

Submitter: James Kraft

On Behalf Of: Washington Water Trust

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB3164

Thank you for allowing Washington Water Trust to testify in support of HB 3164.

Washington Water Trust, a non-profit environmental organization, was founded in 1998 to help restore instream flows in rivers and streams across Washington State, and more recently in Oregon. Washington Water Trust is an active supporter of the Walla Walla 2050 Planning process that covers the basin that falls both in Oregon and Washington. In this effort, we collaborate with many parties at the table including farmers, irrigators, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Department of Ecology. Moreover, we are working on numerous water conservation projects in the Walla Walla Basin.

Washington Water Trust uses numerous tools to help restore instream flows while still allowing farmers to thrive. We work with water rights holders to find efficiencies so that they can put water back instream in trust in the water rights program. We also work out leases and other temporary donations of water into trust. We also work with cities on innovative strategies to use high winter flows for injection into storage wells for use later in the drier summer months.

One key to our work is to have legal flexibility. Every landowner has different needs and thus solutions are necessarily varied. Thus having legal flexibility is good for both water right holders and our rivers. In many cases, water right holder are happy to help with river restoration—they just need to be provided the tools to do so, like split-season leasing.

It is for this reason that Washington Water Trust wholeheartedly supports HB 3164 and urges its passage.

Thank you very much.