

Grant Application

Tom Josephson



Email : tjosephson@columbiaestuary.org

Application ID : A63JT131

Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2023-08-02 20:32:12

Application Completed Date: 2023-08-21 23:01:52

1 Have you previously applied for a grant from the Oregon Wildlife Foundation?

no

2 Has a previously submitted grant application been denied funding support?

no

3 Title of your proposed project

Palensky Highway 30 - Wildlife Underpass

4 Name of your organization

Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST)

5 If your organization is not a 501c3 nonprofit, please identify your fiscal sponsor

If this does not apply to you, write N/A

N/A

6 Your name or the name of the Project Manager

Jason Smith

7 organization mailing address

Please enter full address with city, state & zip

818 Commercial St. Suite 203 Astoria, OR 97103

8 your phone number or that of the Project Manager

(503) 325-0435

9 your email address or that of the Project Manager

jsmith@columbiaestuary.org

10 a brief biographical statement about yourself or that of the Project Manager

Jason Smith is CREST's Senior Habitat Restoration Project Manager. He has over 8 years of experience directly overseeing the implementation of restoration projects throughout the Lower Columbia River. Jason led the design, permitting, and grant funding for the Wildlife underpass project. He will oversee the implementation of the project.

11 social media handles that your organization uses

Enter social handles or URLs such as instagram, facebook, twitter, youtube, etc. so that we can use to cross promote on our channels - if you do not have any, please place N/A

Facebook - CREST

12 are you are currently following Oregon Wildlife Foundation on its social media channels?

- None of these channels

13 what is the total estimated cost of your project?

2907500

14 Funding that you are requesting from OWF

If your request is for more than \$5,000, please contact Tim Greseth tim@myowf.org before submitting your application.

50000

15 what type of project are your proposing?

wildlife habitat restoration or improvement

16 will your project address an Oregon Conservation Strategy habitat or species?

yes

16.Y.1 What habitat or species is addressed?

Address fish and wildlife movement barriers. Directly benefit amphibian species *Rana aurora* and *Pseudacris regilla*.

17 what is the location of your proposed project?

45.6427733827927,-122.837468776677

18 what ecoregion and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) is your proposed project located in?
See <https://www.compass.dfw.state.or.us/> for the information you need to answer this question

Willamette Valley Ecoregion, Sauvie Island-Scappoose COA

19 what is the anticipated start date of your project?
Day/Month/Year

15-04-2024

20 what is the anticipated end date of your project?
30-09-2024

21 has a local, state or federal biologist reviewed this project?
yes

21.Y.1 What is their name and contact info?
Susan Barnes, ODFW susan.p.barnes@odfw.oregon.gov

22 have you already or will you obtain necessary permits from all requisite agencies as applicable to proposed project?
yes

23 what will the funds you are requesting be used for?
this would be a good time to review, if you haven't already done so, our grantmaking guidelines at www.myowf.org/grants

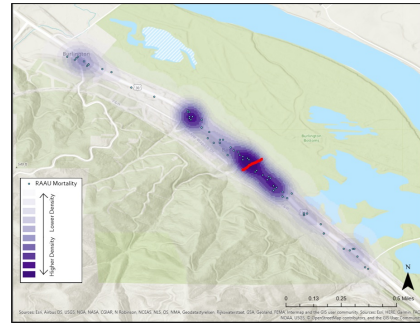
All funds received from OWF will be put towards contracted services for construction. Major construction deliverables include construction of the wildlife underpass and directional walls. OWF funds will be matched with other State, Federal, and private funds to pay for these restoration treatments.

24 provide us a brief summary of your proposed project

The creation of a wildlife underpass underneath Highway 30 offers the opportunity to provide unimpeded safe passage for wildlife between large parcels of protected habitat. The Palensky Wildlife Area (also known as Burlington Bottoms) consists of 470 acres of floodplain wetlands, sloughs, ponds, and riparian forests directly along the Multnomah Channel. It is protected land owned by the Bonneville Power Administration and managed by the ODFW as fish, migratory bird, and amphibian habitat. On the upslope side of the highway is 354 acres of upland forest protected and managed by Metro and adjacent to other large parcels of forested lands. By establishing a wildlife underpass, this project has the potential to provide landscape scale connectivity across the forests and wetlands of the Northern Willamette Valley along the Columbia River Bottomlands. The new underpass will be constructed from a steel pipe, 54 inches in diameter, with a natural bottomed substrate. It will have 8 vertical light shafts with metal grate covers to allow in natural light and ambient humidity and temperature. 600 linear feet of wall will be constructed at all four corners of the underpass to direct wildlife towards the new underpass.

25 upload pre-project pictures or a video

By submitting these photos or video I warrant that I am the legal owner of this media and grant the Foundation permission to reproduce, exhibit, or publish them for all general purposes in relation to Oregon Wildlife Foundation's work. If you have questions about photo or video submissions please refer to myowf.org/grants for guidance.



Project Revenue	Cash	In-Kind	Committed / Pending
Oregon Wildlife Foundation Request	50000		Pending
Bonneville Power Administration (Lower Columbia River program)	1667000		Committed
Bonneville Power Administration (Willamette Valley program)	200000		Committed
OWEB	495000		Pending
OCRF	100000		Pending
State of Oregon funding (ODFW to lead funding effort)	395500		Pending
Project Management (CREST construction oversight and administrative support)		24449	
REVENUE	2907500.00	24449.00	
		TOTAL PROJECT SUPPORT	2931949.00
Project Expenses	Cash	In-Kind	Total
Construction of Wildlife Underpass	1350000		1350000.00
Construction of Directional Walls (600 linear feet)	900000		900000.00
Construction (Mobilization, construction survey, traffic control, erosion control, replanting, bonding, all other construction costs except underpass and directional walls)	650000		650000.00
Seeding and Replanting	7500		7500.00
Project Management (CREST construction oversight and administrative support)		24449	24449.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
			0.00
		TOTAL PROJECT EXPENSES	2931949.00
Balanced budget? This cell should read "0" ---->		NET	0.00

27 upload a narrative of your proposed project

Please make sure your narrative is no more than 7 pages long, single spaced, 12 pt. font (Calibri preferred).

1 Document Uploaded

28 upload letters of support

letters of support are strongly encouraged. in particular a letter from a supervising biologist

5 Documents Uploaded

29 I understand that I am required to submit a Project Completion Report, copies of any publications or social media posts crediting the Foundation's support, and post-project pictures at the completion of my project

yes

Powered by **Submit.com**

— Grant Application

Tom Josephson

Application ID: **A63JT131**



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Email: crest@columbiaestuary.org, Website: www.columbiaestuary.org

Highway 30 Wildlife Underpass

Project Need

Spanning between Portland and Scappoose in Multnomah County, OR, U.S. Highway (Hwy) 30 poses a significant barrier to wildlife movement between the floodplain wetlands along Multnomah Channel and the upland forests of the Tualatin Mountains. Amphibian species including 1) the northern red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*), a Federal Species of Concern, State Sensitive Species, and top-ranked ODFW priority among Oregon Conservation Strategy Species for the Willamette Valley and 2) Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) each migrate twice/yearly between the forests and floodplain wetlands. The 4-lane Highway severely impacts this migratory pattern, with high mortality rates as amphibians are struck by vehicles as they traverse back and forth across the roadway.

This project is a collaboration between CREST, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The designs call for a wildlife underpass that will convey migratory amphibians, while meeting the safety and design standards of ODOT. The result is a 130-foot long underground tunnel with a natural bottom substrate, natural light openings, and 600 linear feet of directional wall to guide amphibians and small mammals to the new crossing.

Two other partner projects along Hwy 30 are currently in feasibility and initial designs. The Harborton Wetland Amphibian Underpass (led by Oregon Wildlife Foundation and USFWS), and Crabapple Creek (led by Metro and LCEP). Each are examining the feasibility of installing additional wildlife underpasses beneath Hwy 30. If all projects are constructed there will be three (3) new wildlife crossings along 5.5 miles of Hwy 30 – greatly enhancing wildlife connectivity throughout this region. Since the Palensky – Highway 30 wildlife corridor is fully designed, permitted, and ready for construction there is an opportunity to learn a lot about design, construction and monitoring which can be put to use for the two subsequent wildlife corridor projects.

Problem Statement

Transportation infrastructure divides wildlife habitat in Oregon and poses significant barriers for wildlife movement. Major highways especially impact amphibians, which rely on migrating through a range of unique habitats to complete their life cycle. Both the northern red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*)—a Federal Species of Concern, State of Oregon Sensitive Species, and top-



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ranked ODFW priority among Oregon Conservation Strategy Species for the Willamette Valley—and the Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) require aquatic habitat with shallow ponds (seasonal or permanent) for breeding, and riparian and upland forest habitat for foraging and overwintering. Each species migrates twice per year between forests and floodplain wetlands. Population declines for the Northern red-legged frogs are well documented in Oregon's Willamette Valley (Blaustein et al. 1995; Pearl 2005). The International Union of Concerned Scientists (IUCN) estimates that at least 40% of global amphibian species are currently at risk of extinction and the scale of population declines in the past two decades is higher than at any other time. Habitat fragmentation appears to be a major contributor to this decline.

U.S. Highway 30 is a significant barrier to northern red-legged frog and Pacific treefrog migration between the floodplain wetlands along Multnomah Channel and the upland forests of the Tualatin Mountains. The 4-lane highway presents an extreme risk to their migratory pattern, causing high mortality rates as these amphibians are struck by vehicles as they traverse back and forth across the highway. U.S. Hwy 30 divides two Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) identified in the 2016 Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS). The upland forest habitat west of the highway is the Forest Park COA and the wetland habitat east of the highway is the Sauvie Island - Scappoose COA. Wildlife crossings for amphibians hold promise for reducing mortality, promoting migration, and overall promoting the health of local amphibian species.

After several years of observation and data collection on northern red-legged frog migration patterns, crossing locations, and mortalities, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) identified the preferred location for constructing a wildlife underpass. Site selection was further validated by roadway safety and geotechnical considerations determined by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). ODFW has proposed constructing an amphibian underpass at a "frog hot spot" where significant numbers of frogs have been observed crossing the highway and being killed by vehicles.

The proposed wildlife underpass would provide safe passage for amphibians and specifically address two of the Recommended Conservation Actions for the two COAs: (i) Reduce Mortality for amphibians and other wildlife crossing Hwy 30, and (ii) Address fish and wildlife movement barriers (e.g., roads, culverts, fences). Barriers to Animal Movement is also identified in the OCS as a Key Conservation Issue and is addressed by this project. Additionally, the need for a wildlife crossing is identified in the draft Palensky Wildlife Area (PWA) Land Management Plan.

The creation of a wildlife underpass underneath Highway 30 offers the opportunity to provide unimpeded safe passage between large parcels of protected habitat. The Palensky Wildlife Area



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(also known as Burlington Bottoms) consists of 470 acres of floodplain wetlands, sloughs, ponds, and riparian forests directly along the Multnomah Channel. It is protected land owned by the Bonneville Power Administration and managed by the ODFW as fish, migratory bird, and amphibian habitat. On the upslope side of the highway is 354 acres of upland forest protected and managed by Metro and adjacent to other large parcels of forested lands. By establishing a wildlife underpass, this project has the potential to provide landscape scale connectivity across the forests and wetlands of the Northern Willamette Valley along the Columbia River Bottomlands.

Conservation Plan Priority Project

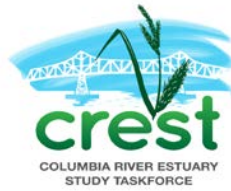
The wildlife underpass addresses priorities outlined in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: Oregon Conservation Strategy (Oregon Conservation Strategy, 2016. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Salem, Oregon).

As stated in the goals of the Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS), "The overall goals for the Oregon Conservation Strategy are to promote healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing any declines in these resources where possible." A key component of preventing declines of at-risk species is to provide safe passage corridors along migratory routes.

The Palensky Highway 30 - Wildlife Underpass project specifically seeks to improve habitat connectivity and reduce mortality for the northern red-legged frog populations, which is a Federal Species of Concern and a State Sensitive Species. Northern red-legged frogs are listed in the OCS as a ODFW Wildlife Priority Strategy Species for the Willamette Valley (https://oregonconservationstrategy.org/media/ODFW-Wildlife-Priority-Strategy-Species-by-Ecoregion_3.2018.pdf).

Barriers to Animal Movement is identified in the OCS as a Key Conservation Issue. The project will provide unimpeded species movement between the Tualatin Mountains and Burlington Bottoms, both of which are listed as Conservation Opportunity Areas. Since the project address amphibian movement, it covers both Goal 1 (Provide conditions suitable for natural movement of fish and aquatic animals throughout their native range) and Goal 2 (Provide connectivity of habitat for the broad array of wildlife species throughout Oregon).

The project addresses several actions identified in the OCS including: Action 2.1 - Promote conditions suitable for habitat connectivity throughout Oregon , Action 2.2 Continue to collect



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terrestrial wildlife movement data, and Action 2.5: Work with ODOT to identify and address wildlife mortality on highways.

Reducing road mortality for amphibians and other wildlife crossing Highway 30 is a Recommended Conservation Action (RCA) for the Sauvie Island-Scappoose Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) and addressing fish and wildlife movement barriers (roads, culverts, fences) is an RCA for the adjacent Forest Park COA.

The need for a wildlife crossing is identified in the draft Palensky Wildlife Area Land Management Plan.

Goals and Objectives

Goal

Establish a safe wildlife passage corridor underneath Highway 30 that allows amphibians and small mammals to traverse between the floodplains of the Palensky Wildlife Area and the Tualatin Mountain forests.

- **Objective #1**

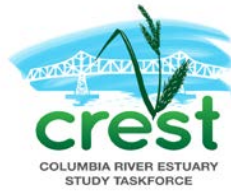
Construct a 130-foot long wildlife underpass with a natural bottom substrate and natural light openings beneath U.S. Highway 30 that will safely convey migratory amphibians between adjacent habitats, while meeting the safety and design standards of ODOT.

- **Objective #2**

Construct 600 linear feet of Directional Walls to guide wildlife towards the new underpass.

- **Objective #3**

Seed the entirety of disturbed areas outside of the roadway (0.629 acres) and install 1,100 plants consisting of wetland plugs, shrubs, and trees in disturbed areas (0.57 acres).



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Effectiveness Monitoring

During the feasibility stage, various locations were examined for the new underpass at the Palensky Wildlife Area. Based on frog survey data and input from ODFW biologists and the constraints of roadway safety and geotechnical conditions, the project team chose the current location as a "frog migration hot spot" and selected it as the best choice for the wildlife underpass.

Wildlife cameras will be installed and monitored by ODFW to document wildlife use and determine if additional temporary fencing needs to be installed to increase the use of the wildlife underpass.

Data collection pertaining to amphibian migration, mortality, and egg mass surveys will continue to be conducted by ODFW at the Palensky Wildlife Area to ascertain if amphibian populations are changing due to the new wildlife underpass.



600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
oregonmetro.gov

March 24, 2023

Liz Redon and Region 3 Review Team
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Review Team:

Metro strongly supports the Palensky Highway 30 Wildlife Corridor project proposed by CREST. Metro owns and manages the adjacent 354-acre Burlington Creek Forest Natural Area which provides the upland component many native amphibians require to complete their life cycle. Burlington Creek Forest Natural Area shares a boundary with Palensky Wildlife Area for approximately 1.5 miles and that entire stretch is bisected by Highway 30 which forms an often-lethal barrier for wildlife crossing.

Amphibian species including the Northern red-legged frog (State of Oregon Listed Sensitive Species, and the top-ranked ODFW priority among Oregon Conservation Strategy species for the Willamette Valley) and Pacific chorus frogs migrate between the upland forests of the Tualatin Hills and the Burlington Bottoms floodplain. The existing 4-lane highway greatly impacts migration, killing many of these amphibians as they attempt to traverse back and forth. ODFW data collected along this portion of Highway 30 indicate that the location of the proposed wildlife underpass is a "hotspot" of frog migration.

Metro is committed to increasing wildlife connectivity through land conservation, restoration, and partnership in the Regional Habitat Connectivity Working Group and this project aligns with those objectives. In addition to the focus on amphibians, various other small and mid-sized wildlife (coyotes, small mammals) could potentially use the new wildlife underpass for safe passage. Reducing wildlife mortality between these protected landscapes is crucial to protecting the populations of these species as well as enhancing the permanently protected habitats on each side of the highway. Movement barriers are a major problem for sensitive wildlife, such as amphibians, who need large, intact habitats and freedom to move as they grapple with threats, including climate change and disease.

Complementing this project, Metro is working on feasibility analysis for another crossing location under Highway 30 at Crabapple Creek. Wildlife use surveys and design lessons learned from this first crossing can be incorporated into future designs at other locations, potentially providing a series of wildlife crossings for a 5.5 mile of section Highway 30, vastly increasing connectivity between the Tualatin Hills and floodplain wetlands along Multnomah Channel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Soll".

Jonathan Soll
Science and Stewardship Manager



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife Division

4034 Fairview Industrial Dr. S.

Salem, OR 97302

(503) 947-6301

FAX: (503) 947-6330

Internet: www.dfw.state.or.us



30 March, 2023

Liz Redon and Region 3 Review Team
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Review Team,

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) strongly supports the Palensky Highway 30 Wildlife Corridor Project. The Department has been working closely with CREST and a diversity of other partners, including the Oregon Department of Transportation and West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, to design a safe, effective wildlife crossing structure to improve wildlife passage and reduce wildlife mortality on US Highway 30 between Burlington Creek Forest Natural Area and Palensky Wildlife Area.

“Barriers to Animal Movement” is one of seven key threats to wildlife conservation in Oregon. Roadways present a substantial barrier to animal movement for many species throughout our state. In addition, roadways are a significant source of species mortality, particularly for smaller bodied, less mobile species like amphibians. Northern red-legged frog is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Oregon and is one of the top 5 priority Oregon Conservation Strategy species in the Willamette Valley. Red-legged frogs must migrate each spring and fall between upland habitat in forested areas and wetland habitat in order to breed. Access to breeding wetlands is critical for long-term population survival, but human development has fragmented habitat and is making it increasingly difficult for these frogs and other native amphibians to migrate. The 4-lane US 30 directly bisects the migratory route for red-legged frogs between upland habitat in the Burlington Creek Forest Natural Area and breeding wetlands in Palensky Wildlife Area. Each year, hundreds of frogs and other wildlife are killed by vehicles as they attempt to cross this roadway.

To help mitigate the impacts of the roadway on frogs and other wildlife, and to reduce vehicle-caused mortality of this State Sensitive Species, CREST, ODFW, and other partners have designed a wildlife crossing structure to allow wildlife to safely pass underneath the highway. In addition to red-legged frogs and other amphibians, the crossing would aid other small and mid-sized wildlife in accessing the permanently protected habitat on either side of US 30, enhancing connectivity and improving the ability of wildlife to adapt to changing landscape conditions, including climate change.

This project is fully designed and permitted. While recent state and federal investments in transportation mitigation have made some funding available for wildlife crossing projects, this funding has been restricted to large bridges and overpasses that target mitigation of collisions with large-bodied wildlife like deer and elk. Funding for wildlife passage for smaller-bodied species is extremely limited. Contributions from OWEB would help fill a significant funding gap for construction of this much-needed crossing structure. The Department of Fish and Wildlife and our partners are committed to continuing to improve wildlife passage and enhance habitat connectivity for wildlife throughout the state. I encourage you to support this project.

Sincerely,

Rachel E. Wheat
Wildlife Connectivity Coordinator



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Transportation
ODOT Engineering and Technical
Services Branch
4040 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, Oregon 97302
Phone: (503) 986-3252

Liz Redon and Region 3 Review Team
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Review Team:

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) strongly supports the proposed Palensky Highway 30 Wildlife Corridor being implemented by CREST. ODOT has been involved throughout the design and approval process for the new wildlife corridor and is fully supportive of the proposed wildlife underpass project.

ODOT is supportive of projects which reduce wildlife mortality along public roads and highways, while retaining essential roadway safety features and minimizing maintenance costs. This project aligns with the goals of greater wildlife connectivity, while not impacting travel access, safety, or maintenance requirements.

Additionally, this project might become a catalyst for future wildlife connectivity projects. ODOT is engaged with various other groups examining feasibility of additional wildlife crossings throughout the state. Design elements, construction methods, low maintenance features, and general lessons learned from this project could lead to several additional wildlife connectivity projects becoming implemented in future years.

Regards,

Denis Reich
Environmental Manager
Region 1 – Tech Center

Denis.A.Reich@odot.oregon.gov
503.278.1620



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office
2600 SE 98th Avenue, Suite 100
Portland, Oregon 97266
Phone: (503) 231-6179 FAX: (503) 231-6195

Reply To: ADMI-670-5

File Name: Letter of support for Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce's Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board proposal

TS Number: 23-181

Doc Type: Letter of support

Liz Redon and Region 3 Review Team
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street, NE., #360
Salem, OR 97301

April 10, 2023

Subject: Letter of support for Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce's Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board proposal

Dear Review Team,

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office (OFWO) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) supports the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce's (CREST) proposal for an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grant and looks forward to being an active partner in supporting this project. Our role as partner has been and will continue to be to collaborate with CREST on the creation of both the Palensky and Harborton Highway 30 Wildlife Crossing projects. The USFWS worked with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation to submit a successful OWEB proposal last year to help fund the feasibility study of the Harborton Highway 30 Wildlife Crossing project. As the Palensky project enters construction, lessons learned will inform the Harborton project. Additionally, these crossing projects will work in tandem to support Northern red-legged frog populations north of Portland as frogs migrate across Highway 30.

Annually, hundreds to thousands of northern red-legged frogs (*Rana aurora*) migrate from upland areas (Burlington Creek Forest Natural Area, Tualatin Hills, and Forest Park) to wetland areas along the Willamette River. At the Harborton site, it is estimated that vehicles kill hundreds of northern red-legged frogs. Mortality is likely similar at the Palensky site, deemed another hotspot of northern red-legged frog migration by ODFW. Northern red-legged frogs make this dangerous migration to get from non-breeding upland habitat to wetland habitat to breed and lay their eggs.

PACIFIC REGION 1

IDAHO, OREGON*, WASHINGTON,
AMERICAN SAMOA, GUAM, HAWAII, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

*PARTIAL

Construction of the Palensky Wildlife Crossing would provide safe passage for frogs moving between upland and wetland areas, decreasing vehicle-related mortality while increasing the size of this population with the aim of maintaining this population into the future. A wildlife crossing is a long-term solution that provides high conservation outcomes for northern red-legged frogs (one of top five ODFW Wildlife Priority Strategy Species for the Willamette Valley ecoregion) and increases habitat connectivity and migratory access between the Tualatin Hills and the Burlington Bottoms areas, both of which lie within Conservation Opportunity Areas of the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

We believe the goals of CREST's proposed project fit well within the priorities of OWEB and the USFWS to achieve on-the-ground habitat connectivity and conservation. There are clear and measurable ecological benefits to this project for northern red-legged frogs, which will also inform and support the Harborton crossing project. Therefore, we strongly support CREST constructing this crossing and support their application for a 2023 OWEB grant for funding.

If you have questions, please contact Erin Abernethy at (971) 263-4793.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kessina Lee".

For Kessina Lee
State Supervisor



April 19, 2023

Liz Redon and Region 3 Review Team
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Review Team:

West Multnomah SWCD strongly supports the Palensky Highway 30 Wildlife Corridor project and grant application by Columbia River Estuary Task Force (CREST) for a wildlife crossing just south of McCarthy Creek. WMSWCD manages the 121-acre "Wetland Reserve Easement" site at the mouth of McCarthy Creek, contiguous to the Palensky site. Together with partners Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and CREST, we have conducted wetland restoration at these important adjacent habitat areas.

For multiple years our organization and staff have supported and participated in the volunteer effort "frog-taxi" that has shuttled many thousands of native adult frogs across the treacherous 4-lane Highway 30 from their upland forest habitat in the Tualatin Hills to their wetland breeding areas along Multnomah Channel. Staff and volunteers have seen first-hand how deadly this stretch of highway is, both for amphibians and mammals. ODFW data supports our understanding that the location of the proposed wildlife underpass is a "hotspot" for frog migration. Species affected include our native Pacific chorus frog and Northern red-legged frog, a status-listed Sensitive Species and top-ranked priority among Oregon Conservation Strategy species for the Willamette Valley.

WMSWCD recognizes that barriers to movement are a major problem for sensitive wildlife, such as amphibians, which compound the stressors these populations face from climate change and disease. We further recognize that humans ferrying frogs across the highway nightly throughout the breeding season is not a sustainable solution and that a permanent undercrossing is our best long-term solution. The proposed 130 foot long crossing with 8 light boxes and 600 linear feet of directional wall to funnel wildlife towards the corridor will not only benefit amphibians, but also coyotes and smaller mammals. And reducing wildlife mortality and improving access to our newly restored wetlands will only increase their ecological value.

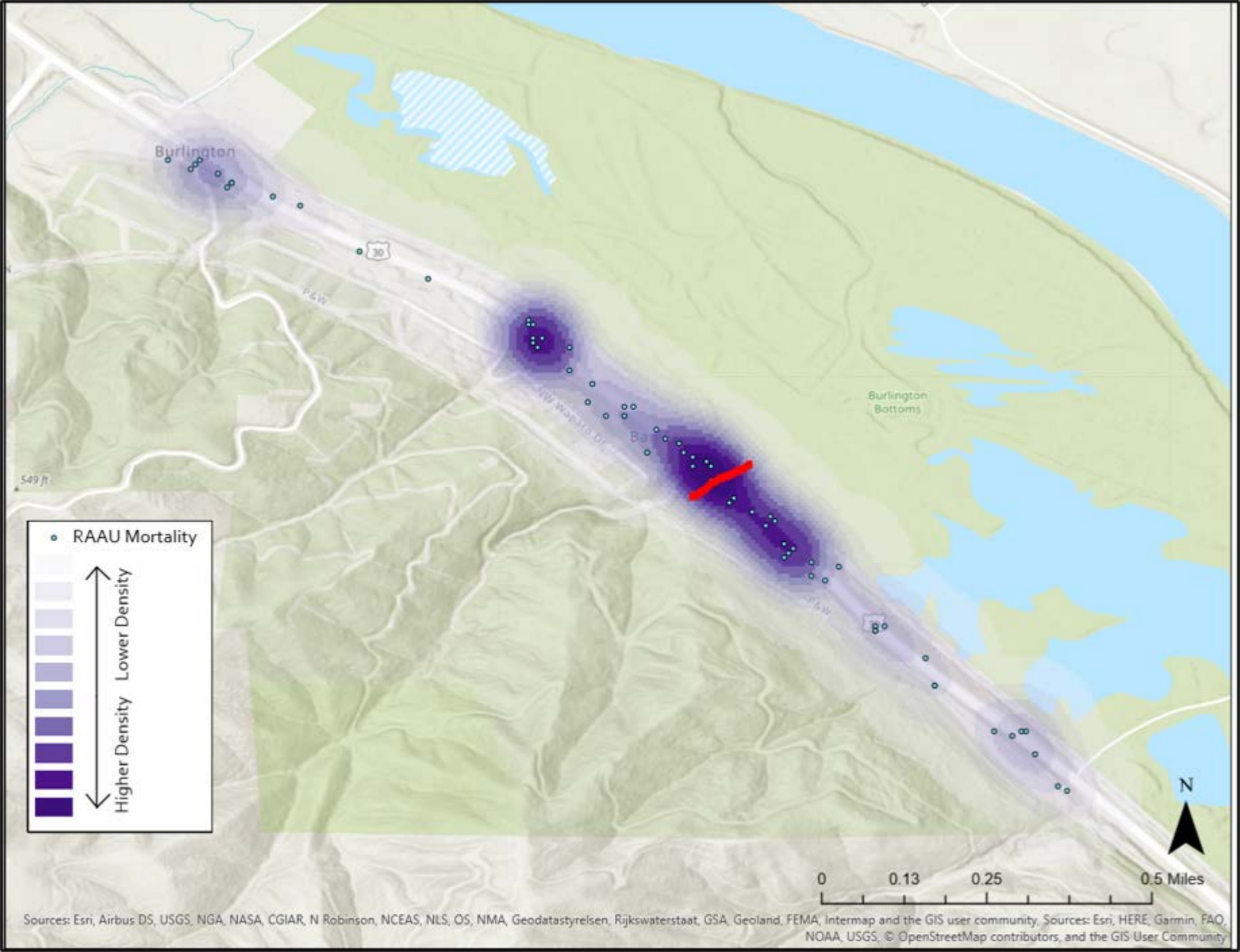
Lastly, wildlife use surveys and learnings from the design of this Palensky crossing can inform designs at other locations. One such location is further north on Highway 30 at Crabapple Creek, where Metro has proposed another undercrossing.

WMSWCD urges OWEB to approve funding for this project so that implementation can occur in summer 2024. This solution to our local amphibian mortality and habitat disconnectedness is long in the making and eagerly awaited.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn Barlow".

Lynn Barlow
District Manager



Sources: Esri, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodastystyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community, Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Wildlife Crossing

Directional Wall

Staging

Existing Culvert

Staging

Temp Construction Access Road