



Providing opportunities for stakeholders to cooperate in promoting and sustaining the health of the watershed and its communities.

Date: March 18, 2019

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Rebecca McCoun, Executive Director of the North Santiam Watershed Council

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

My name is Rebecca McCoun and I am the Executive Director for the North Santiam Watershed Council which is one of many important tributaries of the Willamette River. The North Santiam River which begins in the headwaters of the Mt Jefferson wilderness is the sole source of the City of Salem's drinking water, and provides drinking water for 8 smaller communities. It is also one of the sources for the City of Albany.

The North Santiam Watershed Council is a grassroots non-profit formed in 1997 that brings together a host of partners to facilitate joint efforts to restore and enhance the river ecosystem-- work that is important to fish and wildlife as well as the humans who depend on the water. A healthy North Santiam River is critical for ensuring good water quality-- which in turn supports the economy and quality of life of our communities. We could simply not do this work without support from OWEB.

We receive OWEB funds to both fund our organizational capacity as well as to effectively engage our community stakeholders and to implement on the ground instream, riparian, wet prairie and oak habitat restoration. Our partners include the federal, tribal, state, counties, cities, soil and water conservation districts, irrigation districts, businesses and landowners.

One of our shining examples are Jan Irene Miller and Jim Bayuk, two of our landowners who have contagious enthusiasm that have forever made an impact on our watershed. We began working with them in 2015 and with leveraging OWEB dollars and federal resources from the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, to name a few, we have been able to improve fish passage opening up access to nearly a mile of side channel habitat being utilized by Spring Chinook, Oregon Chub and Pacific lamprey and are working to restore 33 acres of floodplain habitat and 40 acres of upland prairie oak habitat. So excited about the project they began to invite their neighbors and people they didn't know to come see their project. With their deep commitment to improve their watershed community they were able to encourage others to work with the Council and its partners and begin to restore additional instream, riparian, prairie and oak habitat in the Bear Branch Creek subbasin in Linn County.

OWEB funds also enabled the council to partner with the Oregon Business Council, Marion Soil & Water Conservation District, Marion County and the City of Salem to contract ECONorthwest to conduct an assessment that looks at the economic importance of water in the North Santiam.

The assessment framework asked the following:

What are the uses underlying water demand? And How does water yield economic value?

Results for the North Santiam Watershed:

- Instream flow for aquatic species was valued at \$62 million/year.
- Water related recreation was valued at \$36.5 million/year.
- Electricity Generation \$7.8 million/year in Production Value & \$19.8 million/year in avoided CO2 emissions.
- Municipal and Industrial \$66 million/year
- Irrigated Agriculture 59.8 million/year
- Cultural and Tribal, Aesthetics and Public Health and Well Being uses are noted as extremely important but not as easy to assign a dollar value.

The ultimate take away is we are economically, ecologically and socially river dependent communities.

The human demands on the North Santiam watershed are only expected to increase in the future. We are working hard to work with our community members who are directly and/or indirectly dependent on the river and want to urge your support for the full funding of OWEB's budget in Senate Bills 5539 and 5540.