



WaterWatch of Oregon

Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers

HB 2821

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon

By Kimberley Priestley

Submitted to the House Water Committee

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Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers and that groundwater is responsibly managed in order to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes, wetlands and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch supports HB 2821

HB 2821 would declare harmful algal blooms to be a threat to safe drinking water and a menace to public health and welfare. The bill also directs agencies to identify HAB areas and susceptible water bodies, and, importantly, to identify sources of pollution that contribute to occurrence of harmful algal blooms. The bill also directs agency coordination as well as the development of a publically accessible clearinghouse of HAB information.

Harmful algal blooms (HABS) are becoming an increasing occurrence in Oregon, due to the effects of both human activity and climate change. HABS pose significant risks to human and animal health, river dependent economies and freshwater ecosystems.

WaterWatch participated in some of the HAB meetings of 2019-2020. Those discussions centered largely on municipal prediction, prevention and treatment. This group did not identify upstream practices and/or sources of pollution that contribute to HABS, in part, because of concerns voiced by water user groups. However, the need to research this was flagged as subject that needed attention in the near future. HB 2821 allows that forum. WaterWatch supports HB 2821's direction of agency attention to this subject, as it would remove stakeholder politics from the scientific collection and analysis of data needed to address this growing threat.

We urge the Committee to support HB 2821.

Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

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