



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 18, 2023

To: **Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman and Members of the Committee**
[House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water](#)

Re: **[HB 3124](#) - Drought Relief and Water Scarcity Package – Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has studied water quality and quantity since the 1960s. We believe “*that water is a resource that should be managed for the benefit of the public and as sustainable habitat for all life forms.*” Most recently, we participated in the HB 5006 (2021) [Work Group](#) where many people with a wide variety of water interests discussed the many issues around Oregon’s water. With that background, **we provide comments on the proposed Drought Relief and Water Scarcity Package in HB 3124.**

We guide our comments on **Section I: Overarching Recommendations (pages 7-8) of the HB 5006 Work Group [Final Report](#):**

Recommendation A: *The Legislature should allocate **increased funding to support state agency capacity** and resources for collecting, processing, interpreting, and distributing the water data needed for more effective water planning and management of instream and out-of-stream needs. At a minimum, this should include:*

- (1) Increased access to existing **water data** and prioritizing efforts to address known data gaps for water planning (e.g., data inventories for place-based planning as described in Recommendation I).*
- (2) Developing **climate**-informed water budgets for basins across the state to better understand current and future hydrologic conditions.*

2.2: Oregon Water Data Portal Development. \$2,251,846, including 5 positions at DEQ.

2-5: State Climatologist/OSU \$250,000

2.6: Streamflow and Steam Temperature Monitoring and Instream Flow Studies. \$1,380,452 for stream gauges and 2 ODFW positions.

2-7: Stream and Groundwater Monitoring. \$1,000,000 for equipment and contracts.

3-5: Groundwater Quality Monitoring and Action (DEQ, OHA, OSU). Positions at agencies and service and supply funds to address domestic drinking water well safety.

5-8: Studying Springs in Deschutes Basin. \$612,418 includes 2 OWRD positions and contract funds.

Recommendation B: *The Legislature should fund, and the Governor should direct, the appropriate level of **agency capacity** needed for interagency data collection and analysis, technical support, and **coordinated work-planning** and budgeting to ensure robust engagement by and between agencies in support of water planning in alignment with each agency’s mission and authorities.*

1-2: Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) Update and Implementation. One position each for OWRD, DEQ and OWEB plus contract work: \$970,000. Critical is one position at OWRD (POP 101) \$270,000.

1-13: Emergency Response/Recovery Program Continuity. Position authority for OWEB and undetermined funding to administer drought relief programs. We have an on-going drought as noted in the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), a map that is updated every Thursday. Already in 2023 Governor Kotek has signed drought declarations for these counties: Crook, Jefferson, Grant and Deschutes. Wasco County has also requested a drought declaration.

5-5: Capacity for OWEB to apply for federal funding. \$390,375 GF + federal funds for 3 positions.

Recommendation C: *The Community Engagement Guide should be provided to regional water planning and management efforts, in hopes that it will provide support to ensure that access to the process is transparent and inclusive.*

1-3: [HB 3163](#) Place-Based Planning and Fund: \$2,600,000 plus two positions for OWRD and one each for DEQ, ODFW and ODA. \$1,250,000. LWVOR [testimony](#).

1-4: OWRD work on settlement of Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation AND add additional staff for other complex water issues; \$,500,000 + additional for other complex issues.

3-2: [HB 2813](#) Drinking Water Sources Protection Fund. \$5,000,000. LWVOR [testimony](#).

3-4: Domestic Well Assistance. Replenish the Water Well Repair, Replacement and Abandonment Fund created at OWRD in 2021 plus one permanent position to administer. \$2,256,857.

3-8: [HB 3125](#) Low-Income Ratepayer Assistance. Funding to be determined. LWVOR [testimony](#).

4-5: Drought Resilience and Adaptation Grants. \$4,000,000 + admin costs for grants to producers.

In a different world, the League would be tempted to support all of the requests listed in this package. But we provide this list using the bills we have already supported and POPs from a variety of agency budgets, as well as the HB 5006 Report as our guide. We ask that **existing programs be funded first**, since they should not need additional rulemaking. We also **support keeping staffing positions created in previous sessions**.

Oregon needs to build on previous sessions' investments and must face that Drought and Water Scarcity will continue to be in our future. **Climate change is real**; we will continue to see changes in the kinds, amount and timing of precipitation. We need to increase our planning and conservation efforts and we can't leave people behind. Agriculture is the 2nd and most stable economy in Oregon. Our iconic salmon and other aquatic creatures, as well as birds and other wildlife deserve life. **We continue to support "abundant clean water for all". We encourage the legislature to fund at least some of the items contained in HB 3124.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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