



**Testimony before the Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Oregon Water Resources Department Budget, SB 5547
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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

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

Oregon Environmental Council supports the Oregon Water Resources Department's (OWRD) budget request. OWRD is responsible for managing Oregon's precious water resources for multiple purposes, including but not limited to environmental protection and economic development. It is critical that the agency receive adequate funding to ensure that all water rights are fairly enforced, and to gather and analyze scientific data and water use information to understand the status of our water: how much we have and where.

The Department's work becomes increasingly complex as water demands increase due to population growth, and climate change places new stresses on our rivers and other water resources. Inadequately funding the Department places our state at risk of being unable to address water availability challenges and conflicts before they reach crisis stage.

I would like to note a few packages that we believe are particularly important in the Department's budget.

- Packages 101 and 103 re-institute the state's water-use reporting program and provide cost-share funding to help water users install measurement devices.
- Package 102 supports a hydrologist to understand instream flow needs.
- Package 108 establishes a water right management fee, so that water users help pay the costs of managing the water resources that they directly benefit from. The Department currently relies heavily on General Fund.
- Package 202 is cost-share funding that will be matched by USGS to conduct groundwater investigations.
- Package 201 provides staffing to implement the state's Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

OEC participated in the policy advisory group that worked with multiple natural resource agencies to develop the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). This plan provides a blueprint for managing the state's waters into the future, and the Department's budget packages respond directly to recommendations that are identified in the IWRS.

I would like to call your attention to written testimony submitted by members of the IWRS policy advisory group, including OEC, expressing those participants' support for OWRD's budget. We all agree that adequately funding OWRD should be a high priority for our state.