

# The Oregon Solutions Network



The **Oregon Solutions Network** promotes collaborative governance in the State of Oregon by using a cross sector approach to respond to challenges and opportunities that lead to sustainable community and statewide solutions. Governor Kitzhaber signed an executive order in December 2011 establishing the network to link Oregon Solutions, Oregon Consensus, and the Regional Solutions Centers in order to leverage their collective assets and align them all with priorities that are established by Regional Advisory Committees.

## Principles of Collaborative Governance

**Transparency and Accountability:** Decisions take place in the public eye.

**Equity and Inclusiveness:** All interests who are needed and willing contribute to the solution.

**Effectiveness and Efficiency:** Solutions are tested to make sure they make practical sense.

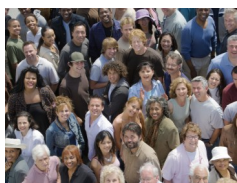
**Responsiveness:** Public concerns are authentically addressed.

**Forum Neutrality:** Different perspectives are welcome; the process itself has no bias.

### **Oregon Consensus**

As the state's designated dispute resolution program, Oregon Consensus (OC) provides a neutral forum to help parties work together to address contentious public policy issues with decisions made through consensus rather than majority rule.

OC is a resource for communities that are experiencing difficulty in agreeing on a solution.

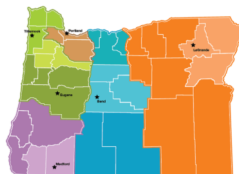


[www.orconsensus.pdx.edu](http://www.orconsensus.pdx.edu)

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### **Regional Solutions Centers**

Representatives from five state agencies (DEQ, ODOT, OHCS, DLCD, Business Oregon) are co-located in Regional Solutions Centers (RSCs) across the state in six universities and community colleges. The RSC's focus on solving problems and seizing opportunities for locally identified projects that require integration of state agency work and funding. RSC Coordinators staff Regional Advisory committees.



[www.regionalsolutions.oregon.gov](http://www.regionalsolutions.oregon.gov)

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### **Oregon Solutions**

Oregon Solutions (OS) is charged with developing sustainable solutions to community-based problems that support economic, environmental, and community objectives and promote prosperity.

OS works across sectors—government, business, and non-profit—to agree how a project will be implemented which is then memorialized in a Declaration of Cooperation.



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## HB 4015

### Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Submitted to the House Committee on Rural Communities February 6, 2014

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch has long supported collaborative regional planning and have participated in broad stakeholder agreements that have contributed to sustainable community and economic development while protecting environmental goals, including in the Rogue, Deschutes and Umatilla Basins. Most recently, WaterWatch was a member of the Columbia River Umatilla Solution Taskforce (CRUST) that was convened in 2012 by the Governor Kitzhaber. This broad stakeholder group was successful in developing a Declaration of Cooperation that outlines a path forward for water development in the Umatilla Basin in a manner that will not undermine existing river protection laws or negatively impact flows need by imperiled salmon.

While we have been involved in many collaborative processes, including an Oregon Solutions taskforce specifically, we cannot support the bill as introduced, or as amended by just the -2 amendments. While the -2 amendments address one of our major concerns, the bill still fails to incorporate the broad governing principals that are supposed to guide all work under the Regional Solutions Network. These principles include, among other things, inclusivity, transparency, responsiveness and balance (see attached Oregon Solutions Network handout). The bill also fails to incorporate the longstanding building blocks of this program, namely that community and economic development be economically, environmentally and socially sustainable and be consistent with regional/statewide environmental goals. That said, we believe that our remaining concerns (as outlined below) can be addressed through fairly simple amendments. As discussed below, the -4 amendments in combination with the -2 amendments address many of our concerns, though not all.

**Position: OPPOSE unless amended.**

**At a minimum adopt both the -2 and the -4 amendments, though we urge the Committee to direct further amendments that would meld -2 and -4 amendments and address points 5 and 6 below.**

**HB 4015--What the bill as introduced does:** HB 4015 sets the statutory framework for the Regional Solutions Program. As part of this, it sets in statute the process for the setting of "Regional Priorities". Regional priorities will be set by Regional Advisory Committees (Sect. 3(4)(b)(A)). Regional advisory committees are made up largely of business interests and elected officials, with some philanthropic organizations. (Sect.3(4)(a)). Regional priorities to date include priorities that would affect statewide

public lands, air and waters. HB 4015 does not provide for any form of public notice and/or comment in the setting of the regional priorities. All state agencies with grant and loan funds are required, regardless of agency mission, to prioritize “Regional Priorities” in both their funding decisions (Sect. 2(1)) and also in setting the priorities and purposes of the agency (Sect. 2(2)).

**Concerns with the bill as introduced:**

**1. Regional Priorities are set without any public notice/comment.** HB 4015 directs the regional advisory committees to establish “regional priorities”. These priorities are set without any opportunity for public notice and comment. Once set, these priorities dictate not only the funding priorities of state agencies, but they also influence agency priorities and workload, regardless of individual agency missions. Many of the priorities set thus far will affect statewide lands and waters that are important to thousands upon thousands of Oregonians. Without allowing for meaningful public input, this program will leave many interests feeling disenfranchised and could affect the ultimate success of the program.

- Solution: insert robust public notice/comment provisions (-4 amendments),

**2. Regional Advisory Committees are not balanced.** HB 4015 sets up regional advisory committees that are not reflective of the whole of community interest in community and economic development. The Committees are made up largely of business interests, elected officials and a few philanthropic organizations. These regional advisory committees are tasked with setting regional priorities. They also can dictate agency participation and/or work priorities via the regional solutions team. Under the bill, regional priorities dictate the funding and workload priorities of state agencies (regardless of agency mission). As many of the regional priorities will affect regional and/or statewide natural resources and/or could have an impact on underrepresented community members, these seats are necessary to ensure that the regional priorities that are recommended by the Regional Advisory Committees do in fact align with the priorities of the community and/or region.

- Solution: add two seats to the regional advisory committees-- (1) conservation NGO and (2) citizen/social justice seats (-4 amendments)

**3. HB 4015 does not direct that community and economic development be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.** Governors Kitzhaber and Kulongoski helped craft what is now the Regional Solutions Network over the past two decades. Important building blocks of this program included executive orders and/or laws that set sustainability and environmental objectives and goals for community and economic development. These are not included in HB 4015.

- Solution: Insert into the definition of “community and economic development” both environmental and sustainability sideboards to incorporate work by our past and present Governors. Insert into the list of factors that a state agency must consider when awarding funds for community or economic development, that the project will protect Oregon’s public health, welfare, safety and environment. (-4 amendments).

4. **HB 4015 directs all agencies that have loan/grant programs to “prioritize funding” for regional solutions, regardless of agency mission (Section 1(2)).** This would apply to all agencies, including natural resource agencies. Thus funds that were legislatively approved for certain projects, would now have to prioritize the funding of regional priorities regardless of whether the regional priority met the requirements of the program.

- **Solution:** Exempt all natural resource agencies from this directive. Ensure that for remaining agencies, the regional priority must meet the standards of the grant/loan fund. Remove requirement that they “prioritize”. (The -2 amendments largely achieve this).

5. **HB 4015 directs that agencies “align priorities and purposes to promote community and economic development” regardless of agency mission (Section 2(2)).** This language co-opts Natural Resource agency missions for the sake of economic and community development. Oregon’s natural resource agencies should not have to “align priorities and purposes to promote community and economic development”. This promotes economic interests over environmental interests, which is not necessarily in line with what the people of this state want or need.

The -2 amendments take this a step further by requiring that the director and staff of all state agencies, including natural resource agencies, work with regional solutions coordinators and teams “to fulfill” regional priorities. Again, regional priorities are set by largely business interests without any public notice/comment and are not required to be environmentally, socially or economically sustainable. Regional priorities may be directly contrary to select natural resource agency missions, but this bill would still require agencies to work to fulfill them. This represents a sea change in agency organizational structure and function. This is a much larger discussion and deserves more public discourse.

- **Solution:** Exempt natural resources from these requirements. (This is not yet captured in any of the proposed amendments).

6. **HB 4015 does not include any legislative oversight.** If enacted into law, this bill will live on much longer than Governor Kitzhaber’s tenure. To ensure balance to this program, there should be some legislative oversight.

- **Solution:** Have a role for the Legislature in selection of Regional Solutions Committees in a meaningful way that assures balanced representation and set criteria for selection of Regional Priorities. (This is not yet captured in any of the proposed amendments).

**Conclusion:** For the reasons outlined above, we cannot support HB 4015 as written or as amended solely by the -2 amendments. The -4 amendments, if in addition to the -2 amendments, would help address three of our four remaining concerns. We urge the committee to direct further amendments that would meld the -2 and -4 amendments and address points 5 and 6 above.

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