



**Testimony before the Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Budget, SB 5520
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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 Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) budget request. DEQ provides critical services to Oregon's residents and businesses by implementing programs that protect the health and safety of our land, air and water. Overall funding for the Department has declined in recent years, but ensuring a clean and healthy environment continues to be a top priority for Oregonians. In addition to increasing efficiencies, the Department has had to cut important programs, and these cuts are now creating significant gaps in protections for the health of Oregonians, and our environment. These gaps need to be filled to ensure safe water to drink, air to breathe, and fish to eat, and to protect the natural resources in Oregon upon which our economy and quality of life depend.

The packages that are a funding priority for OEC include:

WATER

- **320: Pesticide Stewardship Program:** Provide state funding for collaborative, community-based reduction of pesticides in Oregon's waters through Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships and Waste Pesticide Collection Events. These are highly effective, voluntary strategies to reduce problem pesticides. Without this package there will not be stable funding for these strategies, and there are not other state programs that address this issue effectively.

This POP is comprised of half General Funds and half Other Funds (existing pesticide registration fees). We ask you to remove the statement in the first paragraph of the POP that "*any decrease in General Funds would result in an equal reduction in Other Funds.*" The Other Funds portion of the package should remain stable and not be redirected to other purposes if General Funds are decreased. A stable source of funding for the critical elements of this strategy – especially monitoring – is essential to its credibility and success.

It is important to have dedicated funding amounts for the core elements of a state pesticide stewardship strategy. The amount allocated in the POP for monitoring for pesticides in water is clear. However, amounts allocated for the other two critical program elements – technical assistance to reduce pesticide drift and run off, and community pesticide collection events, are not specified in the POP. We ask you to make the following allocations of funding through the POP for these purposes, as described below:

- \$200,000/biennium appropriated directly to Oregon State University's Integrated Plant Protection Center for development of IPM best practices, tools, planning and education as part of Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Projects.

- \$240,000/biennium within ODA's budget specifically allocated to fund 4-5 community waste pesticide collection events/year.
- **090: Clean Water Act:** Restore three wastewater permitting and three TMDL staff positions. These are core functions for protecting water quality and implementing the federal Clean Water Act in Oregon.
- **120: Septic Program:** Restore and maintain the onsite septic program. Over 30% of Oregonians dispose of sewage from their homes and businesses through the use of septic systems. DEQ has revised this package because Ballot Measure 79 prohibits establishing a fee at the time of property transfer. The revised package enables DEQ to restore minimal staffing levels for the program.
- **122: Oregon Plan Monitoring:** Restoring this program is part of a coordinated effort among natural resource agencies to improve watershed health monitoring in a targeted and efficient way.
- **127: IWRS implementation:** These regional staff positions would align water quality programs such as TMDLs with other water-related state agencies and local and federal partners, leveraging resources and implementing projects that achieve multiple goals.
- **128: Groundwater monitoring:** 70% of Oregon residents rely on groundwater for at least part of their drinking water supply. Oregon has three Groundwater Management Areas where high nitrate levels make well water unsafe to drink. Other areas in the state likely have groundwater contamination problems as well, and establishing this program would identify vulnerable areas and populations at risk. Our current lack of groundwater monitoring in much of the state could endanger Oregonians' health and increases the risk of future costly clean-ups.
- **182: Small Community Clean Water Grant Program:** HB 2238 proposes to repurpose the approximately \$1.7 Million remaining in the Sewer Assessment Deferral Loan Program, and establish a Small Community Clean Water Grant Program to provide grants to small communities for upgrading, constructing and repairing wastewater treatment systems. There is a demonstrated need for such funding, since each year DEQ's State Revolving Loan Fund receives many millions more dollars in requests than can be funded. What is most important to us is that this funding be used to benefit water quality, and not swept away from that primary purpose.

LAND

131: Paint Product Stewardship relates to HB 2048, which will remove the sunset on this successful program that reduces waste and the unsafe disposal of unused paint.

AIR

111: Air Contaminants: OEC supports a fee increase to ensure the Air Contaminant Discharge Program can run efficiently. This fee increase is needed to conduct timely permitting, inspections, source testing and planning. This program is important to ensuring clean air and meeting federal requirements.