

March 28, 2013



OREGON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NURSERIES™



**To:** Co-chairs Edwards and Unger, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

**RE:** Support for Oregon Water Resources Department Budget, SB 5547

---

Co-chairs Edwards and Unger, and members of the subcommittee:

We are writing to voice our support for the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) budget, SB 5547. We are a diverse group of water users, conservation groups, municipalities and water stakeholders with a common goal: to advocate for common sense water policies that move Oregon's economy, communities, and environment toward a secure water future.

With the adoption of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy in 2012, now is the time to capitalize on momentum and enact water policy for Oregon that creates jobs to help grow our economy, keeps our cities healthy, strengthens vital agricultural production, and protects and enhances our environmental assets. We all agree that adequate funding for OWRD is essential to ensure the responsible management of our valuable water resources to meet a diverse array of needs.

Water is the lifeblood of Oregon's economy and environment, and OWRD is the state agency in charge of making sure it is properly allocated and managed. Unfortunately, OWRD's share of critically important General Fund dollars has been shrinking for several years. As a result, OWRD now receives 0.15% of the total General Fund to carry out its vitally important mission.

These funding declines have a direct impact on the ability of cities, farms and industries to access water, and on the availability of good scientific data to understand how and when water can be used without harming the fish and wildlife that also depend on Oregon's streams and rivers.

While we believe the vital services provided by OWRD should be funded through an equitable combination of fees, General Fund and other sources, the reality today is that OWRD is highly dependent on General Fund dollars to accomplish its mission. Accordingly we urge you to increase funding for the Department this biennium as a first step toward re-investing in our state's water future.

Sincerely,

*The Freshwater Trust*

*The Nature Conservancy*

*Oregon Environmental Council*

*Special Districts Association of Oregon*

*League of Oregon Cities*

*Oregon Association of Nurseries*

*Oregon Water Resources Congress*