

LANDS IN TRUST PROTECTED FOREVER



March 18, 2019

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair
Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair
Joint Ways & Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature

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Re: Testimony in Support of SB-5539, SB-5540 & Policy Package 110/OWEB Budget

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

The Deschutes Land Trust writes in support of SB-5539, SB-5540, Policy Package 110 and full funding for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, its operations and grant programs. The Deschutes Land Trust is a nationally accredited land trust, based in Bend, serving the watershed of the Deschutes River. Given Central Oregon's rapid growth and the looming challenges of climate change, our work and that of our partners is of immense importance to our communities, both rural and urban.

The Deschutes Land Trust and our partners have utilized OWEB grants to leverage private and federal funding to lead a community effort to protect and restore our rivers and streams. As a community organization, working with private landowners on a strictly voluntary basis, our work plays out in a slow, but permanent manner. Our most notable success has been the historic re-birth of Whychus Creek. Once, one of the basin's primary Steelhead trout spawning streams, the over-appropriation of streamflow and conversion of the floodplain meant this once important creek typically ran dry each summer. Today, with OWEB as a funding partner, Whychus Creek now runs year-round and is seeing the return of Salmon and Steelhead. Similar efforts are occurring throughout Oregon.

Our success on Whychus Creek is rooted in the community, but wouldn't have been possible without OWEB's leadership and ability to strategically fund key projects. We urge full funding of OWEB's budget, particularly your support for OWEB's core programs.

Very truly yours,


Brad Chalfant, Executive Director