



## COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

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To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

### **RE: Support for HB 2813 - Ensuring Safe and Secure Drinking Water**

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts is in strong support of HB 2813, a bipartisan bill that will help ensure secure and safe drinking water for communities across Oregon. While for some communities, clean water is as easy as turning on the tap, a growing number of Oregon communities face challenges accessing clean, reliable, and affordable drinking water.

### **HB 2813 adds an important tool for Oregon to protect the infrastructure that provides drinking water by preventing the fragmentation and conversion of source water areas.**

Oregon's drinking water challenges will become more complex as our built infrastructure ages, climate change and wildfire add uncertainty, and tourism trends change with populations surges to places like the Oregon coast in the summer. Just last week, the Secretary of State released an advisory report addressing gaps in Oregon's water governance and found that "Oregon is underprepared to provide meaningful support to many communities facing water insecurity" (Oregon Secretary of State, 2023).

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is a network of 32 organizations working in Oregon to protect our natural world - our water, wildlife and open space - for all people, forever. Our statewide community of land trusts cover geographies from Gold Beach to Astoria, and are actively working with communities and water suppliers to protect source water areas using voluntary, market-based tools.

As organizations with expertise in land conservation and real estate transactions, our land trust members are uniquely positioned to help water providers protect and enhance community water sources.



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**24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust  
Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust  
Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust  
North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural Trust • Oregon Desert Land Trust  
Pacific Forest Trust • Southern Oregon Land Conservancy • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

The Trust for Public Land • The Wetlands Conservancy • Wallowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust  
**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water  
Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association  
Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

North Coast Land Conservancy, for example, worked with the Arch Cape Domestic Water Supply District and Sustainable Northwest to acquire 1,500 acres and establish the Arch Cape Community Forest. This land is now permanently protected and managed as a community forest that provides multiple benefits including affordable, clean and safe drinking water, stabilized water rates, and conservation opportunities.

In the City of Port Orford Oregon, the Port Orford Watershed Council and Wild Rivers Land Trust have been working hand-in-hand with the City to identify ways to secure their drinking water, including purchasing more land to protect their water at its source. In the small community of Ilwaco, the Trust for Public Land and Columbia Land Trust supported project planning, financing, and conservation planning to support the city as they manage their watershed.

One of the critical missing pieces of this work is the financial resources for small communities to acquire and protect their drinking water sources. HB 2813 will fill a key financial gap to provide capacity and funding for source water projects across the state and leverage federal infrastructure funding. While some communities are already engaged in this work, many lack the capacity to tackle source water protection alone - operating with small or all-volunteer staff, limited budgets with few ratepayers, or serving low-income populations.

HB 2813 will provide financial and technical assistance, resources, and funding for communities to secure plentiful drinking water, remove the threat of fragmentation and conversion, and increase resilience to climate change. In addition, the grant program created under the bill will create a dedicated source of funding to match and leverage private and federal infrastructure investments that support public health and maintain working forests and their economic benefits. The grant program will leverage federal funds from programs such as Forest Legacy, Community Forest and Open Space, and the Drinking Water Providers Partnership - all of which require a non-federal match that Oregon currently lacks.

Oregon must act now to leverage unprecedented federal funding and ensure drinking water security. HB 2813 will provide strategic tools for long-term water security now instead of dealing with a water availability crisis later. We urge the members of this committee to support HB 2813, and thank you for the time to testify.

Sincerely,



Kelley Beamer  
Executive Director  
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

