



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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April 16, 2019

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education
900 Court St NE
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Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members:

I am writing to express my support for continued state funding for the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI). As Co-Chair of the Oregon Drought Readiness Council, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has found OCCRI to be a critical component of discussion with regard to understanding, preparing for, and responding to the effects of changing water supply on communities and industries across Oregon. I expect this challenge to intensify as the climate continues to change, and we will continue to rely on OCCRI in working to achieve a climate-prepared Pacific Northwest.

Here are some specific examples of contributions OCCRI staff members have made in our work together:

Guidance for fundamental climate change research—During the drought of 2015, OCCRI staff members worked with OEM and local emergency managers to develop clear pictures of impacts in communities across the state. They helped us decide which questions to ask, and how to collect the resulting answers from community members in a way that best told the story of drought in Oregon.

Connecting science with decision-making—In 2016 and 2017, OCCRI staff members were able to work hand-in-hand with federal and state agencies to explain the likely impacts of highly variable water supply and snowpack conditions. Their explanations were tied to large bodies of scientific evidence, but their skilled presentation made it understandable to the audience of non-specialists. This issue is vitally important not only with regard to drought, but also flooding, wildland fires, public health issues, and numerous other emergencies.

Climate change adaptation planning—The Oregon Climate Assessment report is a key tool for coordinating emergency management planning across state agencies with a variety of responsibilities in land use, water management, and cultural resource preservation. This valuable and comprehensive document is unique in its inclusion of so many areas of natural and cultural preservation, and supports all phases of emergency management including the State Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

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Connections to federal programs—OCCRI staff members had professional relationships with the US Department of Agriculture staff, the US National Drought Monitor, and other federal agencies and programs that no other state agency staff maintain. This was important during 2018, as several state agencies worked to make needed changes to the Drought Monitor reporting system. Because of the relationships that OCCRI staff members had with state and federal partners, we were able to get many of those changes implemented in order to more accurately represent conditions in that vital report.

Altogether, OEM has found that the skilled, knowledgeable, and practical staff at OCCRI provide great benefits to emergency preparedness and response in Oregon. Maintaining their ability to have staff with deep scientific knowledge and broad connections in their professional community has far-reaching benefits for agriculture, conservation, forestry, ranching, and recreation in many Oregon communities.

Please consider providing them the necessary funding to continue this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew J. Phelps". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrew" and last name "Phelps" clearly legible.

Andrew J. Phelps
Director