



SB 266

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Submitted to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources March 9, 2015

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 of Oregon is neutral on SB 266, with the -2 amendments

What SB 266 does: SB 266 establishes a funding program to allow for grants for place based planning.

The concept of place based planning is found in the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. WaterWatch served on the small Policy Advisory Committee that was convened by the state to help the Oregon Water Resources Department develop the Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

The -2 amendments ensure that some of the sideboards that were developed by the Policy Advisory Committee, and included in the Integrated Water Resources Strategy, will attach to planning efforts allowed under the grant program set forth in SB 266. The inclusion of these sideboards are important to ensure that planning efforts funded by the state ascribe to the guidelines in the Strategy, which was adopted by the Oregon Water Resources Commission in 2012.

The -2 amendments also provide for a ten year sunset. While WaterWatch is in support of regional planning to address the specific issues and hydrology within distinct river basins, we have concerns about allowing entities other than the state to facilitate the development of the plans, which is what the funding program set forth in SB 266 will allow. However, the -2 amendments, by setting a ten year sunset, allow WaterWatch to be neutral on the bill. A ten year sunset will allow review of the program in ten years. If the place based planning is successful then the state can seek to extend and/or lift the sunset, however, if the program proves not to be successful then the funding program does not live on in perpetuity. Given that place based planning is just embarking upon a "pilot" stage, the sunset is all the more appropriate.

Contacts:

Kimberley Priestley, 503-295-4039 x 3, kjp@waterwatch.org

Jonathan Manton, 541-729-2923, jonathan@sawneeservices.com