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March 25, 2015

Co-Chair Devlin and Co-Chair Rayfield  
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**RE: DEQ Budget Package #128 – Quantifying conservation outcomes**

Co-Chairs Devlin and Rayfield, and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Freshwater Trust, our restoration partners, and thousands of stream miles that need a hand, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5018 and the Department of Environmental Quality's Policy Option Package 128 for Quantifying Conservation Outcomes.

The Freshwater Trust is a 501(c)(3) conservation nonprofit, and for thirty-two years, we have been working to preserve and restore freshwater ecosystems in Oregon. We work with landowners, local restoration professionals, and other stakeholders to get work done on the ground around the state. We also engage in key policy work to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration. We continue to serve on Policy Advisory Committees for Agricultural Water Quality, Clean Water Act State Revolving Funds, and advised on the State's Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Our consistent approach is focused on getting results that matter.

Over the last several years, we have helped regulated entities plan for and implement water quality trading programs that accelerate the pace and scale of high-quality river restoration by producing and selling quantified units that can be used to meet permit limits. By quantifying specific environmental uplift derived from specific restoration actions, we can make informed tradeoffs that render environmental gains, save ratepayers money, put people to work, and pay landowners for growing bushels of nature.

Through this process, it has become clear that existing data and analysis on impaired waterways and voluntary nonpoint source actions have not been consistently tracked. In order to fix our freshwater ecosystems, we need to

know where we are and where we are going. It has also become clear that the technology and methods for quantifying environmental uplift continue to improve.

The problem stems from the fact that most existing nonpoint source requirements are often in narrative form and found in different sets of regulations. We need to be able to translate the effectiveness of our actions in real-time. Further, to effectively quantify the voluntary actions that have been funded through various agency incentive programs, stronger data coordination between agencies is needed. And the tools, partnerships, and clear pathway to improving watershed health are now squarely within our reach—it is time to take the next logical step.

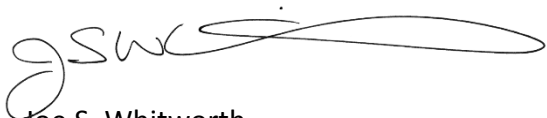
The appropriation in Package 128 to fund the Clean Water Partnership initiative will bridge this gap and provide agencies with a critical common language. By providing the data coordination between DEQ, ODA, OWEB, DOGAMI, and ODF, and analysis necessary to quantify the voluntary restoration actions taken to date, the State of Oregon will be able to invest public dollars in the areas where it is needed most.

The fear, of course, is that this data and analysis might show more is needed, and that it will somehow lead to more regulation. We believe the data and analysis will instead show that with additional time and smart, directed investment, we can ascertain where the work must be done to solve the problem.

In the past, we did not know how to quantify the environmental benefit of restoration actions. Today, the data is real and the tools are available. Private actors are the stewards of much of the land in Oregon and have long engaged in efforts to restore and conserve it. But without data coordination among agencies, we cannot measure the benefit of these actions or step beyond procedural litigation to solve natural resource conflicts. The time has come to give credit where credit is due and precisely invest resources to evaluate and fully restore our rivers.

The Freshwater Trust appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Package #128 to quantify conservation outcomes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. S. Whitworth", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joe S. Whitworth  
President