

**Testimony to the House Committee on Water  
On House Bill 2142**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HB 2142. It is essential that the Water Resources Department (OWRD) have sufficient funding to accomplish its mission of protecting and managing the state's water resources, now and into the future.

Each and every water rights transaction requires review by trained, experienced staff to ensure compliance with existing water laws and regulations. Over time, these reviews have become increasingly complex, as the number of users has increased, the requirements of state and federal regulations have become more stringent, and our understanding of the resource itself have evolved. At the same time there must be sufficient staff to process water users requests in a timely and thorough manner.

This fee increase will let the Department retain 2.5 FTE of the 8.83 FTE removed by the Governor's Recommended Budget. Retaining that 2.5 FTE will not allow the Department to sustain current service levels, but it will help to reduce the impacts of the cuts proposed by the Governor's Recommended Budget.

Oregon's natural resource agencies are chronically underfunded despite the essential role they play in supporting our economy and reducing negative impacts to human health, while ensuring functional ecosystems and environmental services. Water must be managed to balance a range of needs and the Department needs sufficient funding to ensure adequate staffing to provide services to a range of Oregonians.

Fee increases alone cannot address the challenges faced by OWRD, and OEC will support general fund increases to the Department's budget as well as HB 2142.