



222 NW Davis Street  
Suite 309  
Portland, OR 97209-3900  
503.222.1963  
www.oeconline.org

## **Testimony to the House Energy and Environments Committee on House Bill 2295**

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**Angela Crowley-Koch, Legislative Director  
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

### **Oregon Environmental Council supports House bill 2295 to allow the Water Resources Department to provide critical services to manage our public water resources.**

Balancing the use of Oregon's precious water resources is essential to maintain sufficient river flows for fish and wildlife, provide drinking water for growing communities and drive the state's economy. Thorough and timely processing of water right transactions is a key element to achieving this balance, and the Water Resources Department requires adequate staffing to provide this service. HB 2295 merely allows the Department to maintain current staff levels for water rights transactions by removing the sunset on the current fee schedule, which would revert to 2009 rates, and increasing transaction fees to meet projected processing costs.

The water right transaction program has traditionally balanced funding with 50% paid by those who directly benefit, the water users, and 50% through general funds provided by Oregon taxpayers. HB 2295 maintains this funding split with a reasonable increase in transaction fees for those who directly benefit through diversion or appropriation of public water resources. Without HB 2295, the burden would fall on Oregon taxpayers to fund an even greater share of the costs that benefit individual water users.

HB 2295 is a necessary and fair way to maintain the Water Resources Department's critical services to balance water resource use throughout the state, and we strongly urge your support.