

19 May 2017

Co-Chair Senator Fred Girod  
Co-Chair Representative Paul Holvey  
Joint Ways and Means Capital Construction Subcommittee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301



Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are writing in support of the Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC) request that the State of Oregon contribute a minimum of \$25 million through SB 5530 in the 2017-19 biennium to provide cost-share dollars for the DBBC's unifying irrigation modernization, renewable energy, and water conservation program. If implemented, this program will reconcile decades of rancor between irrigated agriculture and the environmental community in Central Oregon's Deschutes Basin. Under the direction of the DBBC, and funded by 1.5 million dollars from the Energy Trust of Oregon, the Farmers Conservation Alliance Irrigation Modernization Program developed comprehensive water conservation, renewable energy, and instream flow and habitat restoration System Improvement Plans (SIP) for all eight of the DBBC irrigation districts. The DBBC district's are adopting these SIPs to advance innovative water conservation projects that will restore instream flows, with senior water rights, in the Deschutes River and its tributaries to enhance irrigation efficiencies, produce and conserve green energy, and concomitantly improve habitat conditions for Oregon spotted frog, steelhead, salmon and other fish and wildlife species. Several of these species, including the frog and steelhead, are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Oregon SB 5530 funds will leverage additional local and federal funds. Last week, Congress approved the FY 17 HR 244 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill as co-authored by Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Ranking Member Jeff Merkley. HR 244 authorizes \$150 million in competitive, cost-shared grants for water conservation, flood protection, fish and wildlife restoration, and other water-related projects. With the support of many partners in both the environmental and irrigated agricultural sectors, including working collaboratively with state and federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Oregon Department of Water Resources, Central Oregon's irrigation districts have worked diligently for many years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies to develop their irrigation modernization projects in anticipation of these Agriculture Appropriation funds.

Beginning in the Fall of 2017, as exemplified by the DBBC's years of dedicated service to the common good of its extended community, the DBBC irrigation districts are committed to completing their preliminary set of irrigation modernization and instream flow restoration projects, further including, as funds

allow, all the other water conservation projects as identified in the district's SIPs so as to conserve water, improve overall water supply, optimize irrigated agriculture, and substantially restore habitat conditions in the Deschutes River and its tributaries for the Oregon spotted frog and other fish and wildlife species. Via SB 5530, the State of Oregon has a fine opportunity to ensure that we, as Oregonians, are all successful in fulfilling our mutual obligation to implement these all-inclusive programs for the collective benefit of Oregon's economy, ecology, and communities at-large. We believe that SB 5530 provides the silver bullet required to move these modernization projects forward, and, accordingly, we seek your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Julie O'Shea". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Julie O'Shea, Executive Director  
Farmers Conservation Alliance