

February 3, 2020

Subject: Testimony on HB 4071 responding to harmful algal blooms
Cc: rep.kenhelm@oregonlegislature.gov, rep.garyleif@oregonlegislature.gov,
Rep.JeffReardon@oregonlegislature.gov, rep.vikkibreeseiverson@oregonlegislature.gov,
Rep.KarinPower@oregonlegislature.gov, Rep.EWernerReschke@oregonlegislature.gov,
Rep.MartyWilde@oregonlegislature.gov, Melissa.Leoni@oregonlegislature.gov,
Shelley.Raszka@oregonlegislature.gov, Isabel.Hernandez@oregonlegislature.gov.

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Leif and Reardon, and Members of the House Committee on Water:

We are writing to urge you to hold a hearing on HB 4071 and send it with a do pass recommendation to a full vote of the Oregon House.

The Deschutes River Alliance (DRA) is an evidence-based organization that advocates for protecting the lower Deschutes River. Our board of directors includes scientists, conservationists, and people who make their living depending on a clean, clear and healthy river.

Since the last session, Representatives Helm, Wilde, and Zika organized and led, with the help of LPRO, OHA, and DEQ staff, a work group focused on addressing the causes, monitoring, responses, and prevention of harmful algal blooms in Oregon's inland freshwater bodies. The DRA was honored to be a part of those important conversations. We thank everyone who dedicated their time and effort to important and urgent topic

HB 4071 represents a step in the direction towards meaningful reform of Oregon's HAB program. The expanded testing capacity, HAB-dedicated regulatory employees, and extra attention being paid to this issue are all important steps towards a full-scale response to this impactful, widespread, and growing problem. The bill lays much of the foundation that future responsive action will build on during this shortened legislative session.

What HB 4071 does not offer or represent is an end to the needed effort on the HABs issue. The State of Oregon, through its legislators and regulatory agencies, must expand and strengthen its HAB prevention, monitoring, and response programs. As the trustees for the State's waterbodies, it is imperative to ensure the continued thriving

and health of these precious biological, recreational, and drinking water resources for its fish, wildlife, and citizens – present and future.

This HAB-policy overhaul will need to focus heavily on recreational water bodies. The current oversight that these bodies receive is purely reactive, only testing, monitoring, and warning users after blooms have already formed and been reported. To allow for earlier warnings, better prediction, and more certainty around safety, regular monitoring and testing must be incorporated into recreational water body oversight, with safety advisories responding to specific blooms. This revamped program will provide water quality certainty for tourists and recreators using these recreational water bodies, who are important components to central Oregon and other rural economies.

These recreation goals are not wholly separate from the state's drinking water goals. A successful, well-oiled monitoring and testing program will benefit both important drinking water sources and recreational water bodies.

More importantly, by addressing the contributing sources of HAB-causing pollution, bloom occurrences can be minimized as much as possible. A robust nutrient pollution-reduction program targeting agricultural and forest land runoff will help combat HABs while also ensure pristine water for both Oregonians and its native species. By creating riparian vegetation and buffers along the most polluted waterways, a significant portion of this HAB-creating pollution can be mitigated.

DRA applauds this first step and will continue our efforts to fully address the controllable aspects of HAB occurrences. We will work for the health of water bodies, for the health of the State's precious ecosystems, and for the local and regional economies that so many Oregonians rely on. We call on the members of this work group and its sponsoring representatives to continue to actively to push for progress in addressing harmful algal blooms throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,



Greg McMillan
Board of Directors President
Deschutes River Alliance