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

Testimony in support of HB 2813: Access to Safe Drinking Water

Submitted by: Zach Freed, Sustainable Water Program Director

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Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

The Nature Conservancy **supports House Bill 2813**, which benefits safe drinking water supplies for communities through watershed restoration in Oregon.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Oregon, TNC has over 80,000 supporters and members in every county. Based in communities around the state, we manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems and partner with ranchers, farmers, fishers, forest and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

Healthy watersheds lead to reliable, secure water for people, fish, and wildlife. Communities across the state are facing water security challenges, and those challenges will become more difficult to overcome as the climate changes. Watershed enhancement or protection can benefit drinking water quality issues and problems with water quantity—such as flooding and drought. Investing in watershed protection and enhancement invests in climate adaptation and resilience for the communities that need it most—such as rural or lower-income communities. Watershed enhancement approaches benefit coastal and inland communities and can address surface water or groundwater issues.

House Bill 2813 will provide much needed state funding to match and leverage federal funding opportunities that Oregon has not previously been able to take full advantage of. Together, this combined state and federal funding will increase the capacity for communities across Oregon to take science-based, innovative actions to protect their drinking water supplies. HB 2813 will provide additional resources for watershed protection while also directing Oregon Health Authority to collaborate with interest groups to identify and secure federal funding for projects that will protect and enhance source water, such as green infrastructure projects.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge you to support HB 2813.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.