



UPPER DESCHUTES
WATERSHED COUNCIL

March 4, 2013

House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capital
900 Court Street NE, Room 347
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: House Bill 2516

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I would like to submit my testimony in opposition of House Bill 2516. As the Education Director for the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, I have been coordinating hands-on, outdoor education activities for students for the past ten years. Our education program accomplishes exactly the type of specialized hands-on learning activities described in HB 2516. However, as written, HB 2516 would effectively undo many years of creating and implementing successful, locally-driven place-based education programs that educate students of all ages about the protection and restoration of native fish and watersheds. By adding an additional and unnecessary layer of administration through the Oregon Department of Education, HB 2516 undermines the ability of watershed councils, school districts, soil and water conservation districts, and other local entities to deliver place-based education programs that are locally-based.

As originally written, ORS 541.932 already provides a funding mechanism for outdoor education efforts like ours that are connected to the local community and emerge out of the unique and meaningful environmental protection needs of a particular watershed. Therefore, House Bill 2516 is not only unnecessary to funnel funding for outdoor education projects but also, as a statewide approach, diminishes the effectiveness of a locally-led approach to connect students to the natural world. Thanks to past funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and a great deal of local support from school districts, teachers, and community members, we are able to engage thousands of students in activities that educate them about the restoration and protection of wildlife habitat and watersheds. If passed, HB 2516 could dramatically reduce the amount of available funding for local, well-established outdoor education programs that are already effectively working with thousands of students per year.

Respectfully,

Kolleen Yake
Education Director
Upper Deschutes Watershed Council