



To: House Committee on Water
Chair Helm
Vice-Chair Owens
Vice-Chair Reardon
Rep. Breese-Iverson
Rep. Leif
Rep. Reynolds
Rep. Wilde
Rep. Witt

From: Caylin Barter, Oregon Water Program Manager

Date: March 2, 2021

RE: Support for HB 3105 -- Critical Funding to Keep the Four Place-Based Planning Pilots Afloat

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3105, which appropriates \$100,000 of General Funds to help complete and implement the state's four place-based planning pilots.

Wild Salmon Center works with partners to conserve healthy wild salmon fisheries across the North Pacific. Adequate streamflow is key to that conservation effort. Many salmon runs in Oregon are endangered, and low flows are limiting their recovery. These problems are worsening due to climate change and increased demand for water, and regional differences make these challenges all the more difficult to address. We recognize the value of place-based planning for tailoring high-level recommendations to local conditions, while simultaneously building local capacity and trust. **Wild Salmon Center is a charter signatory to the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership** and works closely with conservation partners involved in the other three place-based planning pilots across the state. Yet these planning efforts will be hobbled without sufficient state funds to maintain momentum from planning into implementation. That is why **we support HB 3105**, which dedicates state funds to completing and implementing the pilots during the next biennium.

Place-Based Planning is Part of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy

Place-based planning is critical to achievement of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS), which recommends actions to ensure clean and abundant water is available to meet future instream and out-of-stream needs. The state's first IWRS, adopted in 2012, included **Recommended Action 9A: "Undertake Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning."** This Action recognized that "every river basin in Oregon is unique with widely varying ecological issues, community values, and economic dynamics." Local planning can provide a framework for regions to leverage state resources available through the IWRS, while also informing refinements to the statewide IWRS based on lessons learned through plan development and implementation. Though place-based planning was only a recommendation at the time, the 2012 IWRS recognized the critical role of state funding to the process: **"The Strategy's objectives of better understanding and meeting our water needs will be *meaningless without adequate funding.*"**

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State Funding for the Place-Based Planning Pilots Is Critical to Their Success

Initially, state funding for place-based planning was robust. Two new staff OWRD staff positions and \$750,000 for grants were included in the Governor's Recommended Budget in December 2014, and legislation authorizing grants for assistance with development of place-based integrated water resources strategies was passed in 2015 (SB 266). Place-based planning guidelines were developed by OWRD and laid out a five-step process, culminating in Step 5: Plan Adoption & Implementation. The Guidelines made clear that adopting a place-based plan was not the final step; instead, "Planning groups may need to develop a more detailed *implementation strategy*, agreement, or workplan to **ensure that all of the hard work of creating the integrated water resources plan is carried out** by various public and private partners."

Four place-based planning pilots received grant funding from OWRD and kicked off in 2016. Soon after, Oregon's 2017 IWRS contained a slightly revised Recommended Action 9A: "Continue to Undertake Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning." The text accompanying the Action recognized that the four pilots were already needing additional assistance beyond what was initially assumed, including needs for professional facilitation, financial and technical resources, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. It also recommended that **"the communities currently piloting place-based planning should be supported in various ways to achieve successful outcomes and implementation of practical, local solutions."**

Originally scheduled to sunset in 2019, the legal authority for the four pilots has been extended through 2023 to allow time for completion. In March 2020, OWRD's place-based planning staff prepared a "[2021-2023 Gaps & Needs Assessment](#)" to summarize additional support and resources that were identified by the four pilot areas as necessary for their place-based plans to succeed. Estimated funding needs ranged from \$75,000 to \$125,000 per year to support implementation of *each* of the three pilot plans slated to be completed in 2021; meanwhile, it was estimated that an additional \$175,000 per year would be needed to complete the Harney Basin place-based plan by 2023. While it was never envisioned or expected that the state would foot the entire bill to finish these plans, **the 2021-2023 GRB does not allocate any OWRD grants or staffing to help the four pilots complete the place-based planning processes** that were envisioned by the 2012 IWRS, enabled by grants under the 2015 legislation, and reiterated in the current 2017 IWRS.

The members of the four place-based planning partnerships have invested countless hours in developing these plans, and they need continued state investment to make real progress toward balancing future instream and out-of-stream uses. And while each pilot is important in and of itself, **all Oregonians need all of these pilots to succeed so that we may begin to understand the resources necessary for communities to engage in informed, equitable, and durable place-based planning.**

"Bringing together state agencies and local partners through planning creates a testing ground for the wide range of recommended actions described in [the] 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy."

"As planning progresses, the Department and its partners will gain valuable insights from these first efforts."

-- 2017 IWRS, Chapter 4 - Meet Oregon's Instream and Out-of-Stream Needs

We support HB 3105. While the \$100,000 of General Funds allocated by HB 3015 over the next biennium is insufficient on its own to support completion and implementation of the four pilots, these monies will serve as crucial seed dollars to secure funds from other sources. And we also look forward to advocating for expanded General Fund investments in the Department's planning processes, now and into the future.