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February 26, 2019

Representative Helm, Chair  
House Committee on Energy and the Environment

Re: Trout Unlimited Comments on HB 2856

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 2856. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited (TU), a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. TU has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

TU supports HB 2856 which allocates general fund money to groundwater investigation and study. Many rivers in Oregon are over-appropriated (particularly during the irrigation season) resulting in a significant number of water rights applications for groundwater use. The 2016 Oregonian series "Draining Oregon", noted that OWRD often makes decisions on these applications without adequate information. In fact, the series noted that at current spending levels, officials wouldn't finish analyzing the State's 18 drainage basin until 2096. While detailed study of all 18 basins is probably not necessary or warranted, it is clear that several of our basins are currently in extreme risk and immediate study and action is necessary to provide for appropriate long-term management of our community's water resources. It is critical that OWRD make decisions based on sound science as impacts to aquifers are far-reaching and, in some cases, irreversible.

For instance, groundwater pumping can reduce the flow of water in connected streams and rivers to the detriment of surface water beneficial uses. Agriculture, cities, fisheries, and other resources are harmed as a result. Over-pumping can result in overdraft conditions, which is a significant issue that can result in land subsidence and reduced aquifer storage capacity, a condition that is already observed in several other western states. Over-pumping can also cause impacts that are less visible and less well-understood such as declining surface water levels which in turn negatively affect dependent ecosystems and surface water quality and the people who depend on them.

It is extremely important that OWRD have resources to properly manage our state's groundwater. The reliance on groundwater is only expected to increase as Oregon confronts the challenges presented by population growth, drought and climate change. TU requests that the Committee support HB 2856.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2856.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chandra Ferrari".

Chandra Ferrari  
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