld funding from the program. Because of the risks associated with the use of pesticides, the Oregon Department of Human Services supports the reporting system. The 2005 Legislature should fully fund the program to protect the health of all Oregonians. For more information contact: [Laura Weiss](#), Oregon Environmental Council.

### **Protecting Land-Use Planning for Oregon's Future**

The integrity of Oregon's landmark land-use planning system is at risk due to the passage of 2004's Ballot Measure 37. Measure 37 was approved by voters for its no-nonsense language of providing "fairness" to property owners. Its result, however, may be the wholesale elimination of Oregon's land use planning system – an effect that would have serious, long-term, negative impacts on Oregon's economic growth, neighborhoods, farmland protection, and environmental health. The Oregon Legislature must take a stand for both property owners and the long-term health of the state by finding a solution which gives property owners the "fairness" and redress they sought under Measure 37, without the elimination of a program that has shaped the beautiful Oregon we know and love. For more information, contact [Jessica Hamilton](#), Oregon League of Conservation Voters.