

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural  
Resources and Water  
On HB 3124**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

OEC supports aims of HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BIDRAWS). The state needs to develop a big picture approach to water management, and HB 3124 is a heroic attempt to embrace that challenge.

We understand that the conversation started by the 2021 water investments continues in this bill, and we support that effort. However, we would like to see a package that brings more focus to the need water management in Oregon to coordinate across agencies. Bolstering the effectiveness of each agency's area of activity is important, but that should not lead to further siloing of agency programs and policies. For example, groundwater management needs to have a holistic approach, not be divided into a groundwater quality program at DEQ, a groundwater quantity program at OWRD and a public health program focused on well water at OHA. The management of groundwater should first and foremost acknowledge that groundwater quality and quantity are inextricably intertwined, and then aim for programmatic coordination.

That said, OEC supports all components included under #3: Water for Families. This section of the BIDRAWS contains components that

- a. Include a number of POPs included in DEQ's ARB but not included in the GRB, POPs that support water quality permitting staff, address groundwater quality concerns and needs, and protect public health;
- b. Build on 2021 water investments and;
- c. Ensure that Oregon can access the federal funds being devoted to water infrastructure over the next few years.

The state has underinvested in DEQ's water quality work in the past, and we must address that shortfall, particularly on behalf of our smaller more rural communities.

We look forward to continuing to work with the legislature on the BIDRAWS package as we move through the session.

OEC urges you to support HB 3124.