



March 19, 2021

Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon, Co-Chairs
Committee on Joint Ways and Means, sub-committee on Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for Restoring OWEB's Base Budget

Dear Committee Co-Chairs,

The Deschutes Land Trust (DLT), the Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC), the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council (UDWC) and the Crooked River Watershed Council (CRWC) have been working as a powerful partnership in Whychus Creek and the Crooked River since 2006 and in partnership with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) through OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program and its predecessor, the Special Investment Partnership program, since 2008. DRC works with partners to restore flow to Whychus Creek and the Crooked River while DLT protects land along Whychus Creek and the Crooked River through conservation easements and acquisition projects. This stream flow protection and land conservation work allows UDWC and CRWC to complete large-scale restoration and fish passage projects focused on restoring the physical and biological conditions necessary for successful reintroduction of salmon and steelhead in the upper Deschutes Basin, while benefitting other native fish and wildlife species.

We are writing to you with concern regarding HB 5038 which proposes a reduced base budget for OWEB over the next six years, eliminating funding for critical OWEB staff positions supporting the FIP program and partnerships across the state. As one of OWEB's FIP grantees over the past six years, we are very aware of the value that comes from OWEB's service to the FIP program and to collaborative partnerships associated with this program. OWEB staff are critical to helping FIPs successfully navigate OWEB's granting and reporting processes, and account for and articulate conservation outcomes that ultimately indicate the success of the FIP program. Much like the Deschutes Partnership, there are numerous other FIPs around the state that are working cooperatively to enhance and restore vital fish, wildlife, and unique habitats.

In addition to restoring OWEB's base budget, we strongly support and advocate for Policy Option Package 100 that will support two core OWEB staff positions supporting the FIP program.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic further and thank you for your consideration of this topic.

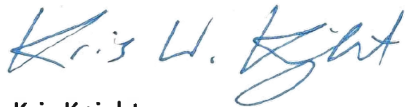
Sincerely,



Brad Nye
Conservation Director
Deschutes Land Trust



Natasha Bellis
Program Manager
Deschutes River Conservancy



Kris Knight
Executive Director
Upper Deschutes Watershed Council



Chris Gannon
Executive Director
Crooked River Watershed Council