



March 12, 2021

To House Committee on Water

From: Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Support for HB 3293 – Local Community Engagement Plans

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) supports **HB 3293**. OACD represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by countywide elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners.

OACD supports **HB 3293** authorizing agencies named in the bill as providers of water project support funding for planning for community engagement. The advantage of receiving funding for a "community engagement plan" allows the entity developing the water project to participate in making a meaningful process available to members of the community to secure their input in the early planning stages. The bill particularly calls out encouraging the participation of disproportionately impacted communities such as those in rural, coastal, tribal, and historically disadvantaged areas. While it is voluntary to participate in this program, participants, upon deciding to use this program, must follow the protocols set forward in the legislation and eventually under the guidance of rules each provider agency will adopt.

This is an opportunity to plan for projects that emphasize meeting identified needs of all of the community in the early stages of planning and will lead to fulfilling the best practices recognized by each provider agency offering this opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your decision-making process.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Lee".

Jan Lee, Executive Director

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

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