



DESCHUTES RIVER
CONSERVANCY

Date: March 16, 2021

To: Members of the House Committee on Water
From: Deschutes River Conservancy

Re: Testimony on HB 3228

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Reardon, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3228. The Deschutes River Conservancy has several concerns with HB 3228 and does not support the bill as proposed. However, the DRC would like to express our strong support for continued discussion on the topic of regionalized water management or 'cooperative water management plans.' The Deschutes Basin, like many throughout the state, faces unique challenges and barriers in its effort to balance water needs to support rivers and communities. We also have opportunities unique to our basin. We believe that management flexibility is key to implementing integrated solutions identified through multi-stakeholder planning efforts. Regionalized water management at the basin scale provides a potential mechanism for enhanced management flexibility. The DRC supports the development of a Working Group with balanced membership to explore the feasibility of this concept. We believe basin-wide approaches hold great promise if done with appropriate sideboards, and in a way that balances instream and out of stream water needs. A changing climate and growing populations only increase the urgency of this work.

Stakeholders in the Deschutes Basin have a long history of collaborative success developing and implementing projects that have restored streamflows, supported agriculture and helped meet the needs of growing cities. Basin partners recently completed the Upper Deschutes River Basin Study, in partnership with the state and the Bureau of Reclamation, which quantified current and future water supply and demand, analyzed tools for addressing shortages, and evaluated these tools in terms of effectiveness and cost. The Upper Deschutes Basin Study was completed in 2019 and is succeeded by the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative, a group of 46 stakeholders currently working to develop a comprehensive Deschutes Basin Water Plan that prioritizes integrated implementation strategies and that will look to support policies that advance these strategies. We believe we are on track to be a model for how we can solve water issues for rivers and communities at the basin level through close collaboration. As the Deschutes Basin—and many other basins throughout the state—embark on basin plans, the time is ripe to discuss how the state might play a role in facilitating the implementation of these plans in a manner that meets the diverse needs of the state's basins.

The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) restores streamflow and improves water quality in the Deschutes Basin using a coordinated, collaborative and voluntary approach. Founded in 1996 as a consensus-based, multi-stakeholder organization, the DRC's Board of Directors includes diverse representation from tribal, environmental, irrigated agriculture, and hydropower interests as well as federal, state and local government. The DRC Board formally supports this testimony, with federal and state agencies abstaining as per agency policies.

Sincerely,

Kate Fitzpatrick

Kate Fitzpatrick
Executive Director
Deschutes River Conservancy