

June 9, 2023

Joint Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Testimony in support of HB 2010, -6 amendment: Omnibus Water Package

Submitted by: Zach Freed, Sustainable Water Program Director

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Nature Conservancy **supports House Bill 2010**. This water omnibus bill incorporates policy changes which will benefit Oregonians and natural landscapes across the state.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Oregon, TNC has over 80,000 supporters and members in every community around the state, where we manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems and partner with ranchers, farmers, fishers, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

Drought and climate change are among the greatest ecological, economic, and human health threats of our time. The policies and programs within HB 2010 will help prepare Oregon for a more sustainable, secure water future for people and nature. The Nature Conservancy especially supports sections of HB 2010 related to Place-Based Planning, Voluntary Agreements for Groundwater Users, and Source Water Protection.

Place-Based Water Planning (Sections 15 and 16) is a collaborative approach to water management that directly addresses water needs for fish & wildlife, impacts to frontline communities, water quality, and water availability in a changing climate. The four existing Place-Based Planning Collaboratives have included diverse stakeholders including irrigators, municipalities, federally recognized tribes, domestic well users, and conservation organizations.

Voluntary Agreements (Section 43) are an under-explored mechanism for groundwater that could help communities increase drought resilience through voluntary actions—securing safe drinking water, helping fish & wildlife, and driving a sustainable economy. These approaches were described in Oregon’s 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

Source Water Protection is an investment in healthy watersheds that will secure water for people and nature. The grant program described in Sections 1-4 will provide much-needed state funding to match and leverage federal funding opportunities.

Oregon needs collaborative planning efforts to ensure a sustainable water future for people and nature. Please support the -6 amendments to HB 2010. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.