



## WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP

April 30, 2019

House Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

*Regarding support for HCR 33*

Dear Representatives Paul Holvey (Chair), Jennifer Williamson, Carl Wilson (Vice Chairs), and members of the committee,

*I write on behalf of Willamette Partnership to express appreciation for the attention of the committee in advancing Oregon's 100-year vision in pursuit of sustainable and equitable water infrastructure, and to register our support for HCR 33.*

Willamette Partnership is a 501(c)3 working across the West with a focus in Oregon and Washington. We have a track record of delivering practical solutions for a range of environmental issues, from water quality and floodplain management to sage grouse mitigation and oak habitat preservation. We believe it is increasingly important to do this work in a way that cares for people – making communities more resilient and improving health, social, and economic outcomes. One way we do this is by working collaboratively to increase investment in natural infrastructure – the strategic use of open space and working lands to meet the needs of human communities – wherever there is an opportunity to create better outcomes at a similar or lower cost.

Willamette Partnership supports HCR33 because:

- **It is timely.** Now is the time to understand and invest in the state's water infrastructure needs. Oregon's population is projected to grow from 4 million people in 2013 to 5.2 million by 2040.<sup>i</sup> Climate change will result in 50% less water stored as snow by 2050.<sup>ii</sup> There are also projected increases in extreme high flows for most of the Pacific Northwest, especially west of the Cascade Crest.<sup>iii</sup> A delay in water infrastructure investment could double the cost of current projections and remove the option to use natural infrastructure where natural lands are further impacted by development.<sup>iv</sup> There is still a chance for Oregon communities to shape the water future they want – a future that supports their residents, economy, fish, wildlife, and healthy rivers – but we need to get started now.
- **We're better together.** Water is important in so many ways, and that makes the "right" way to manage it is elusive. Water resource investments need collaborative input. Collaborative process can build consensus, leading to more durable solutions that benefit more parties, and bring in new ideas. Collaboration is critical because the challenge of creating a sustainable and equitable water future for Oregon is far bigger than one person or one point of view.
- **It seeks integrated solutions.** The regulatory programs that govern water are complex. Looking at those programs, it would be easy to forget that stormwater, flood water, ground water, waste water, and drinking water are the same water. But they are, we have just one water. Active integration across water resource subsectors, and with other core infrastructure (e.g., power, transportation), can identify "one water" solutions for today's complex and interwoven issues.

In implementing the recommendations within HCR33, we further hope that the Governor's office, agencies and employees of the State can work with tribal governments, water stakeholders, and other interested parties to:

- **Build prosperity and healthy communities for all Oregonians**, no matter where we come from or what our color. Some of Oregon's most vulnerable communities have experienced the greatest inequities and injustices related to water, like outsized exposure to toxics, localized flooding, and flood-related losses; barriers to affordable water service; and loss of access to culturally important places. Past resource and infrastructure decisions have not included or affected all Oregonians equally. Future investments can avoid reinforcing or repeating these inequities and injustices if the voices of communities of color, tribal governments, immigrants, and low income Oregonians can be heard and centered through the proposed collaborative process.
- **Continue to make space for natural infrastructure**. Watersheds store, treat, and transport water. Our engineered systems pick up where they leave off to meet the needs to communities, industry, and agriculture. Making nature part of our infrastructure systems can ease the burden on built water infrastructure or replace it all together. It can also create spaces that provide a host of additional community values, including clean water and air, fish and wildlife habitat, places to play, active transportation, and buffering from floods and other natural disasters. Cities as different as Prineville, Portland, Ashland, and Salem have all found great ways to make nature a pragmatic and cost-effective part of the way they grow.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We are happy to answer any questions your may have.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara O'Brien  
Interim Executive Director

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<sup>ii</sup> Oregon Climate Change Research Institute. 2017. The Third Oregon Climate Assessment Report. [http://www.occri.net/media/1051/3ocar3\\_final\\_water.pdf](http://www.occri.net/media/1051/3ocar3_final_water.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> *ibid* at Note 32.

<sup>iv</sup> American Waterworks Association. 2012. Buried No Longer: Confronting America's Water Infrastructure Challenge. [http://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/uploadedFiles/Resource\\_Center/Landing\\_Pages/AWWA-BuriedNoLonger-2012.pdf](http://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/uploadedFiles/Resource_Center/Landing_Pages/AWWA-BuriedNoLonger-2012.pdf).