

March 7, 2023

Representative Helm, Chair
Committee Members,
House Committee – Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Subject: House Bill 3231—a Bill to Direct and Fund the Department of Environmental Quality, in Consultation with Water Resources Department, to develop recommendations and other resources to expand beneficial water reuse or recycled water programs in state [Oregon]

Letter of SUPPORT

Chair Helm and members of the Committee:

As a long serving member Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies Board, I currently serve as the chair of ACWA's Biosolids and Recycled Water Committee. I appreciated the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3231 on behalf of ACWA members who come together in our Committee to support agencies in successfully implementing sustainable resource recovery and beneficial reuse of treated wastewater. Wastewater utilities look for solutions to water quality challenges that provide the best fit in their communities from a sustainability and economic standpoint, and that provide maximum benefits from public water infrastructure investments.

Expanding municipal and industrial reuse of treated wastewater can support a variety of statewide and regionally-specific community needs for water, such as industrial process feeds, agricultural and commercial irrigation, wetland and other habitat support, and conservation of ground and surface waters. While there are over 140 recycled water systems across the state today, the potential for reuse to play a role in Oregon's sustainable water future is vastly greater. ACWA has a Reuse Technical Team that has been collaborating with DEQ over the last several years to evaluate the regulatory framework with the goal of expanding the types of projects that can be readily permitted and economically implemented by communities. DEQ has been fully supportive of this effort, but it has become clear that the competing demands for DEQ resources, such as reducing wastewater discharge permit backlogs, leave insufficient time for DEQ staff to focus the necessary time and expertise to a much-needed water reuse program review.

There is a pressing need in Oregon to update the reuse regulations now. New water quality regulatory challenges emerging in communities' discharge permits call for reuse and other beneficial land application of treated wastewater as a first choice strategy to cost-effectively meet permit requirements and support other community and environmental objectives at same the time. HB 3231 would provide both resources and expectations for DEQ to look to other states for other potentially appropriate regulatory models, like southwestern states that now rely heavily on recycled water strategies to address increasing water supply challenges, and to work with stakeholders to remove unnecessary impediments to expanded development of recycled water resources in Oregon.

On behalf of Oregon ACWA's Biosolids and Recycled Water Committee, we urge you to support HB 3231, and we very much appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully,



Frank Dick, PE
Chair, ACWA Biosolids and Recycled Water Committee