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# Rhododendron Water Association

*Providing tomorrows water quality and reliability... Today*

February 16, 2023

Chair Helm and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water, Thank you for your time and considering this written testimony.

My name is Steven Graeper and I am President of the Rhododendron Water Association. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 3195.

In my role as President of a small not-for-profit water system, I am constantly searching for funding opportunities to assist our water system maintain the high quality of service our rate payors have become accustomed to. While our rates are sufficient to maintain our current, but aging, infrastructure, we need to constantly be looking at opportunities for funding the needed capital improvements necessary to ensure our customers continue to have a steady stream of safe, clean drinking water.

In addition to our rate structure, which allows us to budget a limited amount for needed upgrades and protections, we also look to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (DWRLF) to secure the capital necessary to ensure our system is maintained, upgraded, and our 2.8 square mile watershed protected.

Earlier this month, I testified in favor of HB 2815 that, if passed, would help small water systems ensure watershed protections through OHA. However, OHA loan funds for watershed protections are limited and the competition for those funds is fierce.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRLF) has funding opportunities available for Non-Point Source (NPS) pollution control, but only municipalities and cities with combined water and sewer infrastructure qualify through their program. Small non-profit water systems, like Rhododendron, that are without combined water and sewer infrastructure, are currently not eligible to apply for funds through the CWSRLF.

HB 3195 would remove the verbiage that prevents special districts, that do not operate combined water and sewer facilities, from applying for CWSRLF funds. It would then open more funding opportunities for small water systems to qualify for NPS pollution control.

Reducing NPS pollution in watersheds benefits all watersheds by providing stability during and after high run-off disturbances. It also reduces costs of treatment, operations and maintenance over the long-term, protects public health by reducing contaminant loads, and ensures long-term financial viability.

By including water districts as eligible public agencies, water systems, like Rhododendron's, would be able to apply for available CWSRF funds. The funds would then be used to facilitate watershed protection projects and enhance their natural/green infrastructure so we can cost-effectively provide clean water and reduce risk to our community.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 3195.

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