

April 24, 2021 (1-3pm hearing)

Re: Budget Priorities (SB 5555)

Dear Legislators—Joint Ways and Means Committee:

As you gather input and consider your funding priorities for the 2021-2023 budget cycle, I ask you to assure that key funding is given to assure that there is sufficient water in our streams for people to use and fish and wildlife to thrive. We need science and data to determine how to keep our streams healthy, especially in light of a warmer climate and the shorter rainy season we are already experiencing, even where I live on the Oregon Coast.

As someone who works to maintain and restore salmon and other fish and the habitat that sustains them and the fishing and tourist economies that depends on them, it is critical that we prioritize getting the information needed and having people on the ground to make sure water laws are respected.

Specifically, **I ask you to fund** the following budget Policy Option Packages (POP) for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) and a budget package that supports these agencies and Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) funds paid by hydroelectric projects.

Please support:

POP **114** (ODFW) is crucial to allow ODFW to participate in the State's Integrated Water strategy. Right now, for example, ODFW does not even have the ability to have staff participate in our local area MidCoast Water Planning Partnership. Without them at the table, our group doesn't have the expertise or data sufficient to ensure instream needs are met for our fish and streams. Citizens are putting in hours and hours of work but need science and data to make informed decisions.

POP **105** (for ODFW, OWRD, and DEQ) should also be supported. It would maintain current level of service by ODFW, OWRD (and Oregon's DEQ) related to protecting fish and wildlife at hydroelectric projects, by updating and simplifying the fees paid by these projects. (HB 2143 is also related and should be passed).

POP **109** (OWRD) The public needs OWRD to have more water management capacity; Field staff are critical for assuring that water allocations are properly enforced. It's just complaint driven now and that short changes fish and wildlife and those that follow the rules. Right now without sufficient field staff we aren't assured of measurement and management for the instream and out-of-stream rights.

POP **110** (OWRD). Our groundwater resources are already overallocated because the state lacks the data to make sustainable groundwater decisions. They have given away public water permanently to individuals (in Harney and Umatilla counties) and leaving the rest of us high and dry. We need to assure we do better and that there is data behind the allocation decisions being made about our aquifers and groundwater.

In contrast, I ask you to reject those Reduction Packages that are contrary to these needs.

Reduction Packages **090 and 092 (OWRD)** goes backward in assuring sustainable needs and management. It would eliminate at least one staff position and the gaging stations and observation wells needed for appropriate management of state resources.

Thanks for your attention.

Sincerely,

Fran Recht

Depoe Bay, Oregon