

**Confederated Tribes of the  
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Board of Trustees & General Council



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**Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation**

**Public Hearing**

**Regarding SB 5520 – Department of Environmental Quality**

**Before the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature**

**April 4, 2013**

Co-Chairs Edwards and Unger and Members of the Committee:

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) would like to offer our support for the budget of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ). The CTUIR is aware of the fiscal difficulties the state is experiencing; however, the State cannot lose sight of the fact that responsible execution of laws protecting the environment ensures the quality of life of all Oregonians. With this understanding we respectfully ask that the Committee do what you can to maintain the Department of Environmental Quality budget and its toxics reduction programs in particular.

ODEQ has a solemn duty to help reduce the burden of toxic chemicals in our water, air and soils. The longer we delay our efforts to reduce discharges of unhealthy contaminants, the greater the human health and environmental damages will be. Furthermore, delay will increase the long-term costs of restoring what has been damaged. A recent study by the Oregon Environmental Council found that environmentally attributable diseases--like cancer, birth defects, and neurobehavioral problems--cost Oregonians at least \$1.57 billion annually<sup>1</sup>. We as a state must do all we can to limit these unnecessary risks to our health and other costs to our communities. We cannot afford these preventable and excessive expenses in times of economic hardship, but most importantly, we should not tolerate the needless harm to the health and well-being of our people.

ODEQ Director Pedersen has demonstrated strong leadership and vision in recognizing that we as Oregonians must do more to understand and reduce the damage caused by environmental pollutants. The Director and his staff are implementing initiatives that are crucial to a sustainable and resilient Oregon.

**Implementing Toxics Water Quality Standards**

The first and greatest priority for the CTUIR with respect to ODEQ's 2013-14 biennium budget is supporting implementation of revised toxics water quality standards for human health and

<sup>1</sup> Oregon Environmental Council, *The Price of Pollution*, 2008. Pg. iii.

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aquatic life. Oregon's standards aim to adequately protect the State's citizens and the fish that form a major part of our shared heritage. On paper, the standards are a bold, precedent-setting step forward that we can all be proud of. But to fulfill their promise, they must exist not just on the page, but in actual practice. The key to decreasing toxics and their effects on people and organisms is full, fair and timely *implementation* of the revised standards. Sufficient, secure funding is essential, and will ultimately pay ample dividends in the future. The CTUIR appreciates ODEQ's long-standing commitment to these efforts, and the support of the Legislative Assembly to make them a reality.

The CTUIR thanks you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of ODEQ's proposed budget, including resources for toxics reduction programs to improve state-wide environmental stewardship and the health of Oregonians. Under the able direction of Director Pedersen ODEQ is focused on positive results, productive partnerships and sensible environmental safeguards. We ask that the Department receive the funding needed to maintain the critical work it is doing for this generation and those in the future. If Committee Members or staff require more information, please feel free to contact:

- Phil Donovan, Northwest Public Affairs, at (503) 522-3023;
- Carl Merkle, CTUIR First Foods Policy Program, at (541) 429-7235; or
- Lisa Ganuelas, CTUIR Legislative Coordinator, at (541) 429-7392.

Thank you.