Executive Summary

Fisheries and wildlife resource conservation is a challenging profession involving biological, ecological, management, policy, and social systems. Although many of professionals obtain entry-level positions with B.S. degrees, mid- and upper-level positions typically require additional training. The proposed Professional Science Masters of Fisheries and Wildlife Administration (PSMFWA) degree is designed to provide advanced training for early- and mid-career professionals employed by natural resources agencies and non-government organizations. The PSMFWA degree will assist natural resources agencies and non-government organizations in meeting workforce planning goals and will meet self-improvement goals of current employees.

The PSMFWA is a 57-credit curriculum organized into four main sections: a fish and wildlife core (18 credits), a professional core (18 credits), policy (6 credits), human dimensions (9 credits) and internships (6 credits). It will be taught primarily as a distance, on-line curriculum, although some students may choose to work toward the PSMFWA degree while in-residence at OSU. All of the courses proposed for the PSMFWA degree are already taught in-residence and many are taught on-line. Currently, enough courses are taught on-line to provide students with substantial choice among courses in all curriculum areas. Forty-eight faculty members have agreed to serve as advisors to students for completion of their internships and degree. The PSMFWA degree will be offered as a non-thesis option only, similar to a Masters in Business Administration, Masters of Agriculture, or Masters of Forestry.

We present evidence of need for the PSMFWA from several sources: published literature on workforce planning in natural resources, changes in Masters programs with comparator institutions, and a survey of potential employers. All provide strong support for such a program.

There are no closely related programs in OUS. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife offers the only degrees related to the fish and wildlife professions in the Oregon University System. A Master of Natural Resources (MNR) degree has just been approved by the Provost’s Council and the Sustainable Natural Resources (SNR) Graduate Certificate are related programs because of their general focus on natural resources. Both of these graduate programs target much broader, less well-defined audiences than the narrow professional focus of our PSMFWA degree. Our proposal explains other differences between the degrees and identifies areas of collaboration.

Because we already have a large graduate program substantial new resources are not needed to offer this degree. However, we propose to add staff support to deliver this program. Resources to support these staff will come from revenues generated by our eCampus programs (B.S. and PSMFWA). We estimate an annual cost of $42,447 to support the program. Revenues from our eCampus program exceeded $400,000 last year and have increased at a rate of 10-20% per year for several years. We began to offer our BS on-line fall of 2009 and had >75 majors the first term. Thus, we anticipate that revenues from eCampus will easily cover these new costs.