



WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP

Friday, May 15, 2015

Testimony to Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction on HB 5030

The Willamette Partnership has a conservation mission, which we have pursued in more than 10 years of work on habitat and water incentives and ecosystem markets. The Partnership's Board represents a diversity of interests across business, agriculture, conservation, tribal government, academic institutions, and local government. That diversity underpins a balanced approach to conservation that strives for solutions that will build resilient and sustainable communities.

We are submitting testimony in support of HB 5030. Oregon's working lands are part of our state's heritage, and as Oregon continues to grow, these lands will play an increasingly important role. We need to find ways to protect working lands for the multiple values they produce—food, shelter, clean water, clean air, and natural places to play. HB 5030 and the Clean Water Fund proposed under SB 204 will be an important part of this effort.

Solving difficult conservation problems requires combining and coordinating the efforts of many stakeholders and funding sources – an “all lands, all hands” approach. Federal and state funding, voluntary efforts like those incentivized by this bill, regulatory approaches, mitigation, and technical assistance are all needed to solve the state's water quality problems and put us back on a track to having healthy rivers and fish populations. The Clean Water Fund will help both fund voluntary work and to target funds to where they can be most effective.

We also know that conservation, particularly restoration of riparian areas, provides many important benefits to Oregon's people and economy. For example:

- Clean Water Services' restoration of more than 35 miles of streams in Washington County has improved air quality and provided public health benefits for more than 142,000 people;
- The Oregon Ecosystem Workforce Program estimates that for every \$1 million spent on restoration, 16 jobs are created—often family wage jobs;
- Property values can increase 3-13% for homes within a ¼ mile of a healthy stream; and
- Oregon's fish alone provide a major economic boost to the state, contributing an estimated \$400 million a year to the state's economy through commercial and recreational fisheries, according to ODFW studies.

We support the role of the Clean Water Fund, and its ability to accept contributions from any source. This will let the state leverage dollars from utilities, transportation departments, and private foundations with state funds to achieve the goals of the Fund. It is simple to keep the accounting of different funding sources separate to ensure the Clean Water Fund is achieving its purposes. North Carolina has been able to work with state grant dollars, home builders, and transportation agencies to achieve significant restoration gains.

We suggest the state consider keeping the Clean Water Fund broadly focused, not limited to just riparian improvement. The Clean Water Fund should be available to fund the types of actions identified as most important by local communities. This could include cattle watering stations, forest road maintenance, or improvement of stream crossings—all important actions for clean water, and all supportive of viable working lands.

We applaud the state's efforts to address the need for innovative incentives to maintain healthy working lands and ecosystems. Please feel to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Bobby Cochran,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bobby Cochran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Executive Director