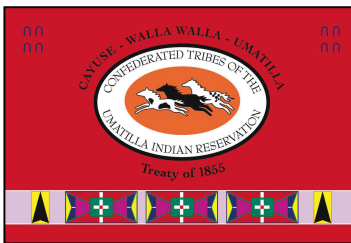


## Confederated Tribes *of the* Umatilla Indian Reservation



46411 Timine Way  
Pendleton, OR 97801

[www.ctuir.org](http://www.ctuir.org)  
Phone 541-276-3165

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Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Witt and Members of the Committee. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony today in support of the Oregon Water Resources Department budget.

The CTUIR has long enjoyed a productive working relationship with the OWRD. Our collaborative efforts have resulted in substantial benefits to the citizens of our Northeast Oregon region and the entire State.

Residents of the Umatilla Basin, including tribal members, enjoy the renewed opportunities from restored fish populations in the Tribes' namesake river—the culmination of decades-worth of successful collaboration with OWRD, involved stakeholders, and many others. A strong, competent OWRD has been vital to these positive outcomes.

The CTUIR has contributed staff time and involvement in the development of Oregon's first ever Integrated Water Resources Strategy, the Seasonally Varying Flows taskforce, the Columbia River Umatilla Solutions Task Force, and last year's Drought Taskforce, and we continue to support implementation of the Oregon Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Our long term effort to peacefully settle the CTUIR's water rights in the Umatilla River Basin is making substantial progress and features regular, constructive and valuable participation of OWRD staff.

There continue to be many challenges. Recently, the media has called much attention to the State's water management challenges, including both surface and groundwater. In response, we understand the OWRD is working with the Oregon Water Resources Commission to initiate a planning effort to improve and prioritize groundwater management for groundwater-challenged areas of the state. We recognize surface and groundwater are linked and their management complex, and the OWRD requires good data and information to make responsible decisions to improve management. The groundwater package, while much more funding is needed, is vital to achieve data-driven management.

Similarly, the Secretary of State's Audit December 2016 Report identified needs for enhanced groundwater protection, data collection and analysis, and staffing to address OWRD's demanding workloads. The report states that "parts of the state are experiencing regular and large scale water supply availability issues," and "indications are this trend will continue." The report also states "actions to restore and protect streamflows and watersheds for long-term sustainability have received less attention. Related programs are limited in number and participation. The demands that are putting pressure on Oregon's water supply are likely to continue to grow, which raises the need for action to ensure the ongoing sustainability of water."

The CTUIR is making significant process on our efforts to negotiate a settlement of our water rights in the Umatilla Basin. Because of our progress, the Department of Interior expects our settlement to be one of the most active Federal Indian water rights settlement negotiations in the United States in 2017. We need Oregon's continued and enhanced involvement in our settlement THIS year. Our settlement has the potential to improve water management in the

Umatilla Basin while resolving our outstanding water rights claims for instream flows and for the consumptive uses of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Our Reservation economy is valuable not only to us, but the region, providing 1,900 jobs as the number one employer in Umatilla County. We will require reliable and continued water supply to maintain these regional benefits in the long-term and our settlement is critical. The CTUIR settlement will also benefit water users in the Umatilla Basin. The CTUIR has committed to a settlement that does not harm existing water rights. The CTUIR settlement seeks to build on the success of the 1988 Umatilla Basin Project and improve instream flow conditions and fish habitat in the Umatilla River while improving the water supply and delivery infrastructure to the Basin's irrigation districts and ditch companies. And perhaps most importantly, the settlement will remove the current cloud created by the unadjudicated Federal reserved water rights of the CTUIR over all existing water rights in the Umatilla Basin.

Meeting its two key goals of directly addressing Oregon's water supply needs and restoring and protecting stream flows requires OWRD possess the resources – data, funding and staffing - to successfully manage water for current and future Oregonians. Further, OWRD needs to fully and actively participate in our Umatilla Basin Water Rights settlement in what we anticipate will be a very productive year of negotiations with Umatilla Basin stakeholders, including irrigators and municipalities.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of appropriate funding for the Oregon Water Resources Department.