



April 12, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon
Senator Anderson
Senator Frederick
Representative Breese-Iverson
Representative Holvey
Representative Pham
Representative Brock Smith

Re: Trout Unlimited Comments on SB 5516 (Department of Environmental Quality Budget)

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Reardon and Sen. Taylor and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 5516. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. Trout Unlimited has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) plays a fundamental role in ensuring that Oregon's surface and groundwater are of sufficient quality to be used by humans for drinking, recreation and other beneficial uses and to protect aquatic ecosystems. TU supports Senate Bill 5516, which will help ensure that DEQ has sufficient resources to meaningfully implement its mandates. In particular, TU requests that the Committee ensure that the following POPs are fully funded.

Clean Water Plans (POP 121)

To ensure the quality of Oregon's water for multiple beneficial uses such as drinking water, fish and wildlife and recreation, DEQ must develop and implement water quality standards and clean water plans (both are necessary to understand the standards that programs are aiming to achieve and the level of impairment that each waterbody can sustain from various sources to still meet those standards). With standards in place, efforts must be taken to ensure all the pollution sources are not exceeding those standards. This is done through permits to specific dischargers such as NPDES permits and by trying to address Oregon's nonpoint sources of pollution. POP 121 adds 2 positions to help DEQ address nonpoint sources of pollution through the development and implementation of TMDLS, including efforts to meet court-mandated deadlines to revise temperature TMDLS, and to address other high priority TMDLS. This work is critical to addressing water quality impairment in Oregon's water bodies.

TU requests that the Committee fully fund this POP which would secure 4 FTE. However, at a minimum, we request that the GRB recommendation be approved for \$531,073 GF and 2 FTE.

Lottery Fund Restoration (POP 125)

POP 125 restores 5 FTE in DEQ's water quality program that should be maintained given current lottery fund projections. These positions are necessary to maintain water quality monitoring efforts at the current service level. Failure to restore these positions will compromise DEQ's efforts to reduce non-point source pollution in Oregon's waterways. TU requests that the Committee approve \$1,543,776 Lottery Fund for 5 positions.

Hydroelectric Program Fee Structure (HB 2143/OWRD POP 105)

TU supports HB 2143 which (1) simplifies the current annual fee structure for hydroelectric projects and restores fairness across fee payers, and (2) preserves service levels in hydroelectric programs at OWRD, ODFW and DEQ. The hydroelectric programs of OWRD, ODFW, and DEQ are critical to the state's ability to fulfill its duties as steward of the public's water resources, with a shared mission to "protect the natural resources of this state from possible adverse impacts caused by the use of the waters of this state for the development of hydroelectric power." ORS 543.015. Specific to DEQ, this fee increase would support 2.0 FTE for DEQ activities related to hydroelectric facility projects, including state water quality certifications designed to ensure project operations will not violate water quality standards and beneficial uses will be protected.

Integrated Water Resource Strategy: Restore Funding for Water Quality Position (002)

This funding would retain a position to support DEQ's engagement in Oregon's Integrated Water Resource Strategy (IWRS) implementation. Specifically, this position reviews water right permits, develops conditions for ensuring high water quality standards, provides oversight and support for Water Supply Development Fund Grants, and improves coordination with the Oregon Department of Forestry and Wildlife and Oregon Water Resources. Enhancing the pace and scale of implementation of the IWRS is key to ensuring sustainable water supply for the benefit of human and ecological communities. DEQ is a key partner in this effort and therefore TU requests that the funding be restored for this position. GF \$286,768

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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