



## TUALATIN RIVERKEEPERS.

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March 24,

2015

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair

Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair

RE: HB 5018 DEQ Budget

Dear Senator Devlin, Representative Rayfield and Subcommittee Members,

Tualatin Riverkeepers appreciates the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 5018 and provisions to restore DEQ's capacity to protect and restore Oregon's environmental health.

In particular, we are encouraged that this bill will address the significant backlog in the issuance of wastewater and stormwater permits through Package #123 in the Governors Recommended Budget. Currently 71% of the Major National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits administered by DEQ are expired.

Expired permits inhibit the progress toward restoring water quality in Oregon's rivers, streams and lakes. There are also real economic consequences for permit delays.

For example, the Watershed-based Permit issued to Clean Water Services (CWS) in Washington County which combines the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit with operating permits for 4 wastewater treatment plants expired in 2009. The delay in permit renewal means a delay in the implementation of significant efficiencies that reduce costs to ratepayers and increase the capacity of the system to facilitate economic growth. This includes implementation of projects including the Natural Treatment Systems and Fernhill Wetland, which significantly increases the capacity of to treat increased wastewater anticipated with the growth of Washington County.

We are also supportive of increased funding for nonpoint source pollution. The Tualatin River has seen a significant transformation in water quality due to the treatment of wastewater, but reducing pollution and erosion from stormwater runoff has been more challenging and will take much longer. Package #124 in the Governor's Recommended Budget is a good investment in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 5018.

Sincerely,

Brian Wegener, Riverkeeper

Advocacy & Communications Manager