



To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Rep. Brad Witt, Co-Chair
Sen. Lew Frederick, Co-Chair

From: Bob Van Dyk, Wild Salmon Center

Date: April 13, 2017

RE: TESTIMONY IN ON SB 5542, OWRD Budget

Co-Chairs Frederick and Witt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 5542.

The Wild Salmon Center is an Oregon-based organization that promotes the conservation and sustainable use of wild salmon ecosystems across the Pacific Rim.

Cold and adequate water are essential to salmon, so naturally we have an interest in the Water Resources budget. But sound water management is obviously not just about salmon. We are all dependent on sustainable ecosystems. Agricultural, industrial, and residential users all benefit over the long run from sustainable and conservation-minded water management.

To manage sustainably, however, we need effective measurement, which is why we encourage you to support especially Packages 101 and 105. Package 101 reflects the Governor's recommendation that \$1.8 million go to support groundwater studies. Package 105 provides enhanced field capacity among watermasters and hydrologic technicians. Together, these studies and field staff are essential to avoid depletion of surface flows that provide for fish, wildlife, people, and businesses who depend on the water.

As the Oregonians' "Draining Oregon" series documented, there are good reasons to be concerned about water management. The Umatilla, Klamath, and Malheur basins have all faced significant conflicts over water. Deliberate and prompt action is needed to avoid such conflicts, and groundwater studies and adequate watermasters will help.

There is some urgency to efforts to improve measurement and funding of water management for two reasons.

First, as our population and economy grow we will need more water. According to the 2015 OWRD forecast, by 2050 demand will be 15% higher than it is today.¹

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Second, scientific projections on the effects of climate change show that many of the changes in Oregon will increase the pressure to manage our water wisely. The Third Oregon Climate Assessment Report, issued in January, makes this clear. The Water Resources section starts with this sentence: “Warming temperatures, changes in precipitation, and decreasing snowpack are already having, and will continue to have, significant impacts on hydrology and water resources in Oregon.”²

The report details how more precipitation will fall as rain, reducing snowpack, increasing winter flood risk, and changing summer extreme low flows.

The consequences of these changes should be sobering for all of us. As the report notes (p. 17), these changes in supply and demand “are expected to strain the ability...to meet the many and varied water needs of Oregonians, namely irrigation, municipal drinking water, industrial activities, hydropower, flood control, fisheries, wildlife, and recreation.”

For salmon, there will be new potential threats from increased peak flows (which can scour habitat), changes in flow timing, reduced summer flows, and increased stream temperatures. These shifts could change run timing and alter life history.

Salmon will have to adapt to some of these changes that we cannot control, but prudent management of our water resources will help us make better and more informed decisions, so as to mitigate and address these changes. And there is no replacement for groundwater studies of available water and watermasters to monitor use if we are to make prudent decisions.

Though Oregon’s water challenges are daunting, we are confident that we can overcome them by working together. Oregon needs enough water to support a vibrant agricultural sector, water to support growth of our industrial and residential sectors, and water to recover and sustain our fish and wildlife.

But we also must emphasize that these problems are not going to get easier, so we ask your support for these WRD packages today.

² http://www.occri.net/media/1055/ocar3_final_all_01-30-2017_compressed.pdf