



**HB 2297, -1 and -2 amendments**  
**Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon**  
**Kimberley Priestley**  
**Submitted to the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**  
**February 9, 2017**

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

**HB 2297-1:** HB 2297-1 proposes to expand the Conservation, Reuse and Storage feasibility grant fund to allow funding of a few of the many drought planning activities recommended by the Drought Task Force.

WaterWatch's concerns with HB 2297-1 are twofold:

First, the provisions of the -1 amendment are inconsistent with the underlying purpose of the fund it proposes to expand. The Conservation, Reuse and Storage fund was narrowly tailored, by design, to help move forward conservation, reuse and storage projects (SB 1069, 2008). This feasibility grant fund was supplemented by SB 839 (2013), which provides project implementation funds for instream and out-of-stream water supply projects. These two funds work together to help advance the state's goals of developing new instream and out-of-stream supply projects. Given the select niche this existing fund serves, we have significant concerns about opening it up to support some of the activities recommended by the Drought Task Force (DTF). Moreover, it should be noted that while the DTF did recommend creating a fund for to support the activities outlined in (2)(a), (b), (c) and (d), in addition to many other activities, at no time did the DTF discuss opening up existing SB 1069 funds to accommodate these specific proposals, nor importantly, did the DTF prioritize these four specific actions over others outlined in the DTF Report.

Second, HB 2297-1 does not provide direct additional funding to help instream needs during times of drought and/or to build drought resiliency. The DTF was tasked with, among other things, developing recommendations to mitigate the impacts of drought on agriculture, cities, small communities and fish and wildlife. While this bill clearly advances funding for out-of-stream interests, it does not outwardly provide equal opportunities for instream interests. If this Committee moves forward with this bill that would expand the existing fund, we would ask that you consider amendments that do the following:

1. Amend section 2(c) so it reads: A regional plan to increase drought resiliency for instream and out of stream needs
2. Amend section 2(d) so it reads: A plan to mitigate the impacts of drought on agriculture, cities and/or fish and wildlife.
3. Add to the list of activities that can be funded (a) instream flow studies (which are identified in DTF Recommendation A), (b) instream acquisitions (identified in DTF Recommendation D).

In conclusion, while we support additional funding for drought planning and other measures to build resiliency for farms, cities and fish, we have concerns about opening up the existing Conservation, Reuse and Storage fund to accommodate a few select recommendations of the DTF as proposed by the -1 amendments. We believe a better route would be to establish a specific fund to address the needs of farms, communities and fish and wildlife during times of drought, as well as providing funds to for the many actions that would help all sectors build resiliency. That said, if the Committee chooses to move forward with the proposed expansion of the fund, we would ask that you amend it as requested to add balance between instream and out-of-stream interests

**HB 2297-2 amendments:** WaterWatch supports expanding the Measurement Cost Share fund to include groundwater.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Contacts: Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon, 503-295-4039 x 3, [kjp@waterwatch.org](mailto:kjp@waterwatch.org)  
Jack Dempsey, WaterWatch Lobbyist, 503-358-2864, [jack@dempseypublicaffairs.com](mailto:jack@dempseypublicaffairs.com)