



February 14, 2025  
Representative Hartman  
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3528

Willamette Partnership submits written testimony in support of HB 3528 to fund community-driven water solutions. Willamette Partnership is a conservation non-profit with a deep commitment to building stronger, healthier, and more equitable communities. We work with communities across Oregon to change how they build infrastructure, protect water sources and critical habitat, and manage farms and forests in ways that strengthen community resilience.

Across the state, Oregonians face complex water challenges. In many communities, water infrastructure is overburdened and there is inadequate water supply to meet growing demand. Changing precipitation patterns and land-use pressures will continue to further exacerbate existing water challenges.

HB 3528 offers a critical piece of the solution: funding community-driven projects for people who have been left out of water policy, including rural communities, low-income communities, and Indigenous leaders. HB 3528 provides \$4 million in funding to support much-needed research and grants:

- \$3.2 million to the University of Oregon for research and grants that help communities address water challenges.
- \$800,000 to Portland State University's Institute for Tribal Governments to support tribal-led water solutions.

Preparing Oregon communities for the future will require investing in water projects that are centered in community voices and rooted in community-identified needs, values, and priorities. HB 3528 helps ensure that water projects are led by community vision and implemented by community leaders. Here are a few examples of past projects from previous Water Equity Funding:

- The Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program (TEIP) led the first Cultural Fire Exchange (CFEX) training at the Siskiyou Field Institute in Selma, Oregon. This took place in the traditional homelands of the Takelma Band of the Rogue River Indians. Returning fire to this landscape was a critical step in eco-cultural restoration and an unforgettable experience. This was a multi-generational, inter-Tribal event, collaborating Tribal partners, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.
- When water funds include equal opportunity for all Oregonians, people show up to engage around water. For example, the Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center held its first Water Justice Workshop that engaged 23 community members, and now they have water ambassadors engaging on water policy.
- Finally, accessible community water funding helps communities build capacity to solve other issues. For example, Changing Currents continues to lead in the region as a Tribal Water Summit, gathering Indigenous leaders to define and work on the diversity of programs that intersect with water like tribal sovereignty, fishing and hunting rights, and energy.

All of these examples were projects made possible by the Water Equity Fund and are why Willamette Partnership supports increasing the Water Equity Fund as a key path to engaging more communities in water. Together, we can respond to the water challenges we face now, and those to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Robison', with several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Barton Robison  
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Willamette Partnership  
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