



## **WaterWatch of Oregon**

### **Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers**

**HB 3103-1**  
**Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon**  
**By Kimberley Priestley**  
**Submitted to the House Water Committee**  
**March 18, 2021**

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 aquifers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater dependent ecosystems 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 3103-1**

HB 3103-1 clarifies that holders of water rights to store water can change the character or "type" of use under their storage right.

Allowing a change in the character or "type" of use of water that is already stored is something that benefits all water users, whether city, farmer or fish. The water is already stored; HB 3103-1 simply allows flexibility as to how that stored water is used. There is no downside to this bill.

The OWRD has long allowed changes in character of use of stored water. There have been hundreds of these transactions over the years for owners of reservoirs of all sizes, from small ponds to storage projects as large as Prineville Reservoir. HB 3103-1 will simply clarify that authority.

We have heard some water stakeholders voice opposition to HB 3103-1 because they do not want this issue clarified in statute absent resolution of issues surrounding changing the location of storage projects. These are very different discussions. Conversations around moving the location of storage are very complex, necessarily include consideration of appropriate sideboards to protect the environment and will take time to come to resolution. The legislative record for SB 946-1 (2019) is illustrative of the many issues involved in that discussion.

WaterWatch is committed to continuing discussions; however, holding HB 3103-1 captive to further that discussion not only stalls an easy solution to a problem that impacts all stakeholders, but has the potential to disadvantage a later, more focused, discussion on the topic of changing location of storage and appropriate environmental sideboards for such transfers.

We urge the Committee to support HB 3103-1. The bill is a narrow fix to a narrow problem that will benefit all. Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

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