



UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

April 20, 2023

To Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District

Re: **Senate Bill 5540** – Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board – Local Grants 2023-2025 Budget

Co-Chairs Senator Dembrow and Representative Pham and Members of the Committee:

I speak to you today on behalf of the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District (UWSWCD). Our district represents the geographic region of eastern Lane County.

The Upper Willamette SWCD strongly supports the ***Senate Bill 5540 - Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's – Local Grants Biennium Budget and the Governors Recommended Budget for the 2023-2025 biennium.*** This funding will allow Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) the ability to work with tribal, federal, state, and nonprofit partners and landowners to protect soil health, watersheds and fish & wildlife habitat throughout Oregon.

During the 2021-2023 biennium; a major investment these funds allowed for was the partnership between the Upper Willamette SWCD and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to develop the Bear Creek Strategic Implementation Area (SIA). SIA's are a focused effort to improve impaired sub-watersheds. Bear Creek is a sub-watershed of the Long Tom River, a source drinking water for the City of Monroe. Bear Creek was chosen as an SIA due to its high percentage of impaired agricultural stream miles and that it's headwaters provide priority fish habitat in the eastern foothills of the Coast Mountain Range. Bear Creek's headwaters provide cold water refugia habitat for salmonids and lamprey when waterbodies lower in the Willamette valley exceed temperature thresholds. Outreach efforts through the Bear Creek SIA led to a restoration project with a landowner who owns the final dam that remains within the Bear Creek system. The funds of the SIA were able to provide a portion of the engineering designs needed to begin the first actions of removing this dam, which expand fish passage into the cold pools of Bear Creek's headwaters.

It is accomplishments such as this, that the funds of Senate Bill 5540 create opportunities for.

The previously listed accomplishments are only a drop in the bucket of the efforts being made by the additional 44 SWCD's in Oregon.

Without the funds allotted through Senate Bill 5540, voluntary conservation efforts on private lands would be less accessible for landowners and land managers leading to further deterioration of Oregon's watersheds and natural habitats.

We urge the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources to pass Senate Bill 5540, continuing to bolster OWEB's ability to address the challenges of protecting and restoring healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies in Oregon.

On behalf of the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District thank you for your time.

Victoria Fischella



Conservation Technician
Agricultural Water Quality Specialist
Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District
<https://uwsxcd.org/>

Vice President
Oregon Conservation Education & Assistance Network

(541) 654-9436
victoria@uwsxcd.org