

February 19, 2024

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

Re: Central Oregon LandWatch Testimony on HB 3419 -3 amendment – Support

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3419, -3 amendments. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of about 950 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.

LandWatch supports water use measurement and reporting and the general direction of HB 3419 and the -3 amendment.

According to a 2022 OWRD report to the legislature on water use measurement and reporting, “[c]urrently, there are about 15,000 water rights that are required to measure and report water use, making up around 17 percent of the total number of water rights in the state. The Department received water use data for approximately 12,000 water rights in 2020, meaning roughly 80 percent of those with a water-use reporting requirement submitted a water use report.”¹ The lack of available data on water use is a significant barrier to improving water management to better meet instream and out of stream needs and in developing solutions to address growing water scarcity concerns.

In the Upper Deschutes Basin, assessments of supply and demand indicate median annual water shortages of “135,000 acre-feet, increasing to 350,000 acre-feet for dry years.”² This is a substantial water shortage—even in “wet” years—that impacts Basin interests across the instream and out-of-stream spectrum.

A 2019 study in the Upper Deschutes Basin found that the greatest opportunities for increasing water supplies fall under two management options: water conservation projects (e.g. piping projects, and on-farm infrastructure upgrades) and market-based incentives (e.g. water leasing,

¹ Oregon Water Resource Department. 2022. 2022 Legislative Report Water Use Measurement and Reporting. [Water Resources Department : Legislatively Required Reports : Legislative and Budget : State of Oregon](#)

² Bureau of Reclamation. 2019. *Upper Deschutes River Basin Study*. Prepared in partnership with Oregon Water Resource Department and Basin Study Work Group.



transfers, and duty reduction).³ The lack of data on the rate and duty of water use is a significant barrier to implementing some of these key tools at scale, restricting efforts to meaningfully address water scarcity issues in the Basin.

As the 2022 report to the legislature succinctly states, “water use measurement data can help the Department protect existing water right holders, facilitate planning for future water supplies, maximize the beneficial uses for both instream and out-of-stream uses, and minimize time-consuming and costly conflicts over water use.”⁴

To meet the water needs of our communities, farms, and rivers, it is imperative that OWRD authorities are expanded to allow for common sense data collection, helping Oregon take a more proactive approach to stewarding Oregon’s water resources.

Sincerely,



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³ *Id.*

⁴ Oregon Water Resource Department. 2022. 2022 Legislative Report Water Use Measurement and Reporting. [Water Resources Department : Legislatively Required Reports : Legislative and Budget : State of Oregon](#)

