



OREGON FOREST &
INDUSTRIES COUNCIL
SUSTAINABILITY. SCIENCE. INNOVATION. GROWTH.

HB 3326 and HB 3340 Testimony

House Energy and Environment Committee

March 14, 2019

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 3326 and HB 3340. Our coalition represents farmers, ranchers, and foresters across the state who are interested in protecting, maintaining and enhancing water quality across our farms and forests. The agricultural and forestry sectors have always been proactive about protecting, maintaining and enhancing water quality on agricultural and forestry lands, which combined represents by far the largest land use in the state. Indeed, our industries were proactive in developing the Agricultural Water Quality Management Program and Forest Practices Act years before most states had thought of developing their nonpoint source programs. Since that time, we have invested millions in studies, on-the-ground restoration and active management, and compliance with our respective programs. We will continue to be proactive into the future, as evidenced by the millions invested by each of our sectors annually in proactive water quality improvements.

Over the summer, the issue harmful algal blooms (HAB) became front and center in Oregon's ongoing water quality conversations due to the prolonged impact on the City of Salem's drinking water. While the primary impact of the HABs was on city residents, the impacts also extended into the food processing sector and other sectors dependent on a clean, safe drinking water supply.

However, understanding the causes and how to address HABs in the long-term is a complex issue that must involve a diverse cross-section of stakeholders and water quality experts. HB 3326 requires DEQ to "identify sources of pollutants that contribute to the occurrences of harmful algal blooms" and "develop strategies for reducing pollutants that contribute to the occurrences of harmful algal blooms and the frequency and severity of harmful algal blooms." HB 3340 goes a step further, requiring DEQ to "develop pollution reduction plans for point sources and nonpoint sources identified" as potential sources of pollution that contributes to HABs. As all the state agencies that work on this issue will state, understanding what contributes to HABs is a complex exercise as the causes are often diffuse and exacerbated by a number of factors outside the state's control. As such, any work to identify and address HABs must account for all factors impacting HABs, rely on the best available science and involve all impacted stakeholders.

The state already has a number of agencies working on nonpoint source water quality, each of which has their own extensive body of scientific research and data on their sector. As such, it is critical that any program designed to address HABs occur within the framework already in existence for addressing nonpoint source water quality, rely on

the expertise of the Department of Forestry and Department of Agriculture, include those with scientific expertise on these issues, and include natural resources stakeholders.

We understand that the Committee's intention is to develop a workgroup to determine what is needed to address HABs within Oregon. Given that much of the source water for drinking water systems around the state is within forested and agricultural watersheds, we think it is critical that these agencies and stakeholders are engaged in any source water protection work developed through this workgroup to avoid duplication of resources, ensure there is an understanding of the state of current scientific work about agriculture and forestry's contribution to water quality, and ensure that any source water protection goals are achievable and appropriately focused on areas that will actually make a difference.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3326 and HB 3340. We look forward to staying engaged with this workgroup as it comes together to address this important issue.

Oregon Farm Bureau

Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Oregon Cattlemen's Association

Oregon Forest & Industries Council

Oregonians for Food & Shelter

Oregon Wheat League

Oregon Seed Council