



**WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP**

March 31, 2021

Representative Marsh, Chair  
Members, House Committee on Energy and Environment

Subject: Testimony Opposing House Bill 2241 – Requiring the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to Solicit and Provide a List of Private Businesses that Can Provide Certain Permit Review Services and Limiting DEQ's Time to Approve or Deny Permits.

Chair Marsh and Committee Members:

Willamette Partnership submits written testimony opposing HB 2241 as currently written. The bill offers a distracting solution to the broader need to get Oregon's NPDES permitting on track, an effort that is making headway, and this would distract from that progress.

Willamette Partnership is a conservation non-profit with a deep commitment to building stronger, healthier, and more equitable communities. We work with communities across Oregon to change how they build infrastructure, protect water sources and critical habitat, and manage farms and forests in ways that strengthen community resilience. We know firsthand what delays in permitting does for communities who want to make wise infrastructure investments by planning ahead. Investments in natural infrastructure solutions that cool water have been delayed in the Willamette since 2004 through a cycle of litigation and permitting delays.

We support accelerating NPDES permitting updates, but we also think that is DEQ's job. We also feel that in terms of accelerating business, keeping water affordable for residents, and improving clean water, data centers do not need to be at the front of the line. There are a number of small, rural communities whose infrastructure upgrades are sorely needed. DEQ is making progress in better serving these communities.

Don't throw a wrench in progress DEQ is making in serving rural communities.

Additionally, DEQ has put an update of the 100J general permit for cooling water on their workplan for 2021. Please do not ask them to divert resources and attention from work they are already planning for a program that would serve just a small portion of Oregon's economy.

Willamette Partnership stands ready to help think through solutions that are good for business, good for communities, and good for the environment. Let's just not start with what's proposed in HB 2241.

Sincerely,

Bobby Cochran  
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