



March 7, 2019

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

RE: Water Investments in the 2019-2021 Water Resources Department Budget, HB 5043

Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are writing to voice our strong support for the State’s investment in water resources as outlined in the Governor’s proposed 2019-2021 Budget. We are a diverse group of water stakeholders with a common goal: to advocate for common sense water policies that move Oregon’s economy, communities, and environment toward a secure water future. We commend your continued hard work in crafting a balanced budget that meets the needs of all Oregonians and ask that you include investments that will help Oregon move toward sustainable water management

There are several key funding areas for the Oregon Water Resources Department (WRD) that we request be included in the 2019-2021 Budget:

- **Place Based Planning Community Support (Package 101)** – Provides funding support for current planning groups in Harney-Malheur Lake, Lower John Day, Mid-Coast, and Upper Grande Ronde, as well as conducting an evaluation of the place-based approach to water planning. *Total: \$979,950 General Fund*
- **Groundwater Data, Management, and Protection (Package 102)** – Increases the state’s understanding of water supplies by allowing the Department to conduct one additional groundwater study at a time, while also preparing other basins for study and conducting more timely groundwater right reviews. *Total: \$2,837,027 General Fund*
 - **NOTE: While we support Package 102, we prefer HB 2856 for funding groundwater studies.** HB 2856 would direct \$9,000,000 to the Water Resources Department to fund groundwater studies. It would also direct the department to provide a 10-year plan to the legislature that prioritizes ground water studies and report to the legislature periodically to detail its use of appropriated funds. Groundwater investigations take considerable time and resources to complete—estimates for completing groundwater studies in the remaining unstudied aquifers range from \$45-75 million—and HB 2856 would provide a more significant down payment on that effort than Package 102.
- **Supporting Water Management in the Field (Package 106)** – Adds two watermasters (Willamette and Crooked River) and two regional assistant watermasters (East Region and South Central Region) to support timely water management and distribution. *Total: \$754,248 General Fund*
- **Investing in Projects to Meet Water Needs (Package 107)** – Provides \$15 million in Lottery Revenue Bond proceeds, plus \$278k for cost of issuance, to provide grants and loans for water supply projects to meet instream and out-of-stream water needs. *Total: \$15,278,251 Lottery Revenue Bonds*

- **NOTE:** While we support more funding for water supply projects, the grants and loans provided from Package 107 funds should adhere to the objectives of the Water Supply Development Account (SB 839 – 2013): funding water resources development projects that have economic, environmental and community benefits.

We also support the following WRD Policy Option Package that was NOT included in the Governor's request budget for 2019-2021:

- **Resolving Complex Water Issues (Package 103)** – Funds three new Regional Basin Coordinators responsible for working with parties involved in complex water management issues to assist in developing solutions in the Willamette Basin, Deschutes Basin, and the Umatilla Basin, along with ongoing issues in other parts of the state. *Total: \$1,362,009 General Fund*

In light of climate change and recurring drought in the west, it is imperative that Oregon make a concerted investment in water resources now. Our neighbors in Washington, and more recently California, have invested extraordinary sums of public funding toward water supply planning and development and ecosystem and watershed protection to address water challenges that are facing all Western states. Investing in Oregon's sustainable water management today through these important programs will make it more likely that future generations have adequate water supplies that support thriving communities, flourishing industries, and healthy ecosystems.

The POPs we are collectively supporting we help move forward critical information-gathering, collaborative planning and on-the-ground water management activities, all of which will help move Oregon toward a sustainable water management future that addresses the needs of communities, ecosystems and industry. The Oregon Legislature has already taken a step in the right direction with the passage of both SB 1069 and SB 839; which fund water project feasibility studies and water supply development respectively. However, the costs associated with planning for and meeting our water needs greatly exceed available resources and both programs continue to have more demand than allocated funds. Additional funding for feasibility and implementation of water conservation, water reuse and water supply projects is critical to ensuring that our state continues to move forward in meeting its future water needs and associated economic, environmental, and community benefits.

As a whole, providing funding for the aforementioned components in the 2019-2021 Budget will not only help Oregon make progress in its diverse water supply needs, it will also strengthen our state's economy, empower local communities, and assist in restoring the environment we all share.

Thank you for considering Oregon's water management needs in your ongoing efforts to provide a balanced budget for the 2019-2021 biennium.

Sincerely,

*The Freshwater Trust
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Special Districts Association of Oregon
The Nature Conservancy
Oregon Farm Bureau
League of Oregon Cities
Trout Unlimited
Oregon Water Resources Congress*