



Central Oregon Cities Organization

Bend, Culver, La Pine, Madras, Maupin
Metolius, Prineville, Redmond, Sisters

March 22, 2013

Senator Chris Edwards, Co-Chair and
Representative Ben Unger, Co-Chair
Way and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee
900 Court Street NR, S-405
Salem, OR 97301

RE: COCO Support for OWRD Budget

Dear Senator Edwards and Representative Unger:

The Central Oregon Cities Organization (COCO) includes the cities of Bend, Culver, Madras, Redmond, La Pine, Maupin, Metolius, Prineville and Sisters. COCO's purpose is to effectively and efficiently promote the common interests of the cities in Central Oregon, which include interests related to water, transportation, economic development, school funding and tax reform. The members of COCO recognize that water is a precious resource that is necessary for the health and well-being of its citizens, as well as a prerequisite for economic development. COCO members rely on the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to complete water rights transactions and, as necessary, protect the cities' water rights. For these reasons, COCO provides this letter in support of OWRD's budget. In particular, COCO would like to express its support for the following packages:

Package #101 (Re-instate Water-Use Reporting Program): In recent years, OWRD has not had staffing for its Water Use Reporting program. This lack of necessary staffing has created a hardship for water users seeking to obtain water use information from OWRD or to work cooperatively with the agency on issues related to water use reporting, which is required of all municipalities. Additionally, the ability to obtain reliable data regarding the use of water resources is necessary for water supply planning efforts.

Package #108 (Water Right Management Fee): COCO support's OWRD efforts to secure long-term reliable funding for the agency through a water right management fee, provided that municipal water right holders are subject to the same "cap" afforded to other water right holders. Secure funding for agency functions, such as distributing water according to priority date, will provide municipal water providers with certainty that OWRD will have sufficient staff to carry out these important activities on which COCO's members rely.

Betty Roppe, Chair
Central Oregon Cities Organization
(541) 447-5627
broppe@cityofprineville.com

Doug Riggs, Lobbyist
NW Grassroots & Communications
(503) 702-5120
doug@ngrc.com

Package #201 (Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Strategy): COCO also supports OWRD's ongoing efforts toward integrated water resources management. In particular, COCO encourages the subcommittee to support funding to promote integrated water resources management planning at the local level. Local water resources planning, such as the "Basin Study" currently being pursued in the Deschutes Basin, will be a key to effectively managing water resources in the future.

Package #204 (Water Supply Development Program): COCO would like to express its strong support for water supply development funding. Continued economic development in Central Oregon, and throughout the state, will depend on the availability of a reliable water supply. As we all know, the state no longer has readily available new sources of water supply. Development of new water supplies (both instream and out-of-stream) will require significant investments in project development and implementation. These costly projects will likely depend on partnerships with state and federal governments. COCO encourages this sub-committee to continue the state's support for these critical activities, which are vital to our state.

Package #208 (Extend Water Transaction Fee Schedule): COCO also supports OWRD's efforts to maintain (or in some cases increase) current transaction fees, with the understanding that OWRD will make it a priority to complete transactions currently pending with the agency. COCO members rely on OWRD to complete their water right transactions in a timely manner in order to allow the ongoing management of the water providers' water rights and water supply. For example, COCO members must often acquire mitigation credits before expanding the use of their groundwater permits, which would typically require OWRD to process and approve an instream transfer or lease. Consequently, the timely processing of these types of transactions are crucial to COCO members.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for OWRD's budget. Please contact me if you have any questions. My telephone number is 541-447-5627.

Sincerely,



Betty Roppe
Chair