

HEADQUARTERS

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Columbia Land Trust

CONSERVING THE NATURE YOU LOVE

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March 18, 2019

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair  
Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair  
Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources

*Testimony in support of SB 5539 and SB 5540: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Budget*

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Columbia Land Trust is writing **in support of SB 5539 and SB 5540** to fund the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) operations and grant programs. These funds support the protection and restoration of healthy watersheds and natural habitats for future generations.

Columbia Land Trust is a member-supported not-for-profit conservation group dedicated to conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships. We have 3,700 members who support our work through annual contributions, volunteering, or improving the habitat in their own backyards. More than 5,000 Oregon families have signed up for our Backyard Habitat Certification Program.

As a land trust, we are part of a robust network of local conservation organizations that partner with landowners to restore riparian areas, improve water quality, and monitor ecological outcomes over time. Land trusts leverage OWEB funding with private and federal funding sources to ensure the long-term stewardship of lands. Land trusts standards and practices require long-term care for easements and acquisitions to ensure OWEB's investments are benefiting Oregonians in perpetuity.

Currently, Columbia Land Trust is partnering with the Clatsop Community College to conserve 85 acres of important wetland and floodplain habitat in the Columbia River Estuary that will protect critical salmon habitat and provide a place of learning for students. Working in partnership with OWEB, the Land Trust was able to secure \$1 million in federal grant funds to match a \$330,000 investment of OWEB acquisition dollars. This project and many others like it throughout the state provide important benefits to this generation of Oregonians and build a legacy for the future.

**Columbia Land Trust supports the Governor's Recommended Budget for OWEB and also the Recommended Policy Package 110 for personal services contracting.** The land acquisition grant program requires an extra set of expertise that relies on contracted services. This policy package gives OWEB the ability to continue to work with transaction specialists that support long-lasting land conservation in Oregon.

OWEB's grant program is unique in the nation because it fuels conservation organizations like ours that work from the ground up to achieve statewide initiatives like the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and the Oregon Conservation Strategy. We urge you to support **SB 5539, SB 5540 and Policy Package 110**.

Thank you for considering our remarks.

Sincerely,

Dan Roix, Conservation Director

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