



NETWORK of OREGON WATERSHED COUNCILS

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March 17, 2019

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Shawn Morford, Executive Director, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

Re: Testimony in **support of SB 5539 and SB 5540** – OWEB's budget

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 5539 and SB 5540, the funding bills for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). The Network stands with our partners in the Oregon Conservation Partnership- the partnership that represents over **160 watershed councils, land trusts, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts** in the state- in **strong endorsement** of these two bills that enable critical watershed protection and enhancement in this state – goals that are addressed in the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils represents the 90 community-based watershed councils across Oregon that have brought together diverse community members and organizations to jointly conduct assessments, plan, and conduct on-the-ground restoration projects over the past 20 years in their communities. The councils provide critical natural resource jobs, as well as a neutral forum for diverse players to come together around water quality and quantity and habitat issues that affect us all.

The existence of these councils and their ability to do the work they do has depended wholly on the investments made through OWEB for both organizational capacity funding that enables these organizations to hire staff and maintain an office, and critical grant dollars so they can conduct projects on the ground. This grassroots model is truly a unique and the envy of other states across the country.

The drinking water issue in our own Salem last summer as well as statewide droughts and catastrophic fires in recent years have been stark reminders that natural systems have a direct link to our quality of life, economy, and human health. With increased population growth, extreme weather events, and more demands on our natural resources, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board will be a key player in implementing Oregon's water vision and it is well positioned to play an even more critical role in enabling the protection and restoring the natural systems that support our life here in Oregon long into the future.



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We appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for SB 5539 and SB 5540 and thank you for the legislature's many years of support for the budget for Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. We encourage you to continue to support and build OWEB's capacity through these two bills.

Please don't hesitate to contact me for any questions or more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Morford". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Shawn Morford
Executive Director, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
tel: 971-701-6699