



Working with more than 95 community wastewater treatment and stormwater management agencies to protect Oregon's water

107 SE Washington, Suite 242
Portland, Oregon 97214

(503) 236-6722 www.oracwa.org Fax (503) 236-6719

June 6, 2017

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair

Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair

Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization

900 Court Street NE, Hearing Room 453

Salem, Oregon 97301

Sent via e-mail to: jtpm.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: HB 2017-3 Sections 136 & 137

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 2017, and respectfully submits the following concerns regarding Sections 136 and 137. ACWA is a private, not-for-profit organization of Oregon's wastewater treatment and stormwater management agencies, along with associated consulting professionals. Our 135+ statewide members are dedicated to protecting and enhancing Oregon's water quality and sustainably managing the public's infrastructure. Our members provide wastewater and stormwater management services to over 2.4 million Oregonians, serving 64% of Oregon's businesses and homes.

Due to the potential environmental impacts, as well as National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements, ACWA opposes Sections 136 and 137 of the Transportation Funding Package, which include prescriptive, non-flexible requirements for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and for cities over a certain population to "salt" highways after 2-inches of snow accumulation. ACWA member agencies recognize the importance of road safety and, in fact, that auto accidents can be a source of water pollution. However, a blanket approach, requiring the use of salt, is not appropriate for Oregon. It would eliminate flexibility for ODOT and local governments to employ the most effective and appropriate snow abatement methods given all of the factors they grapple with in maintaining Oregon's roadways. Moreover, it would be unnecessarily detrimental to the environment.

Salt adversely impacts stormwater management facilities and roadside vegetation. Road salting also has been shown to adversely impact water quality and aquatic life. Municipalities across the state have identified strategies suitable for their locales for application of winter traction agents, including sand and salts (chemical anti-icing and de-icing agents), along with mechanical snow removal methods. Municipalities must have the flexibility to choose the most appropriate approaches for their jurisdictions that are the most effective in addressing road safety and least harmful to Oregon's rivers, streams, fish, and other aquatic life.

Michelle Cahill, Chair Jennifer Belknap Williamson, Vice Chair
Amy Pepper, Secretary/Treasurer

ODOT has been piloting road salting and studying the impacts to water quality and the environment. Their preliminary findings show that the resulting concentrations of salt entering the road side stormwater quality features can be harmful to or kill vegetation. Road-side bioswales and rain gardens are being installed at an increasing pace statewide, and particularly in our larger cities, as a practical means of meeting state and federal stormwater management mandates. These facilities are designed specifically to take in and infiltrate the road runoff, so there is no getting around the fact that the salt enters the facilities and that the plants suited to these facilities cannot tolerate salt environments. In addition, road salt can build up in groundwater, which is also a concern. Since these water quality facilities are now being required, it makes no sense to also require cities and ODOT to implement practices that have known detrimental effects. The results of implementing the proposed Section 136 and 137 requirements would include millions of dollars of public funds spent on continual restoration of road side water quality facilities and could result in groundwater impacts.

There are several studies available regarding water quality impacts from the application of deicing agents. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) website provides a review of road salt and potential impacts to the environment. It found that chloride is toxic to aquatic life, impacts vegetation, and does not dissipate in the environment. In addition to the impacts of the salt itself, commercial products also contain anti-caking and other compounds that can harm streams and aquatic wildlife. These products have been found to mobilize copper, a regulated pollutant under the Clean Water Act, and contain ferrocyanide, which can convert to cyanide in the presence of UV light (sunlight). There are other resources that address methods for deicing to reduce impacts. "Strategies to Mitigate the Impacts of Chloride Roadway Deicers on the Natural Environment," found at <http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/169520.aspx> is one example.

Road salt has been used for years in many areas of the country and has been found to be useful for some locations, but also can cause harm if used indiscriminately. In many of these locations after sustained use, groundwater has become degraded to the point that water quality regulations for chloride are on the rise. ACWA urges the removal of Sections 136 and 137 from HB2017. Oregon has a diversity of natural environments that do not necessarily correspond to the size of the human populations who reside there. The blanket approach proposed in this bill would almost certainly result in higher application of road salt than present, compromising water quality and aquatic health, without proven benefits over less toxic methods. Local communities must be able to judge the merits and potential harm of salting highways in their local context, taking into consideration the conditions in their communities.

Sincerely,



Susan L. Smith
Executive Director