



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 13, 2017

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Brad Witt, Co-Chairs
Email: jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: **SB 5542** – Water Resources Department Budget – **SUPPORT**

The League has strong positions on both water quality and quantity. We have studied water issues since 1969. We had a seat on the original Integrated Water Resources Strategy Policy Advisory Group and the latest update work. League members attend Water Resources Commission meetings and workgroup meetings. As a result of that window into the department's responsibilities, we provide testimony today **in support of the General Fund and Lottery Fund request for the base budget/activities** of the department.

A reminder:

"All water within the State from all sources of water belongs to the public."

Our **next priority is funding for data collection and meaningful analysis** so that transaction requests can be fairly processed and any requests for water storage can be processed in a manner to assure the public's rights are protected. We include the entire ecosystem in that expected protection. There is a link between this scientific work and the need for future water storage in Oregon. The League believes that our weather is changing and that our wonderful natural storage—winter snowpack—will not provide the summer water we will need in the future—no matter how lucky we have been this year. BUT storage projects need to be vetted. Where to get the water—even winter water—must be a science-based decision. We also support the less expensive "storage" of aggressive water conservation.

Not a part of this budget, but critical to our data collection priority, we supported **HB 2705**, a policy bill that requires additional measurement devices by water appropriators. Such data links directly to other funding packages.

Since the advent of Key Performance Measures (KPMs) by then Senator Kurt Schrader and Representative Susan Morgan a number of years ago, the League has used KPMs to help determine where funding gaps exist. Sometimes KPMs provide a window into department management issues, but as in these cases, there can be a direct link between the resources provided and the work accomplished.

We note that KPM #8's goal is for 2,300 water measurement devices, and we are seriously behind in meeting that goal. On the other hand, KPM #15, water rights reporting, is now meeting the goal. That jump in success is in direct correlation to the monies provided to the department a couple of budget cycles ago to address this issue.

Another way to meet the goal is with policies such as those contained in **HB 2705** mentioned above. We do acknowledge that KPMs need to be meaningful, and that they should measure what the legislature

wants this agency to do and be linked with funding or policies needed to accomplish the KPMs' goals. A review of KPMs to assure their effectiveness is always appropriate.

For 2017, we support, in priority order, the following Policy Option Packages (POPs):

POP 104: Continuation of Place-Based Planning efforts in the Mid-Coast Region, Lower John Day Sub-Basin, Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin and Malheur Lake (Harney) Basin. These local community efforts, which include members with basin area connections and knowledge, need staffing support in order to bring disparate views together. **We are concerned, however, that the Dept. of Environmental Quality budget has staff reductions in this area.** The entire purpose of these planning exercises is to focus on **clean abundant water for all**—the Integrated Water Resources Strategy goal. That means cross-agency staffing is needed. This planning effort is about more than future storage.

POP 101: Additional groundwater studies. As mentioned above, collection of data is critical to resource management. Groundwater studies take a number of years to complete and Oregon is behind in gathering this important data as we see more demands for groundwater. As mentioned by the agency, over half of the new applications are for groundwater. Without adequate data, how can these requests be fairly processed? We also support **POP 103**, a modest fee and policy change meant to protect our groundwater.

POP 105: Field staff is critical to good water management. Frankly, we also support **HB 2706** that would charge a water rights management fee in order to have more robust staffing to protect both the water-rights holder and the public's water. Without the additional money, we would reluctantly suggest that the field conservation coordinator position could be removed from this request.

POP 100: Water Rights Transactions and Dam Safety Fee Updates (contained in **HB 2295**). This fee update was the result of stakeholder conversations and an understanding that timely permitting is critical to Oregon's economy.

POP 102: Dam Safety Inspections: The League has been actively supporting the need to address public safety related to Oregon's dams. We have also provided testimony in support of **HB 3427**, a bill that also addresses the need for emergency planning around high hazard dams with the expectation that POP 102 will be funded. By changing the Limited Duration position to a full-time position, we might actually have 24-months of this extra staff, since it takes about 3 months to hire and then additional time to train staff. It is clear we need this minimal staff in order to address dam safety in Oregon.

POP 109: Feasibility Grants. We have monitored the Feasibility Studies (fondly known as SB 1069 grants) over time and believe they provide real value to local communities as they address water needs. These grants go through a rigorous vetting process and seem to be well spent in local communities. We do question the use of bonds instead of general fund or lottery dollars, but also understand the availability of each.

Without taking a specific position on **POP 110**, we recognize the need for additional conservation and storage projects across the state. We will leave it to others to make the case for this funding request. The same is true regarding **POP 107**, where we expect Umatilla County and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to fund this package. If that funding is not forthcoming, then we do NOT support using General Funds to backfill these positions.

POP 106: Payroll Shared Services. We would be remiss if we did not support and applaud what we hope will be on-going cross-agency services sharing.

We have provided links to two documents related to the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS): a 4-page progress report from February of 2016 and an 18-page update of the IWRS Draft Workplan dated June 28, 2016. These documents are intended to stress two things: A targeted plan with real goals is helpful to agencies and the legislature to provide a roadmap toward meeting those goals. And that the IWRS is about more than this agency. So, **as you consider the entire suite of natural resource agency budget requests, please do not consider them in silos.** It will take staff and program dollars in the Dept. of Environmental Quality, in Fish and Wildlife, in the Dept. of Land Conservation and Development, in the Depts. Of Forestry and Agriculture, in the Dept. of State Lands and other agencies in order to fully implement this important Strategy to assure **abundant clean water for all**, the IWRS mission.

We ask that you consider our testimony and provide adequate funding for the Water Resources Department. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Peggy Lynch
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Attachments: [IWRS Progress Report, February 2016](#)
[IWRS 2012-2017 DRAFT WorkPlan, June 2016](#)

cc: Tom Byler, Water Resources Department Director
Lauri Anan, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Advisor