



February 21, 2019

TO: Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

FROM: Sustainable Northwest

SUBJECT: Support for Water POPs in Department of Environmental Quality 2019 – 2021 budget

Dear Co-Chair Taylor and Co-Chair Reardon and members of the committee:

A reliable water supply is the most imperative and basic need for all Oregonians. The state's water infrastructure and resources provide clean and abundant drinking water, domestic and industrial waste treatment, habitat for threatened salmon and steelhead, supplies that support an \$8.2 billion agricultural industry and other water dependent businesses, and storm and flood management to protect public safety, property, and transportation corridors. But our water infrastructure and practices to sustain these diverse benefits have become increasingly challenged. The result is water pollution, heightened competition for already scarce resources, and a decline in the health of Oregon's iconic rivers and landscapes that support communities, critical wildlife habitat, and countless businesses.

Climate change is further exacerbating stress on our state's water resources and infrastructure. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, floods and droughts, fires, rising sea levels, and diminishing water reserves are already having severe effects on residents' lives and businesses, resulting in skyrocketing costs for disaster relief and recovery. There is an urgent need to comprehensively assess and make strategic investments in Oregon's water infrastructure and resources to respond to these changes and ensure a resilient water future for a diverse range of uses.

Sustainable Northwest supports the suite of water related investments included in Governor Brown's December 17, 2018 memo entitled, "A Secure and Resilient Water Future for All Oregonians". Collectively, these funding packages will foster an improved understanding of Oregon's water resources, consumption, infrastructure needs, and prioritization for future investment. They also address immediate needs and opportunities for improved water quality, infrastructure upgrades, watershed health and restoration, and collaborative planning processes. The following packages in the proposed Department of Environmental Quality 2019 – 2021 budget deserve specific attention and consideration:

Klamath Basin Water Quality Improvements (POP 126)

Provides \$640,000 General Fund, to phase-in 3 positions (2.5 FTE), in support of a coordinated, multi-agency effort to scale up watershed restoration efforts in the Klamath Basin to improve water quality and fish habitat for native species and prepare for the arrival of salmon and steelhead following the removal of four dams planned for 2021.

Water Infrastructure Needs (POP 161)

Provides \$250,000 General Fund, in partnership with OWRD and OWEB, to fund a comprehensive inventory of existing water infrastructure systems and future wastewater and stormwater infrastructure needs in Oregon.

Urgent action is needed to assess and improve the condition of our state's water infrastructure and resources. This challenge will only get more complex and expensive if we do not, and strategic investments this biennium can help develop a clear framework that organizes existing information and deploys technical resources to inform future deliberations. No issue is more significant to the well-being and safety of Oregon. We commend legislators for working in partnership with the state's diverse group of water-related stakeholders to begin to chart a path forward for a more sustainable and equitable water future for generations of Oregonians.

Sustainable Northwest looks forward to continued discussion with the committee as they review water-related agency budget requests this legislative session. For questions or follow-up, please contact Dylan Kruse at dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org or 303-328-7524. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Block', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Block
President
Sustainable Northwest