



April 13, 2017

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Re: The Freshwater Trust's Testimony on SB 5542

The Freshwater Trust submits these comments regarding SB 5542, a bill that requests approximately 0.6% of Oregon's 2017-2019 budget to managing the state's most precious resource: water. Rather than cutting, as currently proposed, The Freshwater Trust recommends increasing funding for water measurement devices and stream gages, tools which are essential for water management.

The Freshwater Trust is an Oregon nonprofit conservation organization with over twenty years of experience working cooperatively with rural landowners to restore instream flows to Oregon's rivers and streams. The Freshwater Trust relies on stream gage and diversion measurement data to implement flow restoration projects that create mutual benefits for farmers and fish. For example, The Freshwater Trust partners with farmers in the Fifteenmile Creek watershed to voluntarily reduce their water use when hot weather and low streamflow increase potential impacts to Endangered Species Act-listed steelhead. This watershed-level coordination earned a certificate of appreciation from NOAA Fisheries. This innovative program is made possible because approximately 95% of diversions in the watershed are equipped with a measuring device, allowing farmers to perform a real-time cost-benefit analysis of reducing their water use when potentially lethal temperatures are predicted.

To help meet Oregon's instream goals, support water management, and empower more farmers to make data-driven water use decisions, WRD's budget should increase funding for gaging stations and the Cost-Share Measurement Fund. The Freshwater Trust appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments. Please contact me if I can provide additional details. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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