



# Deschutes Basin Board of Control



March 16, 2021

Representative Ken Helm, Chair  
Oregon House Committee on Water

Representative Mark Owens, Vice-Chair  
Oregon House Committee on Water

Representative Jeff Reardon, Vice-Chair  
Oregon House Committee on Water

## VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

### **RE: Testimony Regarding House Bill 3228**

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Reardon, and Members of the Committee:

The Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC) respectfully submits this testimony regarding House Bill 3228, which sets forth a pathway for developing and receiving approval for cooperative water management plans. The DBBC is neutral on the bill in its current form, and we would support the establishment of a working group to explore these concepts further.

The DBBC is comprised of eight Central Oregon irrigation districts, including Arnold, Central Oregon, North Unit, Ochoco, Swalley, Three Sisters, Tumalo and Lone Pine (Districts). Through the DBBC, formed in January 2002, the Districts coordinate and share their respective resources and management assets to conserve water, improve their services for farm and ranch families, and enhance river conditions for salmon, steelhead, other fish and wildlife species, and recreational opportunities.

The DBBC, along with many groups and individuals in the Deschutes Basin, have a long history of collaboration on water issues. Most recently, the DBBC received approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for our Habitat Conservation Plan, which was developed under Section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act. The Districts now have in place a 30-year plan to conserve water and increase instream flows, while maintaining the viability of agriculture in our region. The effort took over 12 years to complete, and interested stakeholders were involved in every step of the process.

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PO Box 919 - Madras, OR 97741

*DBBC Member Districts*

*Arnold Irrigation District • Central Oregon Irrigation District • Lone Pine Irrigation District • North Unit Irrigation District  
Ochoco Irrigation District • Swalley Irrigation District • Three Sisters Irrigation District • Tumalo Irrigation District  
DBBC President -Craig Horrell, 541-548-6047; chorrell@cod.org*

Many other groups in our basin have also worked tirelessly on collaborative efforts involving water. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon has led several Deschutes Basin Water Summits in recent years, bringing the Tribes, federal, state and local governments, conservation groups, cities, and farmers together in forums to find common understandings and develop common visions. The Deschutes River Conservancy has long been a pioneer in voluntary, transaction-based efforts to improve stream flows in the Deschutes Basin. Other recent and ongoing efforts include the Upper Deschutes Basin Study Work Group, which was overseen and coordinated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative, which includes a broad range of participants aimed at achieving a balanced water use in the Deschutes Basin.

From all of these collaborative efforts over time, the DBBC has found that some options for conserving water and moving water rights around do not always fit neatly within existing state statutes and rules. Sometimes, what the DBBC and the basin stakeholders would like to do simply cannot be done; in other circumstances, it can be done, but only with an incredible amount of costly paperwork, where the review and approval processes do not improve outcomes.

At the same time, we also recognize that what might work for the Deschutes Basin might not work in other basins. And that's why the DBBC supports a working group to explore regional approaches to cooperative water management plans, and getting things done when it comes to water rights, water conservation incentives, and water-related administrative processes, where programs and efforts can be tailored to the specific needs of a specific region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Horrell', is positioned above the typed name.

Craig Horrell  
President  
Deschutes Basin Board of Control