

April 13, 2021

From: Bill M. Bakke
Congressional District 2
6261 SW 47th Place
Portland, Oregon 97221

To: Oregon Legislative Ways and Means Committee

Re: Management of Oregon's Water Resources by Water Resources and Fish and Wildlife departments

With growing climate change effects on Oregon's rivers and lands and survival of salmon and steelhead protected by the federal Endangered Species Act, it is vital that the following responsibilities of these two agencies and funding support be directed at solving current and long-range problems in water resource management.

The Water Resources Department lacks data to provide science based and data driven water management capacity and the funding to be successful problem solvers and managers.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Water Program is critical to identifying and protecting instream flows needed for fish and wildlife. The Program needs adequate capacity to function properly.

Both agencies need to have the ability to provide science and data driven water management to understand Oregon's ground water systems and to protect and restore public trust stream flows that support healthy and abundant fish and wildlife resources.

Oregon Water Resources Board:

Given a changing climate and a history of inequitable water decisions, it's critical that Oregon invest in OWRD programs driven by data, science, and smart water management to public resources.

1. Reject proposed reductions to OWRD's science, management and data programs that the Governor's Recommended Budget (**Reduction Packages 090 and 092**) would eliminate an assistant watermaster, a ground water hydrologist, gaging stations and observation well. Potentially the Governor's budget cuts would reduce or eliminate staff positions needed to develop long needed groundwater studies.

These budget cuts would not protect public trust water and fish and wildlife resources important to Oregon's economy and enjoyment by all citizens. Oregon has responsibility under federal law to protect and recover ESA listed species such as salmon, steelhead, and bull trout that occupy nearly every river system in the state. Ground water is vital to survival of salmonid spawners and to juveniles rearing in streams during summer. Ground water not only contributes to stream flow it is critical to maintain temperatures (68° F. or less) within the temperature tolerances of these species.

2. Support scientific understanding of Oregon's groundwater and aquifers in **Policy Option Package 110**. Oregon needs to be able to have the data that supports sustainable ground water decisions. This would provide a factual and smart benefit to Oregon citizens.

3. Please fund "boots on the ground" water management (**Policy Option Package 109**): Oregon desperately needs more water management capacity; thus, water management largely is complaint driven. This is unacceptable. Field staffs are critical for on-the-ground water management across the state. OWRD capacity is far below needed sustainable management for instream and out-of-stream rights.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:

The public is concerned about climate change and its effects on land and water environments in Oregon and the Northwest. We suffer in each other's forest fire and grass land smoke and we suffer as the state is unable to "prevent the serious depletion of any indigenous species" (ORS 496.012) as streams are too dry and no longer homes for wild fish populations.

Oregon's future must include adequate water for abundant salmon populations, and the cultures and economies that depend on salmon and healthy rivers. To get there, Oregon must fund ODFW's Water Program.

Provide funding to protect fish and wildlife in regional water discussions. (**Policy Option Package 114**). The Integrated Water Resources Strategy requires Place-Based Planning to meet specific instream and out-of-stream needs. However, the legislature hasn't funded ODFW so that their expertise is at the table ensuring the Water Resources Strategy is actually integrated. Having ODFW expertise is essential in this process so that rivers, native and hatchery fish and wildlife are included in decisions.

Funding programs for both agencies:

Funding Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Water Resources Department to participate in and work on reallocation of stored water above Willamette River Dams (**ODFW Policy Option Package 115, OWRD Policy Option Package 113**) is necessary to reallocate 1.6 million acre feet of water recently approved by Congress. It is important to have these two Oregon agencies involved in decisions to include municipal and industrial along with fish and wildlife uses in addition to authorized irrigation. It is necessary to not only quantify and track live-flows and stored water releases for instream water rights for fish and wildlife and diversion rights for municipal and agricultural users. This is especially important so that Oregon is prepared to manage this reallocation of water fairly in growing drought conditions.

Support agency work to protect fish and other natural resources in the state's hydroelectric work:

Please support efforts to update and simplify annual fees paid by hydroelectric projects in order to maintain current service levels at OWRD, ODFW and the Department of Environmental Quality. The staff positions are critical to ensuring fish, wildlife and other natural resource values are protected as required by hydro statutes (**Policy Option Package 105 and House Bill 2143**)

Sincerely,



Bill M. Bakke