



**July 22, 2020**

**Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**  
**Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair**  
**Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair**

**Testimony on Water Resources Department General Fund Budget Reductions and Shortfalls**  
**Tom Byler, Director**

The purpose of this testimony is to provide information to the committee regarding the Water Resources Department's anticipated budget shortfall related to its legal expenses and how that shortfall when combined with the Co-Chair Rebalance Plan reductions, *could necessitate layoffs of up to 15 positions in September.*

**Agency Background:** The Oregon Water Resources Department practices and promotes responsible water management by addressing Oregon's water supply needs and restoring and protecting streamflows for Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and quality of life. The agency employs staff that work to administer and manage surface water and groundwater rights for instream, economic, and other purposes; collect scientific data to understand our water resources; enforce well construction standards to prevent groundwater declines and contamination; oversee the safety of dams to protect the public from dam failures; assist communities with planning for their water future; and administers water planning, study, and project grants.

**Legislatively Adopted Budget:** The Water Resources Department's Legislatively Adopted Budget (LAB) includes \$144 million and 177 positions. Of the \$144 million, approximately \$51 million supports agency operations, while the remaining \$93 million is funding for grants and loans and associated debt service. The Department's LAB includes \$36.7 million in General Fund dollars, most of which supports agency operations.

**Summary of Co-Chair Rebalance Plan Water Resources Department Reductions:** The Co-Chair's Rebalance Plan includes \$3.6 million in General Fund reductions for the Water Resources Department, including laying off 0.50 FTE. The 0.50 FTE provides technical assistance on water projects, grants, and place-based planning and the Department is looking at options that we could propose to the legislature to retain this position. The reductions also include leaving 11 positions vacant for the remainder of the biennium and reducing funds for water use measurement, streamflow monitoring, and other reductions. The vacancies include two hydrotechs, one assistant watermaster, one data tech, one water rights adjudications/extensions processor, and one water rights application analyst. The vacancies also include five positions previously included the 2019 groundwater basin studies package: two hydrogeologists, two hydrographers, one public engagement coordinator. The reductions will delay or reduce agency capacity to conduct groundwater studies and engage the public, collect and process streamflow and water use data, manage the distribution of water, process water right transactions more timely, and provide technical assistance on water projects, grants, and place-based planning.

**Other Water Resources Department Budget Shortfalls<sup>1</sup>:** Similar to prior biennia, the agency projects its legal expenses to exceed its budget by approximately \$860,000 for this biennium. Last biennium, the

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the Department's legal expenses is provided in the attached quarterly update that we provide to CFO/LFO to keep them apprised of this ongoing issue. In addition, as required in a budget note, the Department submitted a [report on this issue](#) to the legislature in December 2019, which provides additional detailed background on this matter.

Department received an appropriation from the Emergency Board to cover legal expenses in excess of its budget and in the previous biennia, the Department covered its legal expenses shortfall through administrative actions, such as vacancy savings.

**The Problem:** Ultimately, the rebalance plan reductions of \$3.6 million when combined with our projected legal expenses shortfall would amount to a \$4.5 million General Fund impact to the Department budget. The Department brings this matter to your attention now so that you are aware that if the proposed rebalance plan reduction of \$3.6 million is acted on, the agency will have insufficient administrative savings to address its legal expenses budget shortfall, which, without further legislative action, will necessitate laying off up to 15 staff based on current projections. The layoffs would involve positions that are not identified in the rebalance plan.

Under this scenario, the Department anticipates that the combination of cuts will lead to layoffs that will affect program areas across the agency, further diminishing agency operations and services – including slowing the processing of water rights transactions, reducing the collection and analysis of surface water and groundwater data, reducing technical assistance and support to communities and individuals engaged in water projects, and reducing the distribution and management of water for instream and out-of-stream uses, protection against illegal uses of water, and the safety inspection of low-hazard dams.

**Potential Approaches:** The Department has identified several approaches that might be used to address the problem:

- (1) reduce the Co-Chair's Rebalance Plan Reduction by \$860,000 and require the agency to address the legal expenses through these and other administrative savings;
- (2) adopt the Co-Chair's Rebalance Plan Reductions and separately appropriate \$860,000 to the agency to address its legal expenses; or
- (3) adopt the Co-Chair's Rebalance Plan Reductions and appropriate no further funding for legal expenses.

Approach 1 and 2 will not necessitate layoffs of General Fund positions beyond the Co-Chairs identified 0.50 FTE, based on current projections. Approach 3 will likely require the agency to layoff up to 15 General Fund positions in September to meet its legal expenses, in addition to the 0.50 FTE identified in the Co-Chair's Rebalance Plan. Variations on these options may exist and projections may change, which would modify the impacts.

**Conclusion:** The Department understands that these are difficult times and that all agencies will need to face reductions. We also fully understand the legislature is facing many tough decisions on funding state services and that budget challenges are expected to continue for the next several years. At this time, however, the Department wants to make sure that the legislature has a full understanding of how other General Fund budget challenges will impact agency programs, when combined with the rebalance reductions. The Department believes that the work it does to practice and promote responsible water management is important and knows that our ability to do this work relies on the technical expertise and dedication of our staff to provide services to Oregonians. Actions taken during the Special Session on the agency's budget will determine what course of action the Department may need to take to address its legal expenses, either through legislative action, vacancy savings, or layoffs.

Attachment: Quarterly Update on Water Resources Department Legal Expenses Budget



July 13, 2020

To: Matt Stayner, LFO Analyst  
Linnea Wittekind, CFO Analyst

From: Thomas M. Byler, Director

Subject: Quarterly Update on Water Resources Department Legal Expenses Budget

As you may recall, in recent years the Oregon Water Resources Department (Department) has seen a substantial increase in legal expenses for services provided by the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ). As of the June 2020 invoice, legal costs have totaled \$905,942 which is ninety-five percent of the Department's total biennial budget for that line item (see \*\*\*\*). The Department expects to spend more than the entire budget by the July 2020 invoice, to be issued in August 2020. Based on current projections for the biennium, the Department expects a budget shortfall of approximately \$859,846.

Prior to Covid-19, the Department anticipated needing to pursue an Emergency Board request to address current and anticipated increased expenses for the remainder of the biennium. In light of the COVID-19 emergency and expected impacts to state revenues, the Department understands there is considerable uncertainty about this scenario. Depending on the size of budget reductions to the agency that may be adopted during a special session, it is unlikely the Department will be able to address the legal expenses without layoffs. The Department welcomes a discussion to explore the best course of action under these circumstances.

The current projections for legal expenses are consistent with the trajectory in the Department's costs over the last four biennia. As shown in Table 1, the Department's legal costs have exceeded the allotted budget since the 2011-13 biennium.

**Table of Water Resources Department Line Item Budget and Costs for Department of Justice Services**

Biennium	Average Monthly		Biennial		
	Budget	Expenses	Budget	Expenses	Budget Shortfall
2011-2013	\$31,942	\$39,332	\$766,606	\$943,958	(\$177,352)
2013-2015	\$30,815	\$50,721	\$739,561	\$1,217,297	(\$477,736)
2015-2017	\$33,479	\$75,203	\$803,502	\$1,804,872	(\$1,001,370)
2017-2019	\$91,173	\$71,717	\$2,188,154*	\$1,769,218	\$418,936**
2019-2021	\$39,668	\$75,495	\$952,038****	\$1,811,884	(\$859,846)***

\* Includes Eboard request. LAB base budget \$835,628.

\*\* General Fund reverted due to final costs coming in lower than projections. Expenses exceeded LAB by \$933,590.

\*\*\* Includes actual billings through June 2020. Biennial average projected over the remaining 12 months of the biennium.

\*\*\*\* Adjusted by \$53k due to technical adjustment posted to wrong line item. This technical adjustment was proposed in the 2020 February session technical adjustment (which did not move forward) and is anticipated to move forward when the next technical adjustment is authorized by the legislature. If the adjustment does not occur, it would be 90% of the budget item and it would be exceeded by the August 2020 invoice.

Matt Stayner; and Linnea Wittekind

July 13, 2020

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The Department has experienced significant increases in legal costs in recent years, particularly in the Klamath Basin, where water disputes continue. For three of the last four biennia, the Department has achieved savings administratively to address litigation expenses, primarily by holding vacant General Fund positions open longer. However, as the expenses have increased, the impacts on the Department's programs and services have also increased. The Department's 2017-2019 Legislatively Approved Budget already contained a one-time personal services reduction requirement and a 10% travel reduction which limited the Department's capacity to address the shortfall with administrative savings. As a result, the Department submitted a budget request to the September 2018 Emergency Board in the amount of \$1,352,526, which was approved. Prior to the request, the Department also made modifications to non-essential travel and implemented a 180-day vacancy requirement for all General Fund positions. At the close of the 2017-19 biennium, the Department's legal costs totaled \$1,769,218 which allowed the Department to revert \$418,936 of unused general fund Emergency Board appropriation.

C: Governor's Natural Resources Office



## **WaterWatch of Oregon** **Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers**

To: Co-Chair Reardon, Co-Chair Taylor  
Members of the Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

From: Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon

Date: July 22, 2020

Subject: Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan for Agency Reductions

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Thank you for your leadership during this challenging time.

WaterWatch of Oregon is a river conservation group that has worked for over 35 years to protect and restore Oregon's waters. Our comments today focus largely on the proposed cuts that will affect responsible management of Oregon's rivers and aquifers.

Eighteen out of nineteen of Oregon's river basins are already over appropriated from the late spring to the early fall. At the same time, population growth and climate change are increasing the pressure on Oregon's aquifers. Unfortunately, the state is also facing devastating economic times. However, despite the challenging budgetary climate, it is critical that the state not undercut important water management and science/data work that could have ripple effects for decades to come.

The WRD continues to operate with reduced capacity in key water management functions that resulted from multiple budget cuts in the 1990s, and then again in 2009/10. Since those cuts, stakeholders across spectrums have worked diligently to increase water management capacity in the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) over the years. The 2019-2021 Biennium budget reflects decades of this work.

Given the critical importance of responsible water management to this state, we respectfully request that the Committee reconsider the proposed cuts to the OWRD budget that relate to science, data and water management, specifically the proposed cuts to the groundwater study work, streamflow gauging, hydrotech and field staff (water masters). These are found in Items # 313, 315, 317, 318, 321 and 323 of the Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan. To the extent that this cut list might also influence the 2021-2023 cuts, we would also highlight that cutting Item #314 that would fund water measurement devices is of concern. Our recommendations align with the Oregon's Secretary of State 2016 Audit of the Water Resources Department, which made clear that groundwater protection needs more focus, data challenges hinder efforts to manage and conserve water and increasing demands and resource limitations impede efforts to regulate and protect water, among other things. See <http://records.sos.state.or.us/ORSOSWebDrawer/Recordpdf/5080986>

Another consideration is the OWRD's existing and projected legal costs. While the cuts proposed in the Co-chairs Rebalance Plan focus on vacancies, when that is overlaid with OWRD's existing and projected legal costs, it is our understanding that that means upwards of 15 staff could be cut by September 2020. The OWRD is a very small agency that is already understaffed in relation to its many statutory duties; cutting approximately 10% of its existing staff, let alone recently gained positions meant to fill longstanding agency shortages, will be devastating to our state.

**WaterWatch of Oregon**  
**Main Office: 213 SW Ash St. Suite 208 Portland, OR 97204**  
**Southern Oregon Office: PO Box 261, Ashland, OR, 97520**

**[www.waterwatch.org](http://www.waterwatch.org)**  
**Main Office: 503.295.4039**  
**S. OR Office: 541.708.0048**

While we recognize the need for some agency cuts in this COVID climate, Oregon's economy and environment require at least minimal water management capacity to address the challenges presented by the intersection of climate change, economic and population growth and the needs of aquatic habitat and aquatic species. Unless we can find balance in these areas and provide capacity for OWRD to manage the state's water resources, all interests are going to lose.

Oregon has already granted over 89,000 water rights to date. Given the over-appropriated state of most rivers in Oregon, as well as the increasing understanding of the connections between surface and groundwater, as the Legislature moves towards rebalancing the budget we urge you to focus attention on retaining those positions that are necessary to manage already existing water rights and to develop the scientific information necessary to inform sound surface and groundwater management. The OWRD needs defensible data to support defensible decisions, and it also needs field staff on the ground to ensure proper management.

Thank you for your consideration.



July 21, 2020

Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor  
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan for Agency Reductions (Plan). My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited (TU), a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. TU has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

TU understands the difficult budget environment that exists and appreciates the work of the Committee to articulate a path forward that keeps critical natural resource programs intact. However, TU is concerned that certain reductions will significantly affect the State's ability to sustainably manage its water resources with ramifications that could be irreversible or take significantly more resources to remedy. Ensuring sufficient water quality and quantity is a necessary component of achieving a secure and resilient water future for all Oregonians. Accordingly, TU respectfully requests that the Committee reconsider certain proposed cuts to both the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) budgets that relate to science, information-gathering and watershed management.

Specifically, for OWRD, TU requests reconsideration of the proposed cuts to the groundwater study work, streamflow gauging, hydrotech and field staff (water masters) found in Items # 313, 315, 317, 318, 321 and 323 of the Plan. TU understands that these reductions in combination with OWRD's projected legal costs, will result in layoffs of up to 15 staff. For an already resource-stretched agency, such an outcome would have a devastating impact on its ability to manage Oregon's water resources. For ODEQ, TU requests reconsideration of the proposed cuts to the water quality laboratory and permitting program (which also encompasses cuts to its nonpoint source programs and watershed management activities) found in #231, 232, 233, 234, and 235 of the Plan. TU is particularly concerned that the proposed cuts to ODEQ's water quality program are at such a level that staff layoffs will be unavoidable. As a result, ODEQ will have even less resources to address Oregon's significant water quality challenges; more than 44 percent of Oregon's river miles are currently water quality impaired. *See* ODEQ's 2018/2020 Integrated Report available at <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/Pages/2018-Integrated-Report.aspx>.

While TU understands that reductions are necessary, it is vital that OWRD and ODEQ maintain sufficient capacity to ensure that Oregon's water resources are sustainably managed, resilient to the challenges presented by climate change, drought conditions and increased populations and able to provide drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chandra Ferrari".

Chandra Ferrari  
Senior Policy Advisor  
[cferrari@tu.org](mailto:cferrari@tu.org)  
(916) 214-973





## OREGON FARM BUREAU TESTIMONY

### Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

July 22, 2020

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed budget cuts to Oregon's natural resource agencies as a result of COVID-19 related budget shortfalls. Like other Oregon industries, Oregon's farmers and ranchers have been hit hard by COVID-19 related economic impacts, as key markets dried up, supply chains were disrupted, and international trade ground to a halt. Despite these challenges, Oregon's farmers and ranchers are still farming, and working hard to bring safe, reliable, and sustainable food and fiber to local, regional, and international markets.

By way of background, Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is Oregon's largest grassroots agriculture association, representing over 6,000 farming and ranching families across the state. Our mission is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for our members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry as a whole.

Agriculture is the state's second largest traded sector industry, and the programs housed within Oregon's natural resources agencies are critical to our members' operations. While we understand that all agencies are going to need to "tighten their belts" to weather this economic crisis, we are concerned about cuts to some core program areas that will disproportionately impact our members and ultimately harm their ability to stay viable and survive the COVID-19 crisis. We ask for your help in supporting the agency programs needed to ensure Oregon's farmers and ranchers to stay in business throughout this crisis. Farms and ranches are the backbone of their local economies and supply critical goods and services needed during the pandemic.

We urge the Subcommittee to reconsider the following program area budget changes:

- **Oregon Department of Agriculture:**
  - *Predator Control Funding* (\$200,000 in ODA, \$200,000 in ODFW): Predators are a significant source of losses to livestock producers around the state. These dollars are leveraged at every level of government to provide crucial depredation support to landowners and communities.
  - *Invasive Species Council Funding* (\$280,000): The invasive species council conducts a comprehensive and coordinated effort to prevent, detect, control and eliminate invasive species harming the region's economy, health, and natural



resources. This work is critical to our natural resources industry and needs to remain well-funded.

- **Oregon Department of Forestry:**
  - *Rangeland Fire Protection Association Funding (\$185,000)*: RFPAs are the first line of defense against wildfires in many parts of Oregon. The state should continue to ensure they are funded to help quickly contain wildfires that otherwise may go unchecked and cause millions in damage to Oregon's natural resources and wildlife habitat.
  - *Increase Base Protection Cost Funding for Landowners (\$1,948,173)*: The 50/50 split between landowners and the state is fundamental to our wildfire protection system, and must be maintained.
- **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:**
  - *Wolf Program (\$323,404)*: These dollars help support wolf-depredation compensation, non-lethal deterrence and technical assistance to landowners to implement the Oregon Wolf Plan. Livestock owners already bear a disproportionate burden of wolf reintroduction – eliminating this funding would be detrimental to landowner buy in to the wolf program.
- **Oregon Department of Water Resources:**
  - **Field Services Funding**: These field services dollars help fund the on-the-ground work that is critical to effective management of our state's water resources. This program is already severely underfunded, and further curtailments should not be considered.
    - **Measurement Cost Share (\$106,914)**
    - **Vacancy Savings (\$578,251)**
    - **Fund Shift (\$522,262)**
  - **Gaging Stations (\$27,186) and Observation Wells (\$50,000)**: Data collection is critical to management of our state's water resources, and we should not reduce funding that goes toward getting us the data we need to manage these resources in the long-term.
  - Further, we understand that OWRD is facing a budget shortfall due to increased litigation costs. We recognize the need for a comprehensive audit of the Department's programs and resources and support the legislature working to ensure that OWRD remains committed to its core priorities. However, cuts to key OWRD program areas without addressing the litigation expenses or reviewing the Department's prioritization of resources will only compound the issues caused by decades of underfunding and mission expansion. We urge you not to cut key field services that the Department needs to remain functional.

Contact: Mary Anne Cooper (maryanne@oregonfb.org)





# Harney County Watershed Council

July 22, 2020

TO: Co-Chair Reardon, Co-Chair Taylor, Members of the Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

FROM: Brenda Smith, Board Chair, Co-convener Place-based Water Planning

SUBJECT: Budget Cuts and Impacts to Avoid or Minimize

I am the current Board Chair of the Harney County Watershed Council and co-convener of the Harney County Place-based Water Planning effort. We have been engaged in this work since OWRD funded our community along with 3 others to pilot a place-based approach to integrated water resources planning in 2016.

As I understand, the potential cuts could occur due to extensive litigation costs the Department is facing. Breaking the litigation cycle requires upfront investments in planning, management, and community involvement. I have found in my experience of using a collaborative process solve complex natural resource issues, the cost of collaboration is much lower than the cost of conflict. This is an exceedingly difficult situation, but it would be disheartening to see thousands of hours of community work and planning come to a screeching standstill due to potential reductions for OWRD.

The specific items of concern that would impact the extensive efforts of the place-based planning work in Oregon and in the Harney Basin for decades to come are:

- Item #313: Delay Hiring Groundwater Basin Study Team - \$170,517, Item #321: Delay Hiring Groundwater Basin Study Team - \$668,69, Item #322: Groundwater basin study team - reduction in position-related services and supplies budget - \$121,262, Item #323 layoff Field Service employee works in PBP - .05 FTE 145,000
- These reductions would impact the development of a cooperative groundwater study with OWRD & USGS in the Walla Walla Basin. Cooperative groundwater studies are critical to understanding groundwater availability (and therefore managing groundwater sustainably for people and nature). These reductions represent five positions—four scientists and technicians to help with the study, and one position to oversee public engagement—as well as the supplies and resources needed for the study.
- These groundwater basin studies represent a shared belief that improved groundwater data is essential for moving Oregon towards sustainable water management.
- The investments into place-based planning represent significant leveraging of state funds. Just in Harney County, we have received over \$250,000 to match the funds the OWRD provided to conduct place-based planning, not to mention well over 5000 hours of volunteer community participation in the planning effort. Litigation are just dollars out the door. Investments in



# Harney County Watershed Council

planning and the capacity of the department to engage with communities in planning stretch state funds.

- In some locations throughout the state, groundwater aquifers are no longer capable of sustaining additional development. The State needs to know more about how much surface water and groundwater, we have, if additional allocations can be made, and how the groundwater and surface water interact in each basin. This information is essential for communities to understand the sustainability of their current groundwater uses and their opportunities for future economic development.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. It is indeed a time when hard decisions must be made. In light of change climate and recurring drought in the west, it is imperative that Oregon does not withdraw this important investment in better understanding our groundwater resources.

***Mission of the Harney County Watershed Council***

***Local economic and ecological prosperity depends on watershed health and the availability and quality of ground and surface water.***

***Therefore, the Harney County Watershed Council provides a framework of outreach, coordination and cooperation between private landowners and all interested parties to promote watershed conditions that benefit people and the environment. The Council works to improve watershed health through education, action plans based on scientific assessments and enhancement projects.***



DESCHUTES RIVER  
CONSERVANCY

July 23, 2020

Co-Chair Reardon, Co-Chair Taylor  
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**Re: Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan for Agency Reduction**

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Co-Chairs Rebalance Plan (Plan). The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) restores streamflow and improves water quality in the Deschutes Basin using a coordinated, collaborative and voluntary approach. The success of our work relies heavily on our partnerships with state natural resource agencies and specifically the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). The DRC offers the following comments specifically addressing the Plan's recommendations for OWRD.

The DRC appreciates the tough decisions the Committee faces during this public health and economic crisis and that budget reductions to state agencies are necessary to rebalance the state's budget. However, to ensure the sustainability of the water resources so many in this state depend on, the DRC urges the Committee to prioritize water measurement and management in its Plan.

The DRC supports the Plan's prioritization of OWRD's Water Supply Development Fund. State funding for the implementation of water supply projects that address both instream and out-of-stream needs is critical to meeting current and future water demands both in the Deschutes Basin and statewide. These funds are particularly important as we face a changing climate and with many basins in the state recording consecutive years of drought.

The DRC urges the Committee, however, to reconsider the Plan's proposed budget reductions to field staff (315) and water measurement tools (314, 317, 318). OWRD field staff are imperative to ensuring adequate management of Oregon's water resources. And they can only do so with proper field data provided by streamflow gages, diversion measurements and observation wells. Reducing funding to these programs jeopardizes the sustainability of current and future water supplies.

In addition, the DRC understands the Co-Chairs recommended reductions combined with OWRD's projected legal costs will necessitate more OWRD staff reductions, further reducing OWRD's capacity to effectively manage Oregon's water resources. Such an outcome could have detrimental outcomes for water management in the state. The DRC urges the Committee to consider this in its decision making.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
*Ron Nelson*

Ron Nelson  
Executive Director

700 NW Hill Street, Suite 1 Bend, Oregon 97703 | 541.382.4077 | [www.deschutesriver.org](http://www.deschutesriver.org)

**Subject:** Testimony about OWRD Funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 22, 2020 9:21:57 AM

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Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

I would like to provide testimony regarding the reducing and rebalancing of the OWRD agency budget.

I am a County Commissioner in Harney County. I have been working closely with OWRD on water concerns in the Harney Basin. The basin currently has been over allocated due to the lack of monitoring that had occurred in the basin over the last 20 years. When OWRD's budgets were reduced 20 years ago well monitoring in the basin lapsed and created a ripe environment for water permits to be granted without proper data to support the level of permits that were granted.

Now Harney County faces grievous water issues due to the Department's previous inability to monitor the water use in the basin and regulate the water use that was occurring. In an effort to rectify the problems created by the Department's over allocation; it is now doing groundwater studies in the basin, placed-based planning, and requiring the use of meters on more recently permitted groundwater.

By cutting funding to the OWRD's budget you will not only set back efforts to manage the problems that were created during previous budget cuts, but you will also create a prolonged solution to the problem and potentially create similar problems in other basins.

Please consider your role in government to be one that should educated themselves prior to making decisions that have such grievous effects on people in the State of Oregon. It is easy to say that making these cuts won't have major impacts, but the Harney Basin is living proof that such cuts will have impacts for 100's of years while our basin tries to find a sustainable water levels.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kristen Shelman