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March 7, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Senator Kathleen Taylor and Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Committee

Email: [jwmnr.exhibitis@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:jwmnr.exhibitis@oregonlegislature.gov)

Re: **HB 5043** – Water Resources Department Budget – **Support**

The League has strong positions on both water quality and quantity. We have studied water issues since 1969. We had a seat on the original Integrated Water Resources Strategy Policy Advisory Group and the latest update work. Members attend Water Resources Commission meetings and work group meetings. As a result of that window into the department's responsibilities, we provide testimony today **in support of the General Fund and Lottery Fund request for the base budget/activities** of the department.

A reminder:

***“All water within the State from all sources of water belongs to the public.”***

For 2019, we support, in priority order, the following Policy Option Packages (POPs):

**POP 101: Continuation of Place-Based Planning** efforts in the Mid-Coast Region, Lower John Day Sub-Basin, Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin and Malheur Lake (Harney) Basin. These local community efforts which include members with basin area connections and knowledge need staffing support in order to bring disparate views together. The entire purpose of these planning exercises is to focus on **clean abundant water for all**—the Integrated Water Resources Strategy goal. That **means cross agency staffing is needed**. This planning effort is about more than future storage, but conservation efforts and assuring that water is available and usable for agriculture, for aquatic creatures and for human consumption. **If we had additional revenue, investment of new planning efforts would be valuable.**

**POP 102: Additional groundwater studies.** Collection of data is critical to resource management. Groundwater studies take a number of years to complete and Oregon is behind in gathering this important data as we see more demands for groundwater. As mentioned by the agency, the majority of new applications are for groundwater. Without adequate data, how can these requests be fairly processed? **See Slide 55 of the agency presentation regarding current known Groundwater Areas of Concern.** And here is a [link](#) to the specific groundwater restricted areas currently regulated in Oregon.

**POP 104: Dam Safety:** In 2017 we supported POP 102 of the Water Resources Department's agency budget which included the need to address dam safety. And we supported HB 3427 that same year requiring high hazard dams to have an emergency action plan. SB 5702 in 2018 included a budget note requiring a report on the status of dams. That [report](#) and the [Legislative Fiscal Office analysis](#) provided guidance to the Water Resources Dept. in developing [HB 2085 \(2019\)](#), a policy bill we support this session. The League believes this is a public safety issue that should be a priority of the legislature.

**POP 106: Field staff** is critical to good water management. In order to help pay for that staff, we also support [HB 2672](#), a bill that would authorize reimbursement to the Water Resources Dept. (and Dept. of

Agriculture and Dept. of Energy) for [administrative and enforcement costs](#) around activities related to the cannabis industry. We would be interested in having the conversation that started back in 2013 around charging a Water Right Management Fee to help fund the increasing need for more water management. After all, the water belongs to all of us and should be managed accordingly.

**POP 112: Continuing Payroll Shared Services** makes permanent an existing shared services payroll accounting technician linking six agencies—another priority of the League: efficiency and cross agency sharing.

We understand your challenges in funding our natural resource agencies. Each has a separate mission, so we ask that you consider the entire suite of natural resource agency budget requests. Please do not consider them in silos.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President



Peggy Lynch  
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: Thomas Byler, Director, Water Resources Dept.