



HB 5511

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Submitted to the Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

April 2, 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 supports HB 5511

Oregon is a state blessed with a wide array of natural landscapes---mountains, forests, beaches, deserts, grasslands and wetlands abound. Oregon's spectacular rivers play a key function in these landscapes, whether the mighty Columbia, the beloved Metolius, the wild Rogue or the hundreds of lesser known streams and rivers across the state.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's mission is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. ODFW is the agency charged with caring for Oregon's natural landscapes and waterways, and the fish and wildlife that inhabit them. ODFW's work is critical in protecting the places that are so very special to Oregonians, and are key contributors to Oregon's economy---both rural and urban alike.

The work of ODFW is diverse and wide-spanning. In the world of water, for instance, ODFW's work is critical to ensuring that the public interest in Oregon's rivers and streams is protected in the state permitting of new water rights, issuance of hydroelectric permits, permitting of new storage reservoirs, and virtually all allocation and reallocation decisions. ODFW also plays a key role in larger water policy forums such as the Columbia River Umatilla Solutions Taskforce (CRUST) Agreement, the Deschutes Groundwater Mitigation program and endless other task forces, work groups and rulemakings that touch upon water allocation/reallocation. We cannot stress enough the importance of ODFW's work to help protect Oregon's rivers and streams for the public at large.

WaterWatch is a member group of the Oregon Conservation Network and supports the testimony that they have provided to the Committee on HB 5511. With regards to ODFW's work to protect and restore Oregon's rivers and to provide critical services to a wide variety of water users, WaterWatch urges the Committee to:

- Please support the full funding of POP 101, which provides general funds for a variety of work within the agency. Included in POP 101 is funding for the water quantity/water quality program, a program which is critical for ensuring the health of Oregon's treasured rivers. The GRB includes 2.5 positions for the water program under POP 101. POP 101 also includes general

fund dollars to support 25% of district and assistant biologists. These on-the-ground field staff provide critical services to all Oregonians—whether a farmer, city, recreationalist or simply someone who loves Oregon’s rivers.

- Please add back \$200,000 in general funds to support three positions needed to carry out the instream studies that are recommended in the 2012 Integrated Water Resources Strategy (one Natural Resource Specialist 2 and two EBAs (seasonal assistant instream flow specialists)). The Integrated Water Resources Strategy was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders to help create a path forward to meeting Oregon’s instream and out-of-stream water needs. ODFW’s role in carrying out the Integrated Water Resources Strategy is critical to the success of the program and should be fully funded. Without these positions implementation of this statewide plan will be unbalanced, and will not serve the needs of all citizens of this state. These positions were in the ARB, but not the GRB.

Thank you for your consideration.

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