August 7, 2015

Oregon Wildlife

P.O. Box 30406

Portland, OR 97294-3406

To the Beulah Drake Grant Program Review Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (ODFW) Conservation Program and as Co-Chair of the Oregon Native Turtle Working Group – Lower Willamette Chapter, I am writing in support of the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council’s proposed Native Turtle Habitat Enhancement Project. If awarded funding through Oregon Wildlife’s Beulah Drake Grant Program, the proposed project would enhance both upland and aquatic habitats for native western painted turtles at the Sandy River Delta. The project would enhance turtle nesting habitat through the elimination of invasive plants and improve aquatic habitat conditions through the addition of basking structure and hiding cover. The watershed council would also initiate discussions with Sandy River Delta stakeholders regarding possible changes to public access at portions of the site to better protect turtles from unintended human related disturbance impacts. Proposed upland and aquatic habitat enhancement actions are part of a larger and on-going effort to restore the Sandy River Delta and promote community stewardship.

The mission of the Oregon Native Turtle Working Group is to protect and enhance populations of native turtles and their habitats through active partnership, education, and on-the-ground projects. Members of the working group have confirmed presence of western painted turtles at the Sandy River Delta project site and ODFW has provided input to the watershed council on proposed enhancement actions. The western painted turtle is identified as a priority species in the Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) and is classified as “Sensitive –Critical” on Oregon’s State Sensitive Species List. The sandy River Delta is also identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area in the OCS. If funded, this project would further the habitat enhancement efforts at the Sandy River Delta and provide direct benefits to native turtles. Numerous fish and wildlife species would also benefit from the project, including other priority at-risk species (e.g., red-legged frog).

If you have any questions you may contact me at susan.p.barnes@state.or.us or (971) 673-6010.

Sincerely,

Susan P. Barnes

Regional Conservation Biologist

West Region

and

Co-Chair

Oregon Native Turtle Working Group – Lower Willamette Chapter