WATERWATCH

PROTECTING NATURAL FLOWS IN OREGON RIVERS

HCR 9

Testimony of Kimberley Priestley
WaterWatch of Oregon

House Energy and Environment
January 29, 2019

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch has concerns with HCR 9 as drafted.

What HCR 9 does: HCR 9 lends legislative support to closed-loop pump storage projects and also encourages Oregon regulators to support pump storage. The preamble has a number of statements regarding the Swan Lake and Goldendale Projects, including assertions as to broad support of the individual projects. The preamble also makes a blanket statement that pumped storage projects have few or adverse environmental impacts, if properly sited. There is no mention of cultural impacts.

WaterWatch concerns: WaterWatch does not have an organizational position on pumped storage projects per se, however we do have concerns with the Resolution as currently drafted, including but not limited to:

- Both the Swan Lake and the Goldendale projects are mid-process. It seems premature for the legislature to adopt a Resolution that could be construed as legislative support for these projects before the review/regulatory process is final.

- Concerns about the Swan Lake Project and/or the Goldendale project have been raised by NGOs, Tribes and community members. The legislature should not adopt a resolution absent consideration of these concerns and a full review of the FERC and NEPA records and any state regulatory processes.

- HCR 9 provides a legislative directive that encourages Oregon regulators to support pump storage. Such a statement by the legislature could be interpreted as legislative direction to state agencies, and as such could serve to influence agency review of any given project in advance of permitting decisions.

- Blanket statements that pumped storage, if property sited, has "little or no adverse environmental impacts" undermines the regulatory process meant to determine just that.

WaterWatch is not opposed to pumped storage; however we strongly oppose blanket support of pumped storage absent any documentation of claimed benefits of pumped storage in general, and site specific projects in particular.

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