

February 13, 2017

To: Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Johnson and Power and members of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment

From: The Nature Conservancy in Oregon (TNC)

Re: Support for HB 2295, Water Resources Department Transaction and Dam Safety Fees

The Nature Conservancy **supports HB 2295** removing the sunset on Oregon Water Resources Department's (WRD) water right transaction and dam safety fees and increasing fees to the extent necessary to maintain current service levels for transactions and dam safety inspections through 2021.

Without this bill WRD fees would revert to 2009 levels, significantly reducing revenue at a time when the Department anticipates an almost 16% increase in costs associated with simply maintaining current levels of work in transaction and dam safety.

The water right transaction process may seem like a dull, low priority administrative function to some. On the contrary, the effective use of water for all beneficial uses, both instream and out of stream, depends on a timely and reliable system for processing transactions. The ability of all beneficial users to quickly manage and move water without injury to other rights is critical as we face a future where the timing and availability of water is rapidly becoming less predictable due to effects of climate change. In short, our water future depends, in part, on a robust, highly functional transaction system.

Many in the public may be completely unaware of WRD's role in ensuring the safety of over 900 dams throughout Oregon. Numerous downstream communities depend on the integrity of these dams to protect public safety and water supply. Maintaining current service level in this critical program is the minimum necessary to fulfill WRD's obligations to protect those communities.

HB 2295 prevents loss of service in two critical Water Resource Department program areas. We respectfully request your support for a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for your attention to this important bill. Please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Rich, arich@tnc.org if you have any questions.