



Date: March 31, 2017

**To: The Honorable Brad Witt, Co-Chair
The Honorable Lew Frederick, Co-Chair
Joint Committee of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

Testimony in Support of House Bill 5040

Greenbelt Land Trust supports House Bill 5040 and offers the following comments.

House Bill 5040 directs the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to allocate moneys from the Watershed Conservation Operating Fund to various state agencies and to support operations and grants.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board promotes and implements critical programs to restore, maintain and enhance Oregon watersheds in order to protect the economic and social well-being of Oregon and its citizens. Oregon has a remarkable natural resource legacy that includes diverse and abundant sources of water and unique populations of native wildlife and fish species and the habitats they occupy. The stewardship of this rich and abundant legacy is of paramount importance if we want future generations to enjoy the same resources that we have today. The passage in 2010 of Measure 76 by an overwhelming majority (68%) of Oregonians across all regions of the state was proof that the citizens of Oregon strongly support good stewardship of our natural resources and the funding to maintain this stewardship. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has a commitment to make sure that we have clean water, abundant wildlife and fish, and parks for all Oregonians.

During a period where Oregonians will likely see steep declines in federal funding to protect a healthy environment, programs provided by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board will become even more critical to maintain our natural resource legacy. Many regions in Oregon will experience significant increases in population as more people migrate to our state to enjoy its scenic beauty and abundant resources. Development pressures and the subsequent loss of habitat are some of the impacts resulting from more people moving to our region. The challenge for the current generation of Oregonians is to secure a future for our clean water, fish and wildlife by investing in the protection and maintenance of these resources. Recipients of funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board have demonstrated over that past few decades that they can produce strong conservation returns with the funds and leverage the money to bring many more dollars to the table.

Greenbelt Land Trust has used and significantly matched funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to:

- 1) protect working lands with strong conservation values and public benefit (recreational trails) such as Bald Hill Farm,
- 2) restore highly degraded floodplains along the Willamette River that now provide a forested buffer between seasonal high river flows and productive agricultural lands, and
- 3) thin an overstocked forest to benefit wildlife and protect neighboring residential areas from potential catastrophic wildfires.

Greenbelt Land Trust appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments and encourages the members of the Committee to support a strong budget for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and vote in favor of the Bill.

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