



Date: April 16th, 2025

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: Bruce Vincent, Chair, Netarts Water District Board of Commissioners

RE: Support for HB 3341 - \$5 million in funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program

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

I am currently serving as the Chair of our Board. I have lived in our lovely coastal community of Netarts for over 20 years, and a few years ago, I decided to give back to my community by serving on the Board. The Netarts Water District has been providing clean and safe drinking water to its community for over 80 years, and it is the District's goal and mission to continue doing so, well into the future. We have an aging water treatment plant, and our water supply system needs upgrades to accommodate for our community's current and future growth. Netarts has been "discovered" as they say, and our current Master Plan calls for a new, 500,000 gallon reservoir and substantial system upgrades to meet the growth that that we know is coming.

I am writing today in support of H.B. 3341, which would provide an additional \$5 million in funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program for the upcoming biennium (2025-2027). Approval of this bill will ensure the continuation of this valuable program. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's, (OWEB), Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program was established in 2023 with broad bipartisan support, and it plays a vital role in protecting the drinking water supply of small and rural communities across Oregon.

This bipartisan bill would help ensure secure and safe drinking water for communities in Oregon by providing additional funding for water suppliers to protect, restore, or enhance sources of drinking water through land acquisition and conservation. Many coastal communities, such as Netarts, rely on

creeks and streams as their sole source of water, and many of those creeks and streams are located on timber company lands in the hills above our coastal communities. Netarts, for example, does not own or lease the timber company land surrounding its only water source, but in fact only leases timber company land for our treatment plant and reservoirs; this is a common scenario for many coastal communities. Fortunately for Netarts and some other communities, the timber companies have been good stewards of their lands and good partners in protecting our water sources. However, Netarts and other coastal communities want much more long term certainty that our sole sources of water will be protected in perpetuity, and that requires land purchases and/or conservation easements, both of which cost a lot of money that small coastal water districts simply do not have in their capital improvement budgets.

If HB 3341 is approved, then millions more in funding will be available for grants to help us purchase land around our sole water source, and help us fund the required millions of dollars in needed water system improvement mandated by our 20 year Master Plan.

There is great demand for this funding in Oregon. A recent survey by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board identified more than \$27 million in project funding needs over the next 5 years for communities across the state.

H.B. 3341 is also a key component of the 2025 Water Package and will provide meaningful support for many communities facing water insecurity. H.B. 3341 would help communities and water suppliers secure plentiful drinking water, increase resilience to climate change, and provide additional funding to protect water resources and public health.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Vincent". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bruce Vincent, Chair

Netarts Water District