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## **Testimony to the House Committee on Rules On HCR 33**

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Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HCR 33.

Across the state, Oregonians are wrestling with water-related challenges. Clean and adequate water supplies are a significant concern; drought and flooding affects communities, agriculture, wildlife habitat and water quality; outdated and failing infrastructure is everywhere—dams and impoundments, drinking water purification and delivery systems, wastewater and storm water treatment facilities, domestic wells and septic systems, and irrigation water delivery systems both urban and rural. The threat to public health, the environment and the economy is enormous.

However daunting the prospect, Oregonians must move forward together to assess our infrastructure needs, and identify and implement solutions, both built and natural. This work will need to be supported by a robust funding package. We must ensure that our water management policies and programs are flexible enough to allow regional and local efforts to succeed. And we must ensure that all Oregonians, especially those communities most impacted by flooding, drought and Oregon's other water challenges, share equitably in the benefits of new investments.

House Concurrent Resolution 33 makes clear that the legislature is aware of the problems facing Oregon communities and desires the state to work with tribal governments, legislators, water stakeholders and community members to solve those problems.

OEC is eager to see the launch of a statewide conversation about key water quality and quantity issues. Ensuring the inclusion of diverse communities and regional perspectives in this conversation is essential to developing and implementing a successful, sustainable and resilient water future for Oregon. Tribal governments and their agencies have much to contribute to this conversation and their involvement is key.

Oregon's state agencies have worked diligently with a variety of stakeholders to develop the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). Using this strategy as a starting point for moving forward can keep us from wasting valuable time and resources, but it is not all encompassing of Oregon values and priorities. Where innovative, equitable and region-specific solutions and approaches are developed, they must be considered – whether or not they are included in the IWRS.

Building trust and long-term relationships regionally is key to the successful development and implementation of our state's water vision. OEC supports regional approaches to problem solving where appropriate and effective, and where aligned with state water management goals.

We believe that building flexibility into our state-level programs will ultimately help watersheds in responding to the increasing scarcity of water and increasing demands on our water infrastructure.

We need to invest in a process that creates watershed resilient strategies to address climate change in practical and efficient ways for the coming years. We must consistently apply the test of “net environmental benefit” to our water management, remembering that Oregon’s economy is based on a healthy environment. Wherever possible, we must incorporate natural as well as built infrastructure in our water management systems – natural infrastructure solutions yield economic as well as environmental benefits.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HCR 33 as the legislature’s commitment to a more integrated, more equitable and more resilient water management system for Oregon, one capable of carrying us 100 years into the future.