



March 9, 2015

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature

Testimony in support of SB 5540 and SB 5541

Co-chairs and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of SB 5540 and SB 5541. I'm Holly Crosson, Executive Director of the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD). We work throughout Benton County to engage rural and urban residents in the conservation and stewardship of natural resources.

With assistance from OWEB, ODA and other funders, our programs help protect and improve water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat, and help landowners enhance productivity on their land. We work in close collaboration with a committed and diverse group of partners and stakeholders, including state agencies, watershed councils, land trusts, local governments, Oregon State University, farmers, and hundreds of private landowners that are committed to a shared vision: a healthy environment, robust economy and vibrant community in Benton County.

Though we are a small district, the Benton SWCD's impact is far-reaching and relevant for those in our community. Since 2000, we have received \$654,000 in Technical Assistance/LMA funds from ODA. These funds have enabled us to leverage \$1,424,410 in OWEB Technical Assistance Restoration and Small Grant funding, and close to 2 million dollars in additional funds from local landowners and other groups. We've used these funds to implement more than 50 on-the-ground conservation projects. Over the last fifteen years OWEB Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) funding has resulted in the restoration of over 500 acres of riparian buffer along fifteen miles of Benton County streams.

ODA funding makes it possible for us to provide site visits and technical assistance to over 200 landowners each year. Many of the people we visit voluntarily change their practices based on the information we provide or with OWEB small grant funding we've helped them procure.

In January of 2015 the Benton SWCD was awarded \$221,643 in OWEB Willamette Special Investment Partnership (W-SIP) funds. The Benton SWCD, along with more than 30 partner organizations and landowners, will implement on-the-ground riparian and aquatic restoration projects along a twenty-mile stretch of the mainstem Willamette River from Corvallis to Albany. We have used this recent OWEB/W-SIP funding to leverage more than \$218,445 in additional funds from the Meyer Memorial Trust, Bonneville Power Administration and the Oregon State Weed Board, as well as \$71,225 in matching funds from landowners, local businesses and the Benton SWCD.

Quite simply, our success would not be possible without the strong support of the legislature and vital funding provided by OWEB, ODA and others.

We are grateful for your support. We look forward to serving our community and working with our partners to achieve measurable ecological and social outcomes that provide lasting benefits to Benton County residents and the landscape we cherish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Holly Crosson".

Holly Crosson

Executive Director

Benton Soil and Water Conservation District