TO: Dan M. DiGiacomo FCSal Small Grant Application 1/11/2023

Foundation for the Conservation of Salamanders

RE: Letter of Support for Christopher Cousins

Members of the Small Grant Review Committee,

I am writing to recommend Chris Cousins for the Daniel M. DiGiamcomo grant. I am a Professor in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences (FWCS) at Oregon State University and Chris’s PhD advisor. Chris Cousins’s PhD thesis project is leveraging next generation genomic techniques and landscape ecology to identify current and future climate refugia and estimate the population persistence of *Rhyacotriton cascadae* and *R. kezeri*, two species proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. His work is a major resource guiding these ESA listing decisions, and his use of novel genomic and analytical techniques is pushing forward the science of predicting species vulnerability to climate change. Chris’s thesis work involves a team of agency partners, including the USGS, USFWS, and USFS, and his exemplary communication and leadership skills are producing applicable and robust outcomes for this interagency project.

Chris’s academic accomplishments and research experiences have created the foundation for a stellar career in science. He has maintained a 4.00 GPA throughout undergraduate and graduate school, and has been trained in labs specializing in genetics, population ecology, experimental design, spatial analysis, and field biology. Chris has presented his data at 7 scientific meetings including two invited symposia on environmental DNA techniques, produced three publications, was awarded the 2019 OSU Provost’s Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, the 2019 El Café del Futuro Scholarship from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the 2021 Bullitt Fellowship. This productivity is emblematic of the work ethic and dedication he applies to everything he does.

This FCSal grant would allow Chris to further explore the evolutionary differentiation across populations and species within Rhyacotritonidae and Caudata. He has strong evidence for a unique and genetically distinct lineage in the northern range of *R. cascadae*. As this is a species of conservation concern, additional information on population differentiation is essential. This work has the potential to be highly impactful. In addition to his research accomplishments, Chris has forged strong connections with underserved community on OSU’s campus, in Corvallis, and internationally, and this grant would allow him to significantly expand his research and outreach networks. I believe that Chris is the embodiment of what an FCS Fellow should be. Please contact me if you have any questions. Yours,



Tiffany Sacra Garcia

Mace Professor of Watchable Wildlife

Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences

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