

**Testimony to the House Committee on Water  
on HB 3228**

**March 16, 2021**

**Karen Lewotsky, Rural Partnerships and Water Policy Director  
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 does not support HB 3228 as proposed. However, regional water management is an issue ripe for discussion. This bill can serve as a starting point for the conversation, which we hope will lead to a stakeholder workgroup to further explore the issues and propose a path forward. We would appreciate the opportunity to engage with that workgroup.

Oregon is a geographically and hydrologically diverse state. One size cannot and does not fit all when it comes to addressing water management challenges. Developing regional approaches that coordinate with state-wide planning efforts as well as deliver on state-level water goals is an essential next step in Oregon's water planning efforts.

OEC is committed to helping the state develop and implement some form of regional water management. Regional water management must coordinate with larger state water planning framework and must be subject to state authority and must be accountable to state regulations.

We have a number of questions and concerns that we hope a workgroup will address. We need to:

- Define "a region" (a basin, a sub-basin, a county, etc.)
- Clarify the difference between planning and management so all stakeholders are using the terms in the same manner
- Address concerns that the regional approach will attempt to avoid oversight by OWRD/state and compliance with state water law
- Address concerns regional conversations will leave NGOs out, as most conservation NGOs don't have enough staff to have one or more people in each basin

OEC urges the committee to heed the call for exploring this issue through a stakeholder workgroup, and we hope to participate in that effort.