



## OREGON CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

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To: Members of the House Energy and Environment Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: April 10, 2017

RE: House Bill 3343

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee: Good afternoon, my name is Rhett Lawrence and I'm the Conservation Director for the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters in Oregon, I am pleased to offer comments on House Bill 3343. As an organization with a long history of working on moving beyond fossil fuels in Oregon, the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 3343. We have been raising the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive view of large fossil fuel projects for a number of years now. We believe the Climate Test proposed by HB 3343 is an excellent and necessary tool for Oregon to implement as we begin to deal with the climate changes already upon us.

In essence, this bill would essentially create a state-level and more particularized version of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which has been the environmental equivalent of the Magna Carta since it was enacted on January 1, 1970. Our neighbors to the north and south passed their own state versions in the early 1970s – California's CEQA and Washington's SEPA – and both provide significant authority to state agencies to review proposed projects, ask questions, conduct appropriate studies, and consult with other state and federal agencies.

Oregon, on the other hand, enacted its pioneering land use laws, which have served us well in many circumstances and which encourage us to address the impacts of certain projects in some cases long before those projects are ever conceived. Unfortunately, our land use laws and other state agency permitting processes are unable to deal with some very large projects – some with interstate and even international consequences – that have been proposed in Oregon. When a large project requires many permits from multiple agencies, the agencies should be empowered to share resources and provide the applicant and the public with a more coordinated analysis and review. That is not the case in our state right now.

And importantly, none of those laws or permitting systems in our state is required to consider climate impacts as a factor in approving or denying permits. The Climate Test would change that by both bringing climate considerations into the analysis of large fossil fuel projects and creating an

overarching mechanism by which multiple agencies' permits and analyses are contemplated as a whole. It would authorize the Oregon Department of Energy to coordinate with other agencies to gather and provide good information to decision-makers and the public when certain projects are likely to have significant consequences to the environment or the state's economy that extend beyond the issues raised in a single permit. It would also require the assessment of the health effects on environmental justice communities and the impacts on indigenous Tribes.

Of course, another component of the Climate Test is that it will require agencies to examine the economic viability of these large fossil projects in a global energy economy that will limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius. And if the likely economic benefits of the proposed project under the "2 degree C scenario" do not outweigh the cumulative negative impacts, the permit would be denied.

The Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club believes that the proposals put forth in HB 3343 would be beneficial to Oregon, both in better protecting our environment and in instituting new efficiencies in permitting processes for state agencies. For these reasons, we very much support House Bill 3343 and we urge this committee to do the same. Thank you very much for considering my comments.