

# POLK COUNTY

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TO: Co-Chairs Senator Fred Girod and Representative Tobias Read; and Members of the Joint Ways & Means Capital Construction Subcommittee

FROM: Polk County Commissioner Craig Pope, Co-Chair, Association of Oregon Counties Water Policy Committee.

SUBJECT: House Bills 5030 and 5005: Critical water development investments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and Subcommittee members for this opportunity to address you. I am Craig Pope, Polk County Commissioner. In spite of the Polk County letterhead, **I am here to speak for the Association of Oregon Counties** in full support of lottery-backed bonding requests of the Water Resources Department (WRD) in House Bill 5030 and their general obligation bonding request in HB 5005. AOC itself has provided written testimony along with eleven other organizations in support of the WRD requests.

A brief word about my background: since entering office in 2010 I have been an active participant in the AOC Water Policy Committee and am now Co-Chair. Along with all of AOC, I supported and helped to fashion Oregon's Integrated Water Resource Strategy (2012), with particular attention paid to Place-Based (regional/local) Planning, and the new State Water Supply Development Program (Senate Bill 839 [2013]). My county has gratefully received necessary state financial assistance for a feasibility study (SB 1069 [2008]) on water storage

By mid-May the State of Oregon will have up to 12 counties with State Drought Declarations. The state is in the fourth year of what looks like an extended drought. The entire state has a snow pack of less than 50% of "normal" (median basin-wide percentage of 1981-2010). Snow pack is nature's dam, and it is very low. According to federal officials, southeastern Oregon is in "extreme drought", across the state's midsection is in "severe drought", and northeast and much of the southwest is currently in "moderate drought".

It is imperative that Oregon make a concerted investment in water resources **now**. Our neighbors in Washington, and more recently California, have invested extraordinary sums of public funding toward water supply planning and development to address water challenges that are facing all Western states.

Under HB 5030:

- Package #106 adds funds to match local feasibility studies. Polk County could not have had our study without the matching grant. WRD currently has \$750,000 in its base budget to provide grant funding for such studies. This package would add an additional \$2 million.

- Package #113 recapitalizes the Water Supply Development Account created under SB839 and the Water Supply Fund to finance qualifying water supply projects, big and small, with \$17.25 million for grants and loans.
- Package #115 supports project development and Place-Based Planning, our most critical function to start the process that will end in successful community solutions. *County governing bodies are ideal to play the role of convener, but we need technical support and know-how to help us.* This request would expand the water supply team, including two place-based planning coordinators. This package also includes \$750,000 for grants to help communities get started.

Under HB 5005, AOC supports revitalization of the Water Development **Loan** Fund, with \$30 million of GO bonding, to provide a mix of resources particular important to the Umatilla Basin.

We cannot expect the drought to end. Oregon cannot wait for these critical investments.

Thank you Mr. Chair and Subcommittee members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Pope', written in a cursive style.

Craig Pope, Polk County Commissioner  
AOC Water Policy Committee Co-Chair



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May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Capital Construction Subcommittee  
Co-Chair Sen. Fred Girod; Co-Chair Rep. Tobias Read & committee

### **Water Investments in the 2015-17 state budget**

First I want to thank you, the legislature for your support of the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) in the present budget. You have made water a state priority.

I am Co-Chair of the AOC water policy committee. I support the good work at OWRD.

I want to give you a local perspective of the Upper Deschutes River Basin.


- I have been working on water issues for the last 15 years.
- 100 years ago we over allocated the river water. Endangered species, connected ground and surface water, climate change are causing challenges today
- State and Federal grants have enabled us to plan and implement solutions to continue to provide water for agriculture, the environment and the growing population. New solutions will be more complex and take years to develop.
- Basin stakeholders organized then applied for a Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Water Smart grant to develop a basin plan. We could not raise \$750,000 locally to match the grant.
- SB 839 allocated \$750,000 for a match to BOR funds for a water smart grant.
- We now have 40 stakeholders around the table who have approved a 'Plan of Study' with BOR. We will finish this process in 2-3 years.
- The end result will support future city and agriculture water needs while putting 70% of conserved water back into the river.
- Listing of the Oregon Spotted Frog will mean the winter flows of 20 cfs below wickiup reservoir will need to increase to something like 400 cfs.

Please fund all the OWRD packages. This is a long term investment in Oregon.

Without the state support, the Deschutes River Basin would not be moving forward.

Keep the basin flowing.

Sincerely,

  
Alan Unger, Commissioner