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**House Committee on Water**  
**Representative Ken Helm, Chair**

**Informational Testimony on House Bill 3105**  
**Submitted by Racquel Rancier, Policy Manager**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on House Bill 3105, which appropriates money to the Oregon Water Resources Department to support place-based integrated water resources planning. The Department is not taking a position on the bill, and this testimony is provided for informational purposes.

Water is essential for drinking, economic growth and development, job creation, and the livelihoods of many farmers and ranchers across the state. In addition, water is necessary for fish and wildlife, recreation, and other instream purposes that are important to Oregonians. Given the importance of water, in order for a place to achieve their vision for the future, they must consider how their long-term water resources needs will be met. Planning is essential to being able to formulate solutions to water challenges that may affect communities, ecosystems, and economic development.

Undertaking place-based planning is Recommended Action 9.A of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature authorized and provided funding for the Department to pilot the place-based approach to integrated water resources planning. Place-based integrated water resources planning is a voluntary, locally initiated and led effort in which a balanced representation of water interests within a basin or watershed, work in partnership with the state to understand their instream and out-of-stream water needs, and identify solutions to meet those needs.

The Department has been working with four places – Harney Basin, Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin, Lower John Day Sub-Basin, and the Mid-Coast Region – to pilot place-based planning. Three of the four planning groups anticipate completing development of their integrated water resources plans in 2021. The Department has submitted the most recent biannual place-based planning update (Attachment 1) to provide more information on the recent work carried out by each planning group in more detail.

Building trust and creating a shared understanding necessary to collaboratively develop a place-based plan is time-intensive and requires investments in facilitation, process coordination, and technical analysis. There have been significant investments in place-based planning since 2015 from the State, private foundations, and communities. The Department has invested \$1.3 million dollars and the Department and other state agencies have invested over 10,000 hours to support these efforts. The federal government has invested \$190,000 in funding and hundreds of hours. Participants have invested over \$175,000 in funding, and thousands of hours (and mileage), and there have been significant in-kind contributions from paid consultants. Private foundations have invested over \$1,000,000 in funding and hundreds of hours.

Each community has shown dedication to the process and many of the participants have already observed benefits from collaborative planning. Place-based planning has allowed participants to get to

know new people that share an interest in water, collaboratively work through differences, and identify opportunities to work together. It has also allowed the State to be a partner in understanding and addressing complex water problems at a local scale. The planning efforts have increased local access to agency technical information and helped communities better understand existing data gaps and resource limitations.

In a mid-process survey conducted in 2018 to support the place-based planning groups, all respondents (n=60) indicated that they had benefited from the process. Stakeholders also pointed to a greater understanding of specific water resource issues and awareness within the community about shared water challenges, while flagging a lack of sufficient funding as a barrier. Highlights of the survey results are included below and a full report out of the survey results [available online](#) (Table 1).

Table 1. Select Highlights of 2018 Survey - Benefits and Barriers of Planning

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>
Greater understanding of specific water resources issues	75.44%	Lack of sufficient funding	72.41%
Greater awareness within the region of our shared water challenges	71.93%	Not enough capacity to do the work	51.72%
Improved communication & information sharing	70.18%	Lack of public awareness & support	43.10%
New perspectives on water-related issues, challenges, and opportunities facing our region	66.67%	Not enough time to do the work	29.31%

The Department anticipates that the resulting plans will help inform future strategic investments to meet current and long-term water needs, identifying solutions that are widely supported and competitive for funding opportunities. Current Department grants and a limited duration position supporting this work are set to end June 30, 2021.