



HB 5010

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Submitted to the Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee March 29, 2017

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.

ODFW Budget: WaterWatch urges the Sub-Committee to fully fund POP 108 as requested in the Agency Recommended Budget (not as modified by the Governor's Recommended Budget)

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. The work of ODFW is diverse and wide-spanning. In the world of water, 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, permitting of new storage reservoirs, and virtually all allocation and reallocation decisions. ODFW also works to restore and protect flows through its work to establish instream water rights. ODFW also plays a key role in larger water policy forums such as the Willamette Storage Reauthorization and 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.

While we support a wide variety of positions within ODFW, in our testimony today we want to highlight POP 108 which supports ODFW's water quality and quantity program.

As proposed in the Agency Recommended Budget (ARB), POP 108 would fund the very small core staff that houses this program, would continue forward two EBAs (assistant instream flow specialists) to conduct long needed instream flows studies and would fund a NRS4 to help implement the instream directives of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (including engaging with communities and local landowners on finding water solutions and working with other agencies on implementing IWRS).

The GRB does not include funding for one of the EBAs or the NRS4. The importance of these positions cannot be overstated. The Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) 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. One of the key directives of the 2012 IWRS was to determine both instream and out-of-stream demands. The state conducted an assessment of out-of-stream demands, but has not provided adequate funding to complete the flow studies necessary to understand instream demands. Without an

understanding of instream needs, it is difficult to adequately assess the impacts of the many water development projects across the state. With a request in front of the state for an additional 30 million dollars of lottery funds for the OWRD's "water development program" it is more important than ever that the instream work directed under the IWRS be funded. ODFW's role in carrying out the IWRS is critical to the success of the program and should be fully funded. Without these positions implementation of this statewide plan will continue unbalanced, and will not serve the needs of all citizens of this state.

It is also important to note that Oregonian's view protection of water quantity as one of the most important functions of ODFW. In a recent public opinion survey conducted for the Oregon Legislative Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education (2016), the public ranked "not enough water /water quantity" as the second most important fish, wildlife or habitat issue facing Oregon today, second only to "habitat loss" (which covers water as well). The public poll also concluded that "Oregon's water resources are safe and well protected" ranked second in importance only to "healthy fish and wildlife populations exist in Oregon". In short, Oregonians want their rivers and streams protected into the future. It is the few staff in ODFW's Water Quantity/Quality program that provides this service.

In closing, with climate change, increasing complexities and conflicts over water, endangered species concerns and other factors putting increasing pressures on our state's limited water resources, full funding of the water quantity/quality program is vital. ODFW's work is critical in protecting the rivers and lakes that are so very special to Oregonians, and are key contributors to Oregon's economy—both rural and urban alike.

We urge the Committee to fully fund POP 108 as requested in the ARB, not as modified by the GRB.

Thank you for your consideration.

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