



Testimony on HB 3163 Requesting Amendments Aligning with Regional Water Management Workgroup

The Conservation Angler is a wild fish and wild rivers advocacy organization. We participate in a place-based planning effort on the lower John Day River.

Place based planning allows for water resources planning at the basin or subbasin scale focused on unique ecosystems with their specific geology, hydrology, and water issues. Using the word “place” was intentional and intended to be inclusive of all interested in any particular river basin/sub-basin. “Place” was chosen instead other terms to foster inclusiveness to ensure the public interest in water remains broadly protected and also so the state’s overarching management responsibility of Oregon’s water resources were not undermined.

Place based plans fall under the umbrella of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) and must address both instream and out-of-stream needs. The plans are also required to adhere to all state laws and policies. Having inclusive conversations among a balance of instream and out-of-stream stakeholders to develop strategies to meet instream and out-of-stream needs specific to the unique characteristics of a certain watershed is valuable but is just one component of the IWRS’s much larger strategy to address Oregon’s instream and out-of-stream needs.

HB 5006 Regional Water Management Workgroup

The 2021 Legislature funded a facilitated workgroup to discuss regional planning and this Workgroup produced a Final Report with 22 recommendations to better guide place based planning in the future. Of the 22 recommendations, the two that gained the most support of workgroup members were recommendations to increase funding for data and agency capacity to collect, analyze and distribute the data as well as participate fully in planning.

As HB 3163 was drafted before the Final Report of the HB 5006 Regional Planning Workgroup, there is a lack of alignment. The Conservation Angler urges the Committee to amend HB 3163 as specifically recommended by Trout Unlimited, WaterWatch, The Nature Conservancy and Wild Salmon Center that would align the bill with the workgroup report.

There are proposed amendments and language in HB 3163 that were previously rejected by the workgroup or offered as new concepts that change the way water is managed in the state, a much broader topic than this bill’s “place-based” intent.

TCA specifically opposes the following concepts:

- (1) Place based planning cannot commence unless counties agree: A wide range of stakeholders noted problems with this idea, which basically would grant veto power to counties over planning.
- (2) Requiring agency to prioritize PBP implementation: This proposed amendment would cede agency authority and missions to Place Based Plans. Agencies have missions and statutory duties that exist to protect the broader public interest and the resource, and it is critical that agency autonomy to pursue their broad statutory mandates be maintained.

The Conservation Angler asks that this Committee confine amendments to those that would align HB 3163 with the recommendations found in the Regional Planning Workgroup’s Final Report.