



ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST STEELHEADERS

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March 30, 2021

RE: Steelheaders Testimony on House Bill 2251

Dear Chair Helm and House Water Committee members:

My name is Betsy Emery. I am the Advocacy and Campaign Manager for the Association of Northwest Steelheaders. Our organization was founded in 1960 and is one of the oldest recreational fishing and conservation non-profit organizations in the Pacific Northwest. We have eight chapters in Oregon and one in Southwest Washington, representing over 800 members and nearly 5,000 supporters dedicated to enhancing and protecting fisheries and fish habitats for today and tomorrow, with a vision of abundant, sustainable fisheries and healthy watersheds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House bill 2251, which would appropriate money from the General Fund to the Water Resources Department to support water use planning on regional and local bases, develop a system to identify and prioritize water use needs, and implement local and regional water use strategies and plans.

Currently, Oregon communities are required to prepare Water Management and Conservation Plans that describe the water system, identify sources of water used by the community, and explain how the water supplier will manage and conserve supplies to meet future needs.

The water management planning process is becoming increasingly complex and important as communities experience population growth, many surface and groundwater sources are overallocated, and climate projections suggest significant changes in precipitation patterns.

Oregon's population is expected to grow by more than 40 percent of the 2014 population, or to nearly 5.6 million people, by 2050, increasing statewide annual water demand by [more than 400 billion gallons](#). This significant growth in demand, coupled with declining water availability as a result of reduced winter snowpack and extended summer seasons makes long-term water planning even more complex and important.

It is especially important that these long-term planning processes carefully consider conservation efforts that protect and restore in-stream flows to ensure quality fish habitat, especially for endangered salmon and steelhead - considerations that aren't always embedded in water use and management planning and decision making processes.

Allocating money from the general fund to support these community planning processes is especially important given the significant time, cost, expertise and other resources involved in preparing a water conservation and management plan that reflects best available science and technical information. Further, establishing a system that allows the state to not only identify local and regional water use needs and supplies, but prioritize them is especially important in ensuring that additional water demands are managed in a way that provides adequate in-stream resources despite competing interests for additional development and new water rights. Lastly, supporting communities in implementing projects that enhance water conservation efforts are important as many communities face financial impacts and declining budgets as a result of COVID 19, making it harder for these communities to bear the brunt of project costs.

We recommend that the House Water Committee support this bill. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Emery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betsy Emery
Advocacy and Campaign Manager
Association of Northwest Steelheaders
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