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March 25, 2025

Chair Senator Golden  
Vice-Chair Senator Todd Nash  
Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

**Re: Support for Senate Bill 1189 – North Santiam Canyon Wastewater Project**

Dear Chair Gold, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the Committee:

The Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments (MWVCOG) writes to express our strong support for Senate Bill 1189. MWVCOG is a membership organization of over 43 local governments in Polk, Yamhill and Marion County. We provide project management and administration services to local governments, including the North Santiam Sewer Authority and the cities located in the North Santiam Canyon.

The North Santiam Canyon Sewer Project is essential for these small communities still recovering from the devastating wildfires of 2020. Currently, Gates relies exclusively on septic systems and lacks modern wastewater treatment infrastructure, while Mill City's existing sewer facility is at the end of its useful life and does not meet current Clean Water Act standards. Both communities face significant environmental and public health challenges without updated wastewater management systems.

Thanks to a \$50 million ARPA allocation from the Oregon legislature, these communities have a unique and critically important opportunity to build modern wastewater treatment infrastructure. This funding represents a once-in-a-generation chance for these small communities to enhance water quality and ecosystem health, protecting the North Santiam River and supporting regional recovery efforts.

SB1189 is crucial to fully utilizing the ARPA funds before they expire in December 2026. The bill allows construction activities to begin while DEQ resolves regulatory conflicts between the Three Basin Rule and the Supreme Court's Maui decision. Importantly, SB1189 includes stringent safeguards, explicitly requiring all necessary permits and prohibiting plant operation or discharge until the final permit standards from DEQ are met.

MWVCOG strongly supports SB1189, recognizing its vital importance in ensuring responsible investment and environmental stewardship.

Thank you very much for your consideration and support.

Respectfully,

*Laura Conroy*

Laura Conroy, JD  
North Santiam Sewer Authority Project Manager  
Community Development Project Manager and Attorney  
Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments