



DESCHUTES RIVER  
CONSERVANCY

April 22, 2019

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction:

The DRC is writing in strong support of the Deschutes Basin Board of Control's (DBBC's) 2019-2021 Bond Financing Request for \$25 million to match federal funding for district infrastructure modernization project implementation.

The mission of the Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) is to restore streamflow and water quality in the Deschutes Basin. The DRC operates with a multi-stakeholder board and uses a collaborative, voluntary and incentive-based approach to restore flows to the basin's rivers and streams. In close partnership with irrigation districts and other partners over the last twenty years, the DRC has restored over 200 cfs of streamflow to the Deschutes Basin. Modernization of irrigation district infrastructure, and associated water conservation, is a central component of an integrated approach to restore critical streamflows in the basin while meeting community out of stream needs. The recently-completed Upper Deschutes River Basin Study evaluated a suite of water supply tools to meet instream and out of stream needs into the future. Findings suggest that solving long-standing water issues is possible, and that aggressively pursuing all available tools, including water conservation and water marketing, will be necessary to meet needs in a timely way.

A federal investment of \$75 million into the Deschutes basin to support irrigation infrastructure modernization has greatly accelerated the districts' ability to implement water conservation projects at scale. State match funding is critical at this time to take advantage of this opportunity. The DRC wholeheartedly supports the districts' efforts to implement these water conservation projects, and is committed to work with the DBBC to optimize the instream benefits of these projects. The DRC understands that the state funds will be used to match federal funds that will be used in accordance with NRCS Watershed Plans that specify the amount of water from these projects that will be protected instream. Optimizing the instream benefits of these projects is critical to meet water needs for ESA-listed species in a timely way that supports agriculture and reduces the regulatory risk of irrigation partners. Instream flow restoration provides significant and needed benefit for the aquatic ecosystem health for the Deschutes River and its tributaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. While all members of the Deschutes River Conservancy board support the policy objectives of this piece of legislation, it is important to note that some members are also state and/or federal employees and therefore cannot weigh in, for or against, any legislative or budget proposals by the OR state legislature.

Sincerely,

Ron Nelson

Executive Director