



**Testimony for House Bill 3163**  
**House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water**  
**Representative Ken Helm, Chair**

Submitted by: Bryn Hudson, Legislative Coordinator

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide informational testimony for House Bill 3163, which makes the Department's authority to provide funding for place-based integrated water resources planning permanent. The Department is not taking a position on this bill.

### Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning

Place-based integrated water resources planning (place-based planning) is a recommended action in the 2012 and 2017 Oregon Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). Place-based planning is a voluntary, locally initiated and led effort, involving a balanced representation of water interests who work in partnership with the state to understand and meet their instream and out-of-stream water supply needs.

In 2015, the Legislature provided the Department with resources to pilot a place-based approach to water planning, including financial assistance for communities to do planning in partnership with the state. After soliciting and evaluating 16 letters of interest from around the state, grants were awarded to groups in four areas: the Lower John Day Sub-Basin, the Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin, the Harney-Malheur Lake Basin, and the Mid-Coast Region (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Four areas selected to participate in the pilot phase of place-based planning.

Each of these places has been partnering with the Department to test a set of Draft Planning Guidelines, identify best practices, and improve the planning approach. The Department has provided technical and planning assistance to the planning groups, along with a total of \$2.4 million in grant funding.

In 2022, three groups, the Upper Grande Ronde, Lower John Day, and Mid-Coast completed their place-based plans and received state recognition from the Water Resources Commission after an interagency review of their plan. They are now implementing their plans with funding support from the Legislature. The Harney Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative, took a different approach to place-based planning due pressing groundwater issues in the basin. They are nearing completion of the groundwater portion of their plan and are in the middle of surface water planning. They anticipate adopting an integrated plan in 2024.

Grant authority for the place-based planning pilot sunsets on June 30, 2023.

## **Other work on Place-Based Planning**

In 2021, the Department contracted with the National Policy Consensus Center and Oregon State University Extension to conduct an independent participatory evaluation of the pilot phase. The evaluation found that place-based planning can be a very useful tool for bringing multiple water interests together to increase the collective understanding of local water systems and needs and to map out water futures that are mutually beneficial. The evaluation summarized lessons learned from the pilot and made recommendations on how to improve place-based planning in the future. A summary of the nine key lessons from the evaluation is included on [pages 10-13 of the report](#).

In 2022, the House Bill 5006 State Supported Regional Water Planning and Management Workgroup developed [22 recommendations](#) intended to inform future policy development, funding allocations, and guidance around (1) water planning and management and (2) the next generation of the state's Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning Program. The Department provided an informational report on Workgroup recommendations to the House Agricultural, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water Committee on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

Common themes from both efforts regarding the next generation of place-based planning, included: improving access to foundational data, improving interagency coordination and support, providing tools to assess if place-based planning is the right approach given an area's water challenges and capacity constraints, and funding to enable trust building, meaningful and sustained community engagement, professional support and facilitation, implementation coordination, and plan updates.

## **House Bill 3163 and future amendments**

It is the Department's understanding that further amendments to the bill are being worked on. At a high level, our understanding is that House Bill 3163 and forthcoming amendments will seek to:

- (1) Make permanent the Department's authority to provide funding for place-based integrated water resources planning, and every step of the planning process; and
- (2) Integrate some of the lessons learned from the independent evaluation and pilot phase, as well as recommendations from the House Bill 5006 Workgroup Recommendations.