

Date: April 26, 2019

TO: Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

FROM: Supporters of HB 2084

SUBJECT: Support for HB 2084

Dear Chair Dembrow and Vice-Chair Olsen:

The following organizations are writing to express our strong support for HB 2084, to extend the sunset date for the Oregon Water Resources Department grant program for place-based integrated water resources strategies.

Comprehensive water planning is necessary to respond to increasing scarcity and meet the instream and out-of-stream water needs for Oregon's communities, environment, and economy. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature authorized the Oregon Water Resources Department to pilot a place-based approach to integrated water resources planning. This approach provides an opportunity for communities to work collaboratively, in partnership with the state, to understand their water resources challenges and needs, and identify potential solutions to meet those needs. By bringing together diverse local and regional stakeholders and subject matter experts, this process enables communities to address water challenges collaboratively, while reducing litigation and conflict.

Support from the Water Resources Department grant program has enabled four place-based coalitions to build community based collaboratives with diverse stakeholder groups, create governance structures to ensure a durable process, create outreach and work plans, develop water supply assessments for each region, and begin work to complete water supply and demand analyses.

While significant progress has been made in the past three years, additional time and resources are needed to complete the final phases of these place-based frameworks. As explained in recent Senate and House testimony, these processes take significant time to build consensus and there is complexity in developing these plans. Our groups remain committed to the process and building on the foundation of trust that has been established. Continued support for the program will allow collaborative groups to work with the public and technical experts to identify and prioritize solutions to meet water needs, and finalize plans to begin implementation of comprehensive water resource visions.

As state leadership now seeks to chart a course to secure a resilient water future for all Oregonians, these place-based efforts can serve as some of the earliest opportunities for investment to achieve a more resilient and reliable water supply for Oregon. The trust and long-term relationships developed in these groups will provide a critical foundation for successful implementation of future water resources projects. There is a more urgent need than ever to fulfill our water resource planning obligations, and our groups stand ready to work in partnership with state leaders to accomplish these ambitious goals.

Thank you for your consideration and support to extend this critical program.

Respectfully,

Mark Owens, Harney County Court
Co-convener Harney – Malheur Lake Basin Work Group

Brenda Smith, Harney County Watershed Council
Co-convener Harney – Malheur Lake Basin Work Group

Donna Beverage, Union County Commission Chair
Convener Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin Work Group

Herb Winters, Gilliam County SWCD
Co-convener Lower John Day Sub-Basin Work Group

Debra Bunch, Mid John Day/Bridge Creek Watershed Council
Co-convener Lower John Day Sub-Basin Work Group

Tim Gross, City of Newport Public Work Director
Co-convener Mid-Coast Region Work Group

Alan Fujishin, Gibson Farms, Siletz
Co-convener Mid-Coast Region Work Group

Susan Morgan, Policy Manager - Natural Resources & Revenue
Association of Oregon Counties

Greg Block, President
Sustainable Northwest

Karen Lewotsky, Rural Partnerships Director
Oregon Environmental Council

April Snell, Executive Director
Oregon Water Resources Congress