



March 24, 2021

To Joint Subcommittee on Ways & Means, Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Support for SB 5037 and SB 5038

Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Rep. Reardon and Committee Members,

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) represents the 45 conservation districts who are local governments providing technical services to urban and rural communities statewide.

We support restoring OWEB's base budget.

WATER VISION

And we strongly urge adoption of policy option package 110 that will support the 100-year Water Vision as set forth by the governor and incorporating a work program among the natural resource agencies. Change is needed in how we take care of our water future—not a single interviewer last year when approached in a large survey about the future Water Vision—found the status quo acceptable. Continuing to fund the natural resource agencies at only 2% is not going to get the job done. You can help get some momentum by approving POP 110, which will fund a position that will work on the Water Vision program half time and the climate program the other half. That's a start, but the challenge remains to bring the natural resource agencies up to speed to do their part in accomplishing the plan.

The Water Vision was drafted back in 2017 but limited funding has been dedicated. The water situation continues to be constrained by population growth, climate change and other factors. Rather than reacting to crises we need to jump out ahead and make this plan work. If we continue to not prioritize the issue, we will lose jobs, our agriculture activity, wider disparity gaps will occur among our population, and continuing inefficient allocation of state and federal resources will occur.

Senator Bennett of Colorado has indicated in testimony before Congress that we need to fund infrastructure and that natural and working lands are part of that infrastructure.

The Integrated Water Resources Strategy and Place Based Planning initiatives are helping to move the Water Vision forward, but a bold strategy is required to fund the program effectively. We call on you now to move progress forward by dedicating these

funds toward preliminary steps to kick start Oregon's water future to provide healthy drinking water, protect the environment of our watersheds and maintain our economic viability. Your leadership will demonstrate a step in the right direction.

CLIMATE

I am a member of the DEQ rulemaking advisory committee for the Climate Protection Plan, formerly known as cap and reduce, representing the conservation districts on natural and working land concepts. I also closely follow the Oregon Global Warming Commission's work on their surveys and study to provide opportunities on natural and working lands for practices that may be incentivized to allow landowners to value carbon sequestration on their lands. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board position will also move toward this area of work. The federal administration has identified in its Climate 21 document using available federal funds to promote sequestration banking, indicating that up to 20% reductions in greenhouse gases can occur through sequestration programs.

Our conservation districts can assist by providing the technical support for voluntary projects on landowner properties. There are currently sequestration demonstration projects on agricultural lands in two counties. Projects like these can provide economic benefits, especially in rural communities.

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