



March 6, 2019

TO: Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

FROM: Sustainable Northwest

SUBJECT: Support for POPs in Oregon Water Resources Department 2019 – 2021 budget

Dear Co-Chair Taylor and Co-Chair Reardon and members of the committee:

A reliable water supply is the most imperative and basic need for all Oregonians. The state's water infrastructure and resources provide clean and abundant drinking water, domestic and industrial waste treatment, habitat for threatened salmon and steelhead, supplies that support an \$8.2 billion agricultural industry and other water dependent businesses, and storm and flood management to protect public safety, property, and transportation corridors. But our water infrastructure and practices to sustain these diverse benefits have become increasingly challenged. The result is water pollution, heightened competition for already scarce resources, and a decline in the health of Oregon's iconic rivers and landscapes that support communities, critical wildlife habitat, and countless businesses.

Climate change is further exacerbating stress on our state's water resources and infrastructure. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, floods and droughts, fires, rising sea levels, and diminishing water reserves are already having severe effects on residents' lives and businesses, resulting in skyrocketing costs for disaster relief and recovery. There is an urgent need to comprehensively assess and make strategic investments in Oregon's water infrastructure and resources to respond to these changes and ensure a resilient water future for a diverse range of uses.

Sustainable Northwest supports the suite of water related investments included in Governor Brown's December 17, 2018 memo entitled, "A Secure and Resilient Water Future for All Oregonians". Collectively, these funding packages will foster an improved understanding of Oregon's water resources, consumption, infrastructure needs, and prioritization for future investment. They also address immediate needs and opportunities for improved water quality, infrastructure upgrades, watershed health and restoration, and collaborative planning processes. The following packages in the proposed Water Resources Department 2019 – 2021 budget deserve specific attention and consideration:

Package 101 – Place Based Planning Community Support

Provides \$750k for supporting current planning groups in Harney-Malheur Lake, Lower John Day, Mid-Coast, and Upper Grande Ronde, as well as conducting an evaluation of the place-based approach to water planning. Continues existing NRS 4 planning coordinator (\$230k). Total: \$979,950 General Fund; 1 position.

Package 102 – Groundwater Data, Management, and Protection

Increases the state’s understanding of water supplies by allowing the Department to conduct one additional groundwater study at a time, while also preparing other basins for study and conducting more timely groundwater right reviews. The next basin intended for study is the Walla Walla Sub-basin. Adds nine positions: OPA 3 public engagement coordinator, NRS 3 well construction specialist, NRS 3 hydrogeologist, NRS 4 hydrogeologist, NRS 3 hydrogeologist groundwater reviewer, NRS 4 hydrologist, ISS 6 database application developer, NRS 2 hydrographer, and a NRS 3 hydrographer. Provides cost-share funding for groundwater study (\$300k), geologic mapping (\$100k), and observation wells (\$400k). Total: \$2,837,027 General Fund; 9 positions.

Package 104 – Protecting the Public Through Dam Safety

This comprehensive package increases the State’s understanding of the safety and condition of dams. Our particular point of emphasis and support for this package is the inclusion of ***\$100k to develop a business case analysis of the need for investment in water infrastructure across the state.***

Urgent action is needed to assess and improve the condition of our state’s water infrastructure and resources. This challenge will only get more complex and expensive if we do not, and strategic investments this biennium can help develop a clear framework that organizes existing information and deploys technical resources to inform future deliberations. No issue is more significant to the well-being and safety of Oregon. We commend legislators for working in partnership with the state’s diverse group of water-related stakeholders to begin to chart a path forward for a more sustainable and equitable water future for generations of Oregonians.

Sustainable Northwest looks forward to continued discussion with the committee as they review water-related agency budget requests this legislative session. For questions or follow-up, please contact Dylan Kruse at dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org or 303-328-7524. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Greg Block
President
Sustainable Northwest