



April 3, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony on Components of HB 3124

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3124. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of about 700 members. Its offices are located in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for the preservation of natural resources in Central Oregon for over 30 years.

As it relates to HB 3124, LandWatch supports a final package that includes the following components outlined in the 35-page Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BiDRAWS) spreadsheet.¹

1-10: \$250,000 for continued development of an Integrated Water Plan in the Deschutes Basin.

1-14: Funding to increase OWRD field staff capacity and presence.

2-4: Increasing water use measurement and reporting.

2-6: \$1,562,984 to ODFW for ongoing operations and maintenance of stream gauges and a position to oversee implementation of a program to monitor and assess stream temperature statewide, increase capacity to conduct instream flow studies to quantify water needs for fish and wildlife, and for work on coldwater refugia.

2-7: \$1,000,000 to OWRD for the purchase and deployment of surface and groundwater data collection equipment and to support groundwater investigations.

5-3: \$985,870 to OWEB in support of voluntary water acquisitions, increasing instream flows, and building drought resiliency for watersheds and wildlife.

5-4: \$6,000,000 to Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund for restoration work, including low-tech process-based restoration to improve watershed health.

¹ [265282 \(oregonlegislature.gov\)](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/2023/265282.html) (last accessed March 31, 2023)

5-7: \$5,000,000 for drought resiliency projects in Crook, Jefferson, Deschutes, and Grant Counties, particularly for assisting with proven climate change adaptation and resiliency strategies for our rivers.

5-8: \$612,418 to study springs within the Deschutes Groundwater Study Area, including sources and volume of water needed to maintain spring dependent habitats.

5-9: \$2,000,000 to the Deschutes River Conservancy for implementing the Deschutes Water Bank, improving water measurement and monitoring within Central Oregon Irrigation District, funding on-farm improvements to increase water conservation in Central Oregon irrigation District, and for restoration projects in the Upper Deschutes. In the Deschutes Basin, the flexibility sought for transferring water has centered on one-to-one transfers of water from senior districts to junior districts, and from Wickiup Reservoir to instream; the one-to-one concept has been discussed by the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative for years and is a win-win for the river and junior districts. LandWatch recommends that funds allocated to the Deschutes Water Bank only be available to projects that follow the one-to-one instream commitment.

6-1: \$70,000,000 for grants that would protect or restore natural watershed or ecosystem functions in order to improve stream flows. LandWatch strongly recommends that any funding awarded for modernizing irrigation infrastructure be restricted to projects that put water instream via the Allocation of Conserved Water Program or similar mechanism that permanently protects water instream. LandWatch only supports 6-1 if funding is restricted to projects that have a demonstrated ecological benefit.

If funding cuts are made to the components of the BiDRAW package highlighted above, LandWatch strongly recommends that the provisions related to categories 1 (planning, coordination, and capacity), 2 (data and analysis), and 5 (instream priorities and watershed health) be retained at the currently proposed levels given they are a relatively small proportion of the proposed \$250 million package.

Sincerely,



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