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TESTIMONY

Department of Environmental Quality 2021-2023 Budget

HB 5516 and HB 5517

April 12, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the budget for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). DEQ oversees several programs that deeply impact our membership, so the Oregon Cattlemen's Association has a vested interest in DEQ's budget for key program areas.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) is the trade association established in 1913 to serve every cattle producer across the State of Oregon. According to the most recent agriculture census conducted by USDA, there are 1.3 million cattle in Oregon with ranch families in every Oregon County. The economic contribution of the cattle sector to the State according to the 2020 Oregon Department of Agriculture exceeds \$625M at the farm gate prior to processing and marketing of the cattle. OCA urges DEQ's adopted budget focus on core programs as opposed to the creation of new programs that may result in unnecessary work or jurisdictional confusion between agencies. Agency program overlap ultimately causes confusion for those who are working to comply with myriad regulations affecting their agricultural operations.

As I understand, DEQ is proposing **a cut of \$311,326 to defund groundwater tracking** within the groundwater management area (GWMA) program. This follows years of cuts to the groundwater quality program, such that the agency is not making any meaningful progress on addressing groundwater quality issues outside of designated GWMA's, nor has the agency moved forward with designation of additional GWMA's. The agricultural community stands ready to participate in investigating and addressing the causes of any groundwater issues in Oregon but cannot do so in the face of a significantly under resourced program.

I further understand DEQ has been ordered to complete a large number of temperature total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) around the state in the coming years and is requesting **2 FTE through POP 121 to support that work**. OCA supports DEQ having adequate staff resources to make the necessary investments in completing the TMDL work and managing conversations that need to happen for that process to roll out successfully. However, we strongly encourage the legislature not to lose sight of the fact that a significant part of TMDL implementation is done by other agencies. For example, the Oregon Department of Agriculture is the "designated management agency" for implementation of TMDLs on agricultural lands. The Oregon Department of Agriculture is facing significant reductions in their water quality program. It is in the best interest of all concerned that all agencies charged with protecting our state's water quality and implementing TMDLs be adequately resourced to keep up with the significant increase in workload into the future.

OCA is concerned the agency continues to invest significant resources in the development of the "cap and reduce" program and proposes an **additional \$2 million for its climate protection work**. Given that climate change is an international issue best addressed by national policy and federal treaties and given that the Biden Administration has an incredibly proactive climate agenda, we urge the legislature and the agency to reinvest those dollars in avoiding cuts in core program areas and leave

climate policy to Congress and the federal agencies implementing President Biden's most recent executive orders.

Finally, we are concerned with proposed cost shifts in the GRB, particularly to implement **the EDMS system, which is found in POP 141 and SB 58**. Ultimately, the businesses regulated by this Agency pay for the cost of this oversight either directly through fees or indirectly through the General Fund. This is not the time for the agency to invest in a Cadillac data management system when a less costly system is available to meet EPA's mandate.

Thank you for receiving this testimony.

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