

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
On HB 5037/5038**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports both HB 5037 and HB 5038. These bills together comprise the budget request for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB).

The services provided by OWEB are extensive and far-reaching. Across the state OWEB is a trusted partner to, and resource for, local landowners, conservation NGOs, soil and water conservation districts and watershed councils, and other state and federal agencies.

In 2020, the agency took a huge budget hit, losing nearly one-third of its resources (staff and grant funds combined). We cannot afford to let this remarkable agency lose any more capacity if they are to fulfill their mission of protecting native fish and wildlife, and ensuring watershed health for future generations.

In particular, we support the following POPs in OWEB's budget request:

- POP 110, which funds a new position focused on climate and water policy issues
- POP 230, which allows the agency to seek outside funds to support working lands and conservation, working with the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program.

We also support POP 100 from the agency recommended budget. Although this POP was not included in the GRB, it provides support for two staff positions (Conservation Outcomes Specialist and Partnerships Coordinator). These positions support the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP), a crucial component of restoration partnerships throughout the state.

We urge the committee to approve a budget for OWEB that restores the agency's base budget, including contracting services (HB 5037 and HB 5038), and to also approve the staffing positions in POP 100.